

CITY



CONNECTING US:

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CITY-TO-CITY
IMMIGRANT RESETTLEMENT NETWORKS



CITY

FOREWORD: AN INVITATION

When, in the spring of 2022, people began coming to New York from the border without family ties in numbers never quite seen before, the city was taken aback. What normally would be handled in-community—by the network of nonprofits, faith institutions, and service providers that have welcomed new immigrants to the city for decades—was suddenly too much, too big, too fast for even NYC's robust immigration ecosystem to manage on its own. The City and its partners pulled together to meet immigrants' basic needs.

A remarkable humanitarian effort involved thousands of city workers setting up shelters, filling school seats, and developing new healthcare, legal, and information sharing systems for the more than 225,000 newcomers that came through the city's care in two years. But the learning curve was steep, and the response was imperfect. There was almost no future planning, very little coordination with and resourcing of community partners, and much of the rhetoric from the top fueled general mistrust and animosity and undercut the efforts of city staff on the ground. It took a huge human toll on many immigrants, and on the city as a whole.

Looking back, the City waited far too long to ask for help. As a result, the City missed chances to learn from the legion of immigration experts, practitioners, allies, and, importantly, government partners in New York and in other cities, counties, and states to develop an effective response that drew on all of our strengths, together.

This Guide translates our lessons learned into concrete action. It presents city-to-city immigrant resettlement networks as an opportunity to turn a difficult national climate on immigration into a powerful collaboration from the ground up. It offers practical guidance for states, cities, and communities to tailor these networks to best serve each of our particular contexts, ensuring that we effectively, sustainably, and humanely fulfill our obligations to all community members.

Immigration will always be part of the story of every city. Together, we can make it a success story.

Join us.

INTRO

ABOUT & VISION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Connecting US focuses on **resettlement**, an emerging practice that helps recent immigrants find welcome and opportunity through relocation within the US, while also helping local governments develop programs and partnerships that promote individual and collective economic and social benefits.

This Guide outlines a practical roadmap for local governments and their partners to establish collaborative approaches to receive and resettle newcomers through **city-to-city immigrant resettlement networks**—making immigration a win-win for immigrants and the cities where they settle.

VISION

Our **vision** for national **city-to-city immigrant resettlement networks** imagines a practical and pragmatic response to immigration that promotes **mutual prosperity** for immigrants and the local communities that receive them:

- 1** Recent immigrants can access safe and dignified pathways to resettlement within the US that advance their self-determination and belonging.

- 2** Local governments and their partners are equipped with the knowledge, resources, and partnerships needed to facilitate resettlement and help immigrants access opportunities to thrive and contribute.

- 3** Everyone benefits from a well-connected resettlement ecosystem—spanning all levels of government, nonprofits, community groups, employers, neighbors, and immigrants themselves—that fosters prosperity for all and revitalizes communities.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

ASYLUM SEEKER

A person who is seeking legal recognition as a refugee (see below). The Guide uses this term for people who have formally applied for asylum as well as individuals who may be eligible for this protection but have not yet applied.

GATEWAY CITY

Localities that are or may be interested in providing recent immigrants residing in their jurisdiction with information, connections, and/or assistance to settle in other cities where they can find support and opportunity. These include cities at the border and in the interior (like El Paso and New York City) where immigrants begin their US journey in earnest. Compare with “Receiving City.” Note: The terms “Gateway City” and “Receiving City” are not mutually exclusive, and a locality could be both at the same time for different immigrants.

IMMIGRANT

Broadly refers to noncitizens who have arrived in the US, some of whom may be asylum seekers and/or pursuing other forms of immigration relief. The Guide also uses the term “newcomer” to describe recently arrived immigrants.

NETWORK

Formal or informal multi-nodal coordination and cooperation between localities (city/county/state) and various actors, including nonprofits, faith-based and community groups, employers, and governmental actors, on reception and resettlement.

RECEIVING CITY

Localities that are or may be interested in promoting the arrival, inclusion, and contributions of recent immigrants, including those who have initially arrived at another city. For example, Utica in upstate New York has historically been a receiving city for refugees, and New York City has long been a receiving city for immigrants. Compare with “Gateway City.” Note: The terms “Receiving City” and “Gateway City” are not mutually exclusive, and a locality could be both at the same time for different immigrants.

RECEPTION

Policies, programs, services, and other assistance (set out by law or available in practice) that establish how asylum seekers and other newcomers are treated from their arrival (including the satisfaction of basic needs, access to legal services, and protection of rights).

REFUGEE

A person outside of their country who is unable or unwilling to return there because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, as defined by US and international law.

RESETTLEMENT

Public and private efforts and programs for the relocation of immigrants within the US to another part of the same city, county, or state or to another city, county, or state. The Guide uses the term “resettlement” to describe this movement and relocation of immigrants within the US, but we note that it is more typically used to describe the selection and transfer of refugees from a country in which they have sought treaty protection to a third country that has agreed to admit them—as refugees—with permanent resident status. In the US, assistance to resettle refugees is provided through the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

THE OPPORTUNITY

For generations, immigrants have strengthened cities and towns across the US. Immigrants contribute to shared economic prosperity and the social and cultural fabric of local communities. Recent migration trends have again turned a spotlight on US cities. While managing increases in arrivals presents a challenge, it also has created an opportunity for cities—local governments and their partners¹—across the country to leverage migration and work with immigrants to reverse population decline, address labor shortages, and revitalize communities.

City-to-city immigrant resettlement networks are a proven, locally led approach to realizing this opportunity. These networks facilitate the safe, dignified, and voluntary movement of people from one location to another while providing them with the resources they need to thrive and contribute. Resettlement networks result in better socioeconomic opportunities for immigrant families, revived local economies, and a more connected country.

IMMIGRATION IS KEY TO ECONOMIC REVIVAL

More recent immigrants are turning to cities for help getting settled in; at the same time, many cities need more residents to survive and thrive.

Between 2020 and 2024, the number of [people displaced globally](#) increased by more than 50%, from 80 million to over 120 million people. In that same period, arrivals at the southern US border rose by more than 400%.

The increase in the number of people displaced by persecution, conflict, climate change, and other crises who arrived to the US without supportive networks strained local resources and exacerbated xenophobia. It also left the potential contributions of new arrivals unrealized as asylum-seeking families and individuals struggled to find the opportunities and support they needed to achieve stability and self-reliance.

This is a missed opportunity. Close to half (43%) of US cities are [losing population](#). Many cities, including Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Rochester, and St. Louis have experienced long periods of population [decline](#). This presents a range of challenges for cities, from labor shortages and imbalanced age dependency ratios (the working versus nonworking age population) to reduced tax revenue and disruptions to basic services.

¹ Community-based organizations, employers, philanthropies, civic actors, and residents all have a role to play in driving and participating in city-to-city immigrant resettlement networks.

Immigration can offset population decline and fill labor shortages. Immigrants and their children help keep the population growing and the workforce from shrinking while overwhelmingly [generating positive fiscal gains](#).

Decades of data show that immigrants make significant economic contributions to the communities where they settle and the country as a whole. Roughly one in four workers in the [construction](#) industry is an immigrant, including in trades key to building homes like drywall installers (61%) and roofers (52%). The US [agriculture](#) industry is also heavily dependent on immigration. Nearly 70% of farmworkers were born outside the US and more than 40% are undocumented. Immigrants also make up a large share of [healthcare workers](#), including nearly 40% of home health aides. [High-immigration cities](#) outperform other localities in household income, productivity, startup businesses, and staffing in essential occupations, such as nursing.

Further, asylum seekers and other immigrants have significant positive fiscal impacts for all levels of government. From 2005 to 2019, refugees and asylees [contributed](#) \$581 billion in federal, state, and local government tax revenue—generating a net fiscal benefit of \$124 billion across all levels of government. In 2022, undocumented immigrants [paid](#) \$97 billion in taxes, including \$37 billion paid to state and local governments. In fact, more than a third of the [tax dollars](#) paid by undocumented immigrants go toward payroll taxes that fund programs these workers are barred from accessing.

A CALL TO LOCAL & COLLECTIVE ACTION

Immigrants, including new arrivals, bring fresh perspectives, resilience, economic vitality, and ingenuity that benefit all of us. We can realize these contributions through collective action at the local level. Today, local governments and their partners have the opportunity to collaboratively identify and adopt effective practices that support people seeking a new start while also maximizing benefits to the cities and towns across the US where they settle. US local governments have long needed a federally funded, well-coordinated national program for new immigrants, but one may never come. This has not stopped many committed practitioners and neighbors from working across sectors and geographies to unlock opportunities for immigrants and their adopted cities. We all have the chance to join them, to share resources, forge new partnerships, and test program models that support and sustain vibrant communities of opportunity.

This Guide is a call to and a resource for collective action. It lays out a multi-sector, customizable approach for local actors—governments, NGOs, employers, faith communities, philanthropy, and other interested stakeholders—to connect across city, county, and state lines to help make immigration a win-win for immigrants and the

cities where they settle. We hope that it will provide guidance for local governments to set up resettlement networks and for civic actors to support and participate in them.



Image credit: Mayors Migration Council

THE GUIDE

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE?

Connecting US is a guide for local governments and their partners to establish collaborative approaches to receive and resettle newcomers: city-to-city immigrant resettlement networks. These networks can help local governments bridge gaps between recent arrivals looking for work and industries trying to address longstanding employee shortages, link immigrant families in need of sustainable housing to communities focused on reversing population decline or give new arrivals the resources to choose where to live.

WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

This Guide sets a vision for city-to-city immigrant resettlement networks. It first provides an overview of resettlement and the different public and private actors involved. This overview makes plain that the migration ecosystem is vast, roles are flexible, investment levels and program support are varied, and that the constant across models is collaboration.

Next, the Guide outlines examples of city-led resettlement efforts and six core principles to consider in establishing resettlement networks.

From this baseline, the Roadmap at the heart of this Guide provides a four-step approach for gateway and receiving cities to:

1. Build the foundations of resettlement networks;
2. Establish partnerships;
3. Resettle immigrants who choose to participate;
4. Ensure long-term success through socioeconomic support and program evaluation.

Along this path, the Roadmap highlights critical considerations for and about the individuals and families considering and participating in resettlement networks. This Roadmap reflects the fluidity of the existing migration ecosystem and can adapt to diverse political and immigration contexts, from emergency response to business as usual.

The Appendix provides additional examples of networked efforts to assist recent immigrants to resettle from city to city.

HOW WAS THIS GUIDE INFORMED?

Designed in New York City with the support of global migration experts, this Guide draws from lessons learned by New York City, Massachusetts, Chicago, Denver, El Paso, and other cities and states with recent newcomer reception and resettlement pilot project efforts; decades of experience with refugee resettlement through the US Refugee Admissions Program; insights from the NYC Resettlement Roundtables²; focus groups conducted with newcomers to the US in the past three years; interviews with key government and civil society stakeholders; and a review of existing research, program guides, and other evidence on reception and resettlement best practices.

² The Roundtables, which consisted primarily of NYC-based government and NGO representatives, met regularly between January 2024 and March 2025.

RESETTLEMENT NETWORKS

This Guide focuses on **resettlement** (sometimes referred to as relocation). This emerging reception practice is designed to help recent immigrants, including asylum seekers, find welcome, support, and opportunities through relocation within the US to another city, county, or state, while also helping local governments develop programs, policies, and partnerships that facilitate individual and collective economic and social benefits.

WHAT ARE CITY-TO-CITY IMMIGRANT RESETTLEMENT NETWORKS?

Resettlement networks A) facilitate the safe, dignified, and voluntary movement of people from one location to another and B) provide them with the resources they need to thrive and contribute.

Both within the US and internationally, cities, states, NGOs, and private sector actors have recently started to establish formal and informal resettlement networks to assist new immigrants in identifying and reaching destinations where they will find opportunities and assistance. These networks vary in their formality, level of program support, geographies (local, in-state, inter-city, etc.), service periods, and funding sources, among other factors.

The recommendations on how to establish city-to-city immigrant resettlement networks in this Guide draw from decades of research on the US refugee resettlement system and lessons learned from resettlement models from around the world. While there are best practices to learn from and case studies to be inspired by, the diversity of people and places involved necessitates nimble approaches that adapt and adjust to the needs of immigrants, the resources of local governments and community organizations, and the policies and politics of the time. There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

WHAT ROLE CAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR PARTNERS PLAY IN RESETTLEMENT?

Unlike the international refugee resettlement system, there is no national reception system in the US to welcome and receive new asylum seekers or other recent immigrants. This coordination gap between jurisdictions, standards of practice, and funding is a major challenge for recent immigrants and the cities where they settle. But it also provides an opportunity for local innovation and city-specific approaches.

Immigrant communities, faith-based groups, non-governmental organizations, private sector partners, and local governments have developed exemplary models and set standards of practice through bottom-up approaches.

These bottom-up innovations mirror the evolution of the US refugee resettlement system, which was largely locally led following World War II until a formal, federally coordinated system was established through the 1980 Refugee Act. Local governments and their partners have the same chance to model an effective *immigrant* resettlement system today.

ROADMAP

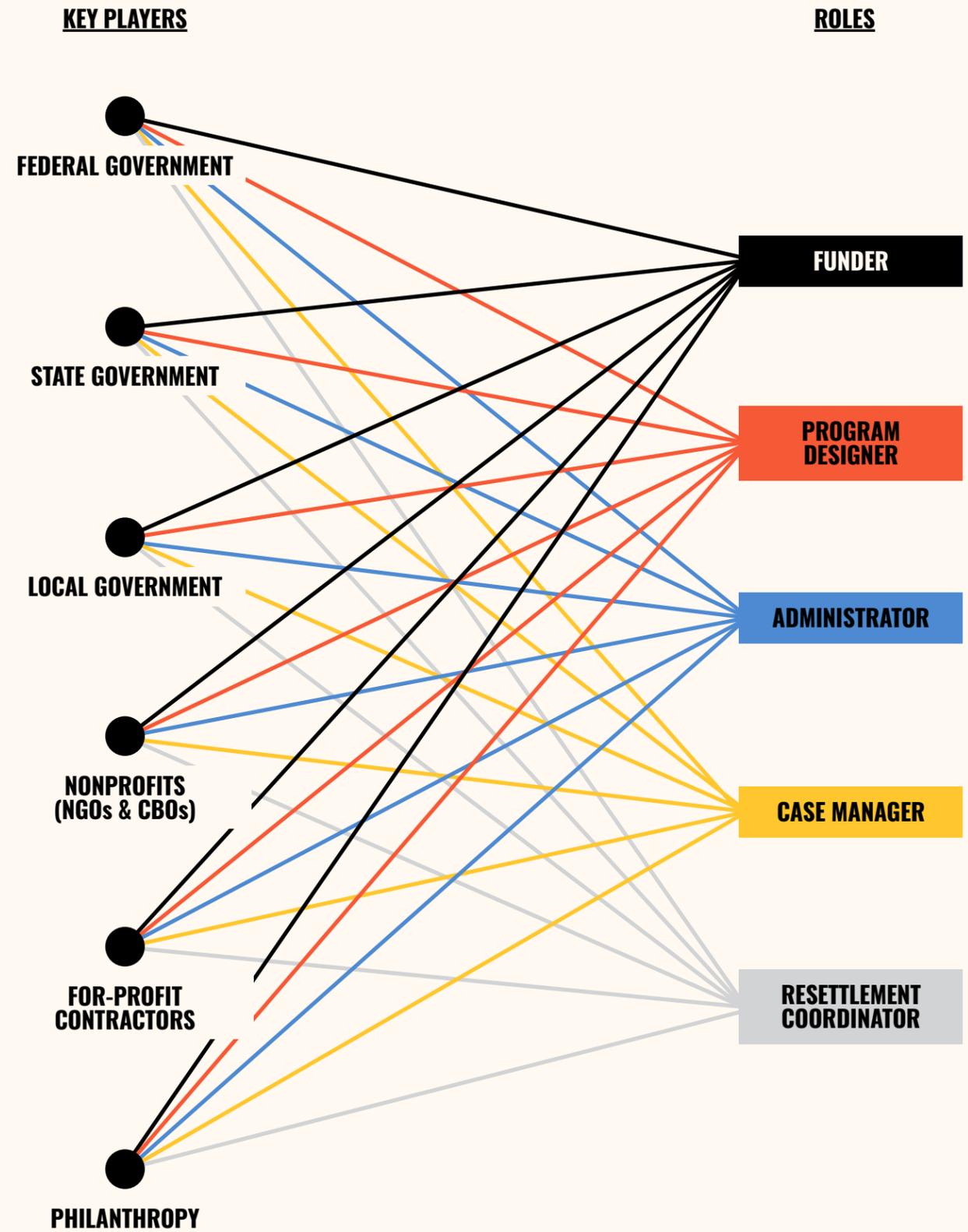
RESETTLEMENT ECOSYSTEM

Ecosystem mapping is a tool for understanding the players, roles, and relationships that shape city reception and resettlement efforts. These roles are not static; stakeholders may play multiple roles and/or shift roles over time.

Roles are defined as:

- **Funder:** entity(ies) providing resources
- **Program Designer:** entity(ies) developing context-specific models based on immigrant and city needs
- **Administrator:** entity(ies) contracting for services and providing ongoing oversight
- **Case Manager:** entity(ies) connecting/providing immigrants with essential health, housing, legal, and other services
- **Resettlement Coordinator:** entity(ies) coordinating between partners in gateway and receiving cities

The case studies included here and in the Appendix highlight diverse models and partnership frameworks that have facilitated reception, relocation, and integration.



EXAMPLE DIAGRAM SHOWING ALL KEY PLAYERS AND ROLES

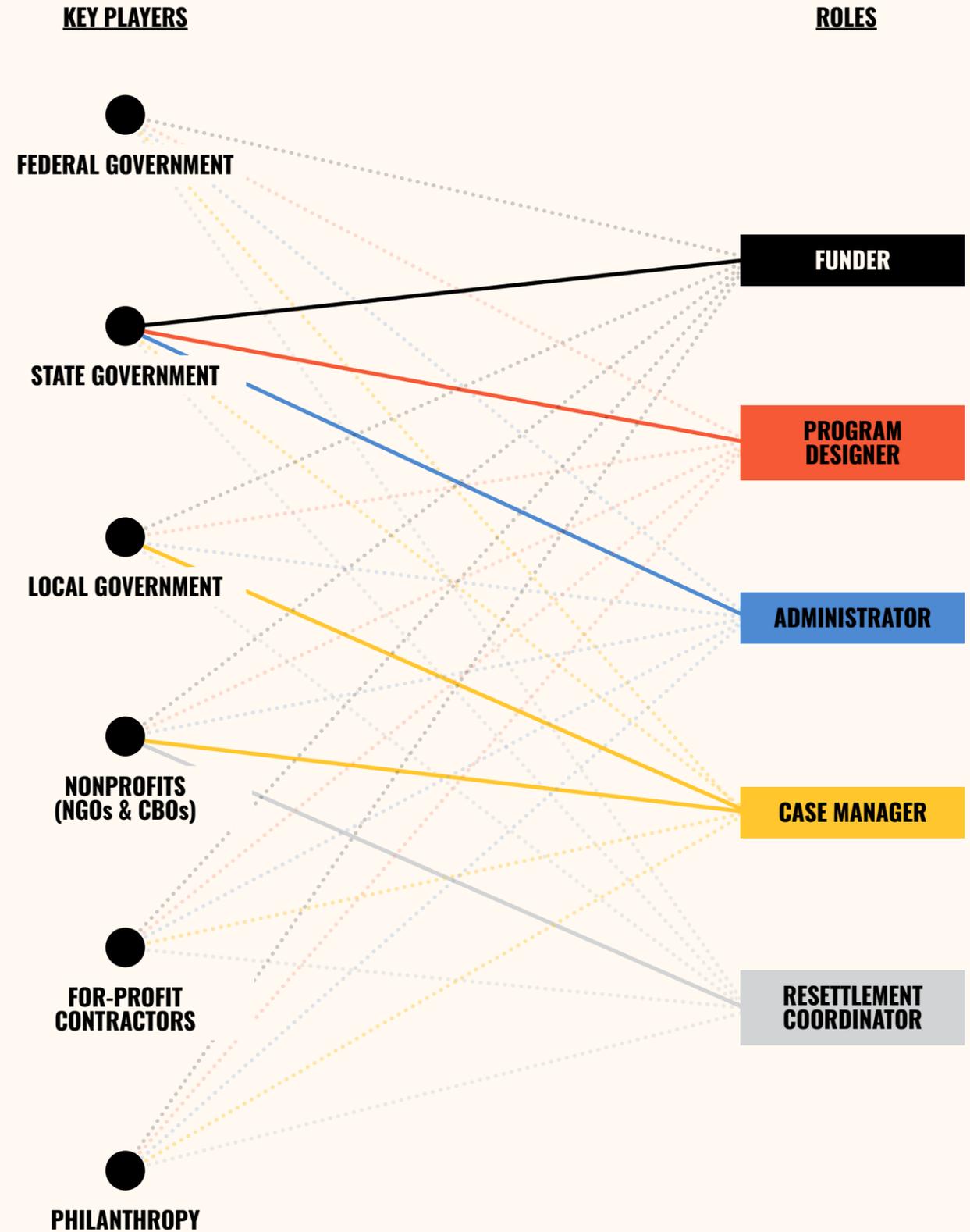
MASSACHUSETTS

LEVERAGING RESETTLEMENT AGENCY EXPERTISE AND EXISTING HOUSING SUPPORT

In March 2024, the Governor of Massachusetts [announced](#) a two-year initiative to expedite the transition of immigrant families from local government shelters to permanent housing. The State partnered with local government shelter operators and eight refugee resettlement agencies to support approximately 400 immigrant families as part of the initiative, helping them navigate programs that offer financial assistance for move-in costs, rent, and security deposits.



Image credit: Jessica Rinaldi / The Boston Globe via Getty



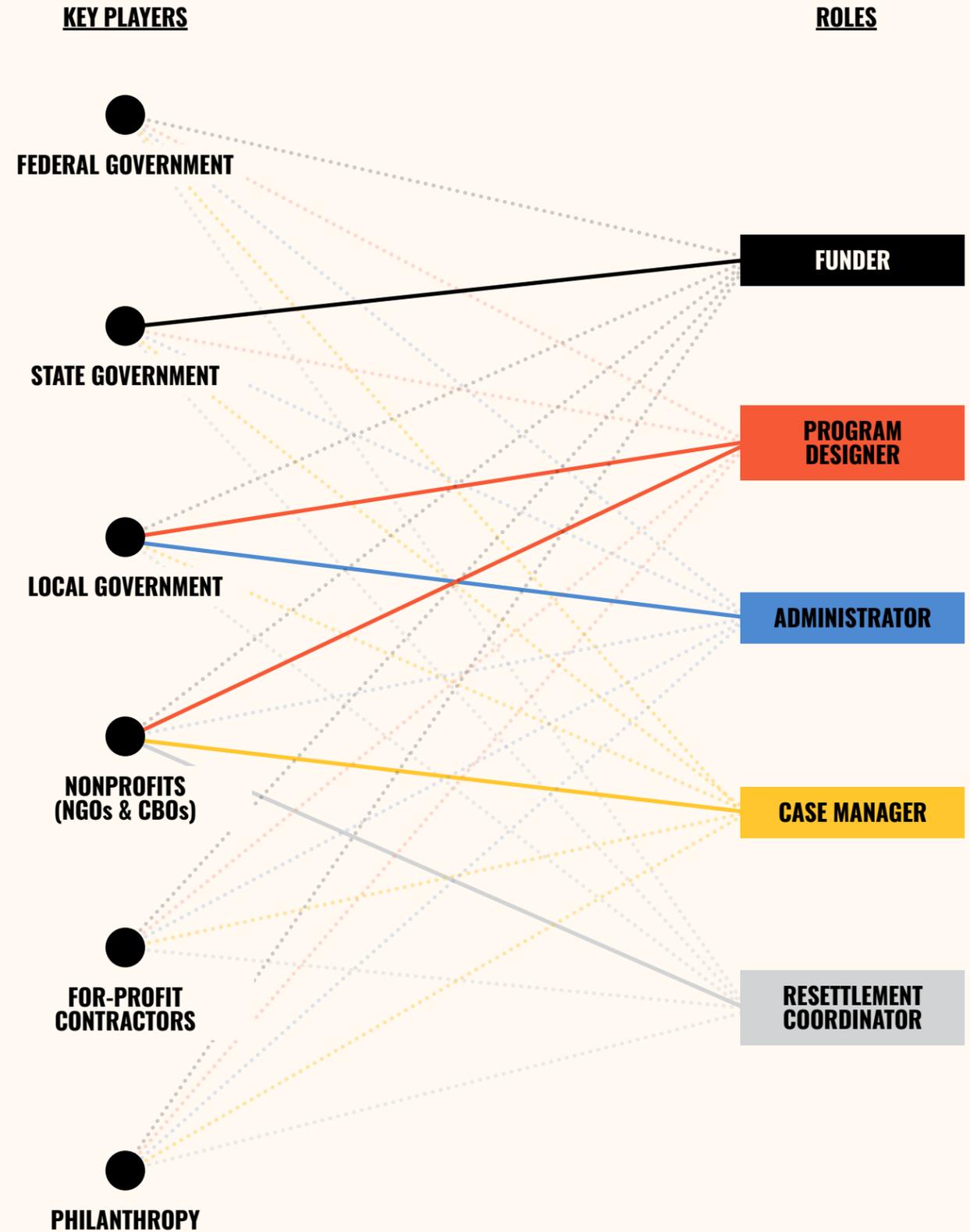
NEW YORK CITY

FORMAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN CITY AND RESETTLEMENT AGENCY

In 2022, New York City sent roughly 2,000 immigrants to upstate hotels when the number of new arrivals outpaced the number of shelter beds in the city. In an effort to move families from temporary to permanent shelter, the City partnered with Jewish Family Services of Western NY (JFS), a local refugee resettlement agency, to design a resettlement program. A first-of-its-kind program for asylum seekers, the State supplied the funding and the City administered the contract. JFS provided immigrant families legal support, housing placement, rent, and essentials for up to six months. The program capitalized on JFS's refugee resettlement experience and local knowledge, gave families the support needed to achieve financial independence, and allowed the City to end the expensive hotel program.



Image credit: Mayors Migration Council



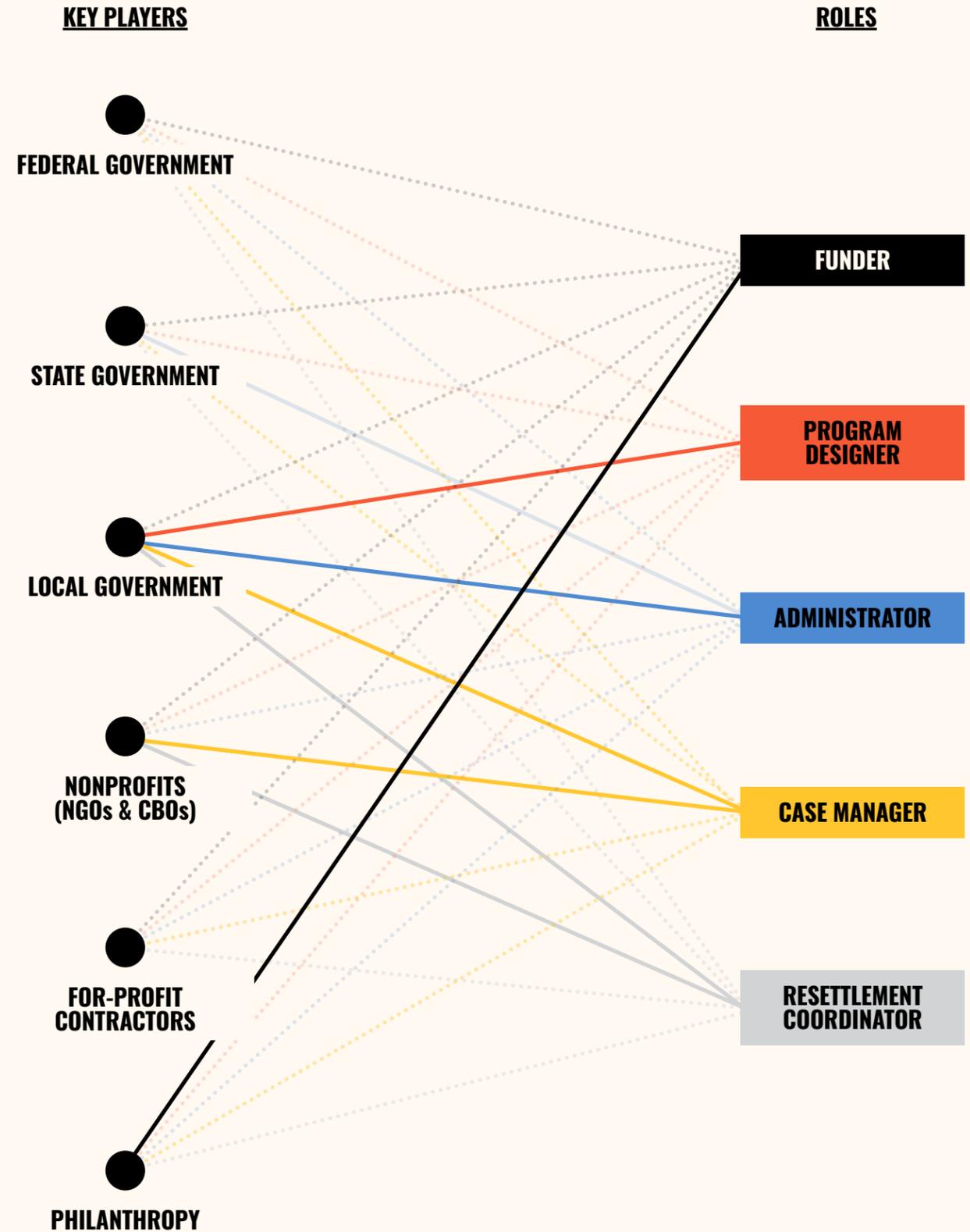
EL PASO COUNTY

NAVIGATION SUPPORT AT THE BORDER

El Paso County serves as a key transit hub for recent immigrants, connecting new arrivals in this border gateway city to resources and support in their final destination. With philanthropic support, the county serves as a navigator, coordinating with nonprofit and government partners to provide up-to-date guidance on travel, available shelters, and legal services in receiving cities. By streamlining connections to services outside of the county, the program helps newcomers more efficiently and effectively access the assistance they need in cities, towns, and communities positioned to meet their goals and needs.



Image credit: Mayors Migration Council



PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles provide a foundation for the design and implementation of a city-to-city immigrant resettlement network. They serve as a framework for decision-making, ensuring that our efforts remain effective, practical, and accountable to the needs of all stakeholders.

1 RESPECT INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

Local governments, NGOs, community-based organizations, employers, and other stakeholders must respect immigrants' choices about participating in resettlement. They are the decision-makers about their own futures.

2 DO NO HARM

Take proactive measures to mitigate risks to the safety and well-being of all actors in the city-to-city immigrant resettlement network, especially immigrants.

3 BE ACCOUNTABLE TO PARTICIPANTS

Include immigrants in the design, implementation, and evaluation of resettlement programs. Create meaningful feedback mechanisms and ensure programs remain responsive and adaptable to community input.

4 BE INCLUSIVE

Understand that resettlement is not viable or suitable for all immigrants. Design resettlement programs to accommodate individuals and families with diverse backgrounds, immigration statuses, and levels of vulnerability.

5 THINK HOLISTICALLY

Resettlement should not be seen as a singular approach but as one part of a set of broader options for newcomers. Consider how to include immigrants in existing support services and how local communities can be included in new approaches.

A CHECKLIST OF RESETTLEMENT LEARNINGS

Some key considerations for gateway and receiving cities establishing initial services for newcomers:

- **Provide information and orientation** that cover all areas of service provision—shelter, health services, school enrollment, etc.—and other available programs and resources
 - Information related to the immigration legal process should be integrated into this offering in collaboration with immigration legal services providers
 - Digital communication platforms that newcomers can access on their own should be considered to disseminate information and address misinformation

• **Ensure provision of meals and basic necessities** takes into consideration cultural and religious preferences and requirements

• **Address hygiene needs**, including access to showers and laundry services—either onsite, in collaboration with partners (i.e., YMCA), and/or with pre-paid passes to local businesses

• **Ensure access to immigration legal services** calibrated to the arriving population, including initial assessment, information about the entire process, and know-your-rights trainings

• **Facilitate application for local identification documents** (e.g., idNYC, non-driver IDs, etc.) as people await more permanent documentation

• **Establish a reliable mail system** for newcomers in shelter to ensure receipt of legal documents and government communication

• **Facilitate culturally sensitive school enrollment** for families with children. Offer training and other supports for teachers and school administrators

• **Offer trauma-informed, culturally sensitive case management** in the short to mid-term to help families and individuals stabilize

• **Ensure language access protocols** so that services and information are provided in languages spoken by the newcomer population

• **Offer onward transportation options** with clear procedures for arranging and providing transportation to final destinations for those not wishing to stay in the initial arrival city; referrals for legal and social services in other locations should also be offered

• **Develop data collection protocols** to ensure the effective delivery of tailored services while protecting personal information

• **Incorporate mechanisms for newcomers' feedback** in order to assess and adjust services for efficacy, efficiency, and quality

• **Create an all-of-government data dashboard** to track inputs and outcomes across agencies and departments in order to improve service delivery, accountability, and long-term sustainability

• **Implement updated public health protocols** where congregate settings are used

RESETTLEMENT NETWORK ROADMAP

The Roadmap provides a structured yet flexible framework for planning and participating in city-to-city immigrant resettlement networks. Divided into four key phases, it highlights essential steps that local governments and their partners can take to build effective and sustainable networks. While not exhaustive, this Roadmap serves as a practical guide, identifying critical benchmarks that contribute to the success of resettlement initiatives.

From laying the groundwork for resettlement and establishing partnerships to facilitating relocation and ensuring long-term support, each phase is designed to help communities navigate newcomers' resettlement while remaining adaptable to evolving needs and challenges.

Note: Each phase of the Roadmap includes milestones for "gateway cities" and "receiving cities," recognizing the unique role that local governments play at different ends of resettlement networks. However, it is important to note that a local government could be both a gateway and receiving city, supporting the arrival of one group of immigrants while facilitating the resettlement of others.

Three components needed to build an effective network:

- INTERNAL OPERATIONS
Establishing **foundational elements** for cities and their partners to prepare for resettlement efforts, including defining visions, assessing resources, and setting data protocols.
- PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION
Building **collaborative relationships and agreements** with other local governments as well as NGOs and community-based organizations for resettlement efforts.
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Highlighting the **importance of involving and communicating with the broader community**, particularly immigrant communities, to ensure successful and inclusive resettlement.



PHASE 1
BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

PHASE 2
ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS

PHASE 3
RESETTLEMENT

PHASE 4
SUPPORT AND EVALUATION

1

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

In this Phase, local governments and their partners can establish a clear vision for resettlement, assess available resources, and engage key actors to lay the groundwork for a successful network.



GATEWAY CITIES

● INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ CREATE A STRATEGIC RESETTLEMENT VISION

- Identify goals, expected benefits, and potential barriers to networking with other cities and partners

● INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ INVENTORY EXISTING ASSETS

- Consider city and NGO infrastructure, budget availability, private sector interest, personnel capacity, political capital, data availability, and protections
- **Seek input and advice** from local stakeholders, such as community leaders, immigrant-serving NGO providers, and immigrant community-based organizations

● INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ SET OUT DATA COLLECTION, PROTECTION, AND SHARING PROTOCOLS

- Information collection for reception/legal services and employment opportunities should also be oriented to capture data on resettlement interest and preferences

○ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

○ SOCIALIZE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR RESETTLEMENT

- Consistently and clearly communicate with immigrants at key points of arrival (e.g., transit centers) and stay (e.g., shelters, service providers)
- Note potential participants while protecting their personal information
- Collaborate with trusted brokers, such as immigrant-led community organizations

“The only time they asked you if you were interested in relocation was at the first interview [with a case manager]. Only when we went to the shelter for the first time, they asked us if we would be ready to move to another state. . . . in the other interviews, which are every fifteen days, they have not asked me again.”

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

In this Phase, local governments and their partners can establish a clear vision for resettlement, assess available resources, and engage key actors to lay the groundwork for a successful network.

✓ PHASE 1
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○ PHASE 2
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PARTNERSHIPS

○ PHASE 3
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○ PHASE 4
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RECEIVING CITIES

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIC GOALS AND BENEFITS OF A RESETTLEMENT NETWORK

- Might include reversing population decline, addressing workforce shortages, and meeting humanitarian needs

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ INVENTORY ASSETS AND EVALUATE YOUR READINESS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESETTLEMENT NETWORK WITH POTENTIAL LOCAL PARTNERS AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

- Consider the availability of local transportation, employment opportunities, safe and affordable housing stock, and social and legal services
- See, e.g., Welcoming America's "[Certified Welcoming Standard](#)" for indicators of readiness to welcome

"I made a first attempt [to relocate], and it went very badly. . . . Everyone needs to have a car to be able to live there, but that is not the case here."

PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ CONSULT WITH KEY COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS AND POLITICAL ACTORS

- With local/state/federal actors, gauge the feasibility of a publicly or privately led resettlement network and its appropriate level of public visibility
- Map cultural capital to understand existing linguistic/cultural resources to facilitate integration of resettled immigrant communities

PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ PREPARE TO EXPLAIN THE OPPORTUNITY AND BENEFITS OF A RESETTLEMENT NETWORK

- Develop clear messages that can dispel myths and misinformation
- Compile relevant demographic and economic data
- Identify spokespeople who can effectively communicate about resettlement with the public, elected officials, and other key stakeholders

How to Make the Case for City-to-City Immigrant Resettlement

The following resources can help local governments and their partners start to develop clear messaging on the benefits of city-to-city immigrant resettlement:

- [Positive Storytelling Kit on Migration for Local Authorities](#) (Communication of Local Authorities for Integration in European Towns)
- [Always Welcome Toolkit](#) (NPNA, CC4C, We Are All America)
- [Messaging Guide: Supporting New Arrivals](#) (Local Progress Impact Lab)
- [2025 State Policy Guide](#) (IRC)
- [Stronger Together](#) (Welcoming America)

In this Phase, collaboration can begin between local governments and their partners to ensure a well-supported resettlement process.

○ PHASE 1
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○ PHASE 4
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GATEWAY CITIES

● INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ EVALUATE THE POTENTIAL OF DIFFERENT PARTNERSHIP MODALITIES AND PARTNERS

- Consider the logistical, financial, and legal context
- **Partnership modalities** might include RFPs, direct contract, bilateral or multilateral MoUs, and informal agreements
- **Partners** might include resettlement agencies, CBOs, community development authorities, local government agencies, and employer associations

🌐 PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ PURSUE A MULTI-PRONGED OUTREACH STRATEGY

- Ask **other gateway cities** with prior or existing resettlement programs (such as through Offices of Immigrant Affairs) for advice
- Reach out to **potential local implementers** (resettlement agencies, immigrant-serving organizations, ethnic or faith community groups), including those with affiliates or networks in other parts of the country
- Open communication with **potential partners in receiving cities**, including through pre-existing city networks or other third-party linkages
- Consider what supports beyond information may be needed to make resettlement attractive to potential participants, e.g., help navigating an informational opportunity database, answering questions, and making logistical arrangements

🌐 PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ MAKE THE CASE FOR PARTNERSHIP

- Highlight what you bring to the collaboration
- Consider funding, knowledge sharing, and nonprofit or employer connections

🌐 PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH POTENTIAL PARTNERS TO DETERMINE:

- Key roles and responsibilities (including whether the pathway will include government actors)
- Financing options
- Scope of services, scale, and timelines
- Eligibility criteria
- Participant protections (data privacy, safety, accessibility)
- Feedback and outcome evaluation mechanisms

Where to Connect for Partnership Opportunities

The following networks can help entities interested in city-to-city immigrant resettlement connect with potential local government, organizational, and private sector partners:

- [Cities for Action](#)
- [Cities & Counties for Citizenship](#)
- [Refugee Council USA \(including resettlement agencies\)](#)
- [National Partnership for New Americans \(with partners in 40 states\)](#)
- Local immigrant organization coalitions (such as in [Kansas](#), [Massachusetts](#), [NYC](#))
- Welcoming Task Forces (in several states, including California)

In this Phase, collaboration can begin between local governments and their partners to ensure a well-supported resettlement process.

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RECEIVING CITIES

● INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ EVALUATE THE POTENTIAL OF DIFFERENT PARTNERSHIP MODALITIES AND PARTNERS

- Consider the logistical, financial, and legal context
- **Partnership modalities** might include RFP, direct contract, bilateral or multilateral MoUs, and informal agreements
- **Partners** might include resettlement agencies, CBOs, community development authorities, local government agencies, and employer associations

● PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ PURSUE A MULTI-PRONGED OUTREACH STRATEGY

- Ask other **receiving cities** with prior or existing resettlement programs (such as through Offices of Immigrant Affairs) for advice
- Reach out to **potential local implementors** (resettlement agencies, housing providers, industry associations)
- Open communication with **gateway cities**, including through pre-existing city networks (e.g., Cities for Action) or other third-party linkages

Note: See the previous page for resources on where to connect for partnership opportunities

● PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH POTENTIAL PARTNERS TO DETERMINE:

- Key roles and responsibilities (including whether the pathway will include government actors)
- Financing options
- Scope of services, scale, and timelines
- Eligibility criteria
- Participant protections (data privacy, safety, accessibility)
- Feedback and outcome evaluation mechanisms

“I have family in Wisconsin, Utah, Denver, Florida. . . . I researched state by state, their economies, safety concerns. There are states like Texas that are very difficult for migrants because of what you hear in the news, xenophobia, persecution. New York seemed like a city that protects you, provides safety.”

○ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

○ FACILITATE CULTURAL BRIDGES BETWEEN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN RECEIVING AND GATEWAY CITIES

- Engage local ethnic/community-based groups and organizations to make prospective resettlement participants aware of existing communities and resources

3

RESETTLEMENT

This Phase focuses on participants receiving information, finalizing logistics, and facilitating relocation with immediate support services in place.



GATEWAY CITIES

○ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

○ INFORM POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS—CONFIRM THE RESETTLEMENT OFFER AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Start with participants who signaled their interest in Phase 1
- Have trained staff communicate accurate information and address questions
- **Ensure program outreach and recruitment materials** are available in relevant languages and in a variety of mediums (text, videos, shareable through social media)
- **Integrate legal services into resettlement pathways** to help answer questions, address concerns, and support any change of immigration court venue needs

“I would go [to another city in the US], but I am afraid I won’t receive my documents, the communication, in time.”

○ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

○ REGISTER PARTICIPANT INTEREST TO PREPARE FOR COORDINATION WITH RECEIVING PARTNERS

- Obtain **informed consent**, including consent in sharing necessary demographic information with the receiving community
- In any case, avoid collecting or sharing sensitive data that is not strictly required for resettlement (this may require seeking informed consent of participants to waive local data protection restrictions)

Experience shows that successful resettlement programs start off small and slow in size, scope, and timeline

○ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

○ SELECT PARTICIPANTS AND PROVIDE THEM WITH DESTINATION COUNSELING

- Ensure readiness for departure
- Share key information about the receiving community

🔗 PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ FINALIZE RESETTLEMENT LOGISTICS AND CASE MANAGEMENT HANDOFF

- Coordinate with partners to arrange dignified transportation
- Ensure point-of-arrival services, including case management, are ready
- Take a trauma-informed, culturally sensitive approach. Resettlement can be an emotionally difficult experience, particularly for those who have become acclimated to their gateway community

3

RESETTLEMENT

This Phase focuses on participants receiving information, finalizing logistics, and facilitating relocation with immediate support services in place.



RECEIVING CITIES

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

PROVIDE MATERIALS FOR PROGRAM OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

- Share key information about the receiving community
- **Ensure program outreach and recruitment** materials are available in relevant languages and in a variety of mediums (text, videos, shareable through social media)
- **Integrate legal services into resettlement pathways** to help answer questions and address concerns about the potential impact of resettlement

PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

PROVIDE RELEVANT PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION TO PARTNERS

- Support pre-departure destination counseling
- Help community service providers (housing, case management, etc.) prepare for participants' arrival

“Sometimes I wonder if I should really go... if I go to another place to work, would I be able to afford food or basic necessities?”

PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

SET ARRIVAL PROTOCOLS IN COORDINATION WITH GATEWAY COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERS

- Plan for logistics and timing of travel, pick up, and location of initial welcome
- Plan for potential media or public interest
- Ensure safety and privacy protections are in place

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RECEIVE RESETTLEMENT PARTICIPANTS ON ARRIVAL AND PROVIDE INITIAL SERVICES

- Take a trauma-informed, culturally sensitive approach. Resettlement can itself be an emotionally difficult experience, particularly for those who have become acclimated to their gateway community
- Provide initial orientation to the new community and ensure information is made available repeatedly and in multiple formats, as needed, through a trained case manager assigned to the individual or family

4

SUPPORT AND EVALUATION

This Phase focuses on providing long-term services, monitoring outcomes, and integrating feedback to continuously improve resettlement strategies.



GATEWAY CITIES

● INTERNAL OPERATIONS

EVALUATE AND ADJUST THE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

- Establish **regular communication channels** with network partners, including regular opportunities for participant feedback
- Ensure **data sharing agreements** with partners allow for the gateway city to access program evaluations to modify, scale up, or make other changes to the resettlement pathway

Evaluations are also critical to continue explaining the resettlement network's work to funders, political actors, and the public

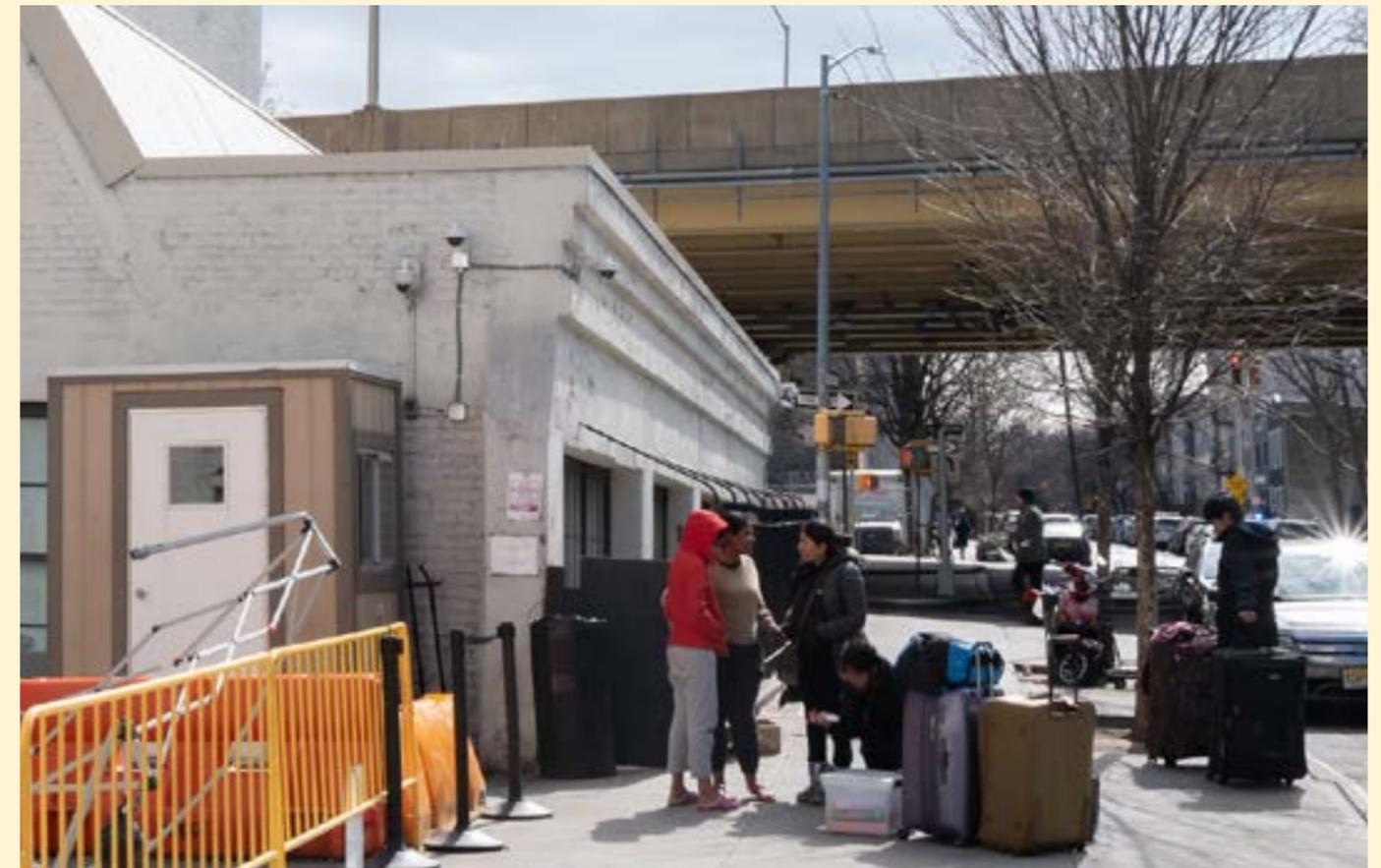


Image credit: Mayors Migration Council

4

SUPPORT AND EVALUATION

This Phase focuses on providing long-term services, monitoring outcomes, and integrating feedback to continuously improve resettlement strategies.



RECEIVING CITIES

● INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT AND INCLUSION SERVICES FOR RESETTLEMENT PARTICIPANTS

- Each program will vary depending on partners and circumstances
- Use **elements of the Reception and Placement services for resettled refugees** as a baseline, including cultural orientation, short-term housing of at least ninety days, employment support, assistance to enroll in school and other eligible services, and case management

● PARTNERSHIPS & COORDINATION

○ ENSURE FREE OR LOW-COST IMMIGRATION LEGAL COUNSELING AND SERVICES ARE PROVIDED OR ACCESSIBLE

- Especially needed in receiving communities with limited existing immigration legal services

● INTERNAL OPERATIONS

○ DETERMINE SERVICE PERIODS BASED ON A RANGE OF NEEDS

- **Ninety days is the minimum service period** standard in the refugee resettlement context; however, many refugees receive services for up to five years from their arrival through other federally funded programs, including intensive case management for people with more complex needs and refugee support services that address barriers to employment and stability
- **Longer periods** of support will be needed for participants awaiting work authorization or asylum decisions, and other individuals who need additional support to stabilize
- Flexibility is key to ensuring participants can achieve self-sufficiency

○ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

○ COLLECT PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK AND PROGRAM DATA TO EVALUATE AND ADJUST THE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

- Solicit participant feedback at multiple key junctures during implementation
- Measure program outcomes across a range of metrics (wellbeing, employment, legal status) during and after program completion
- Share results with gateway partners so necessary modifications can be made to resettlement pathways

NEXT

A CALL TO COLLABORATE

Now is the moment for local government to lead on cross-sector partnerships and to champion practical, mutually beneficial, and dignified policies that serve all of their people and support the long-term growth and vitality of their communities.

Immigration has long been an economic driver and a revitalizing force for cities across the US. We have the opportunity like never before to leverage the experience and resources of NGOs and CBOs, local employers, the faith-based community, philanthropy, and neighbors across the country to build local responses that are custom-made for the needs, contributions, and constraints of both cities and recent arrivals.

Coordination across sectors, and jurisdictions unlocks the self-sufficiency and inclusion of newcomers, ensures that the benefits of immigration flow throughout receiving communities, and fine tunes resettlement models that other US cities can replicate.

Together, we can make the case for these efforts—engaging philanthropy to fund pilots, academics to evaluate approaches, and community members to advocate for local and national policy change.

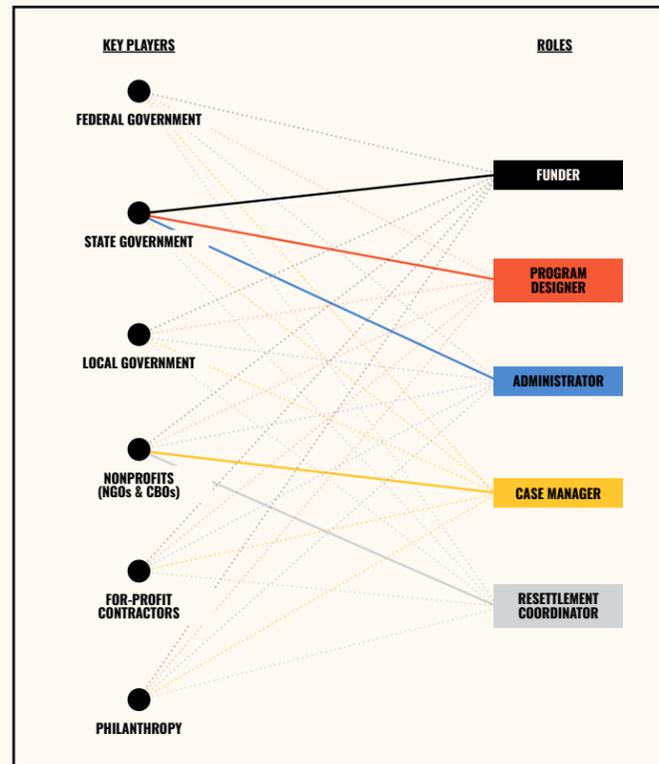
Together, America's states, counties, cities, and towns can achieve prosperity and widen opportunity through collaboration and coordination as we welcome newcomers to our communities.

APPENDIX

RESETTLEMENT ECOSYSTEM

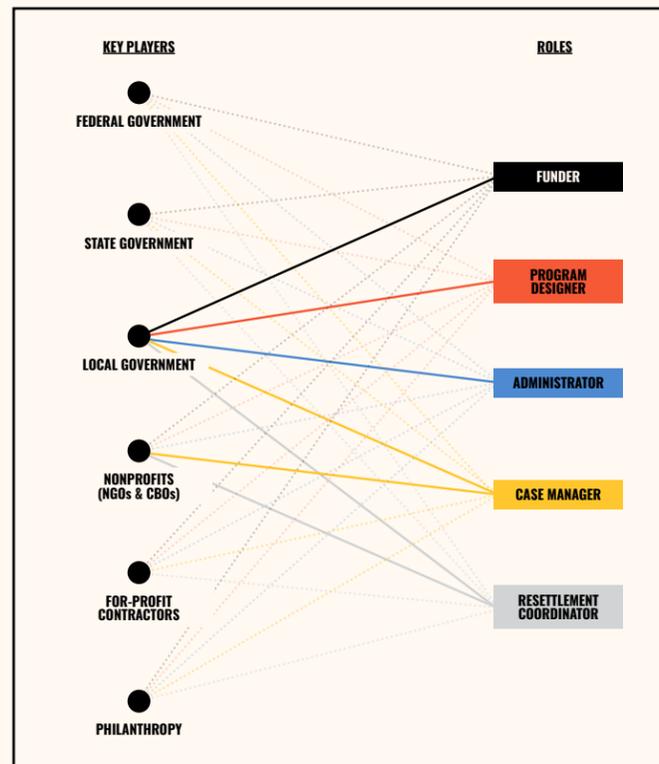
WASHINGTON STATE: COORDINATING FUNDED RECEPTION SERVICES

The Washington Migrant and Asylum-Seeker Support ([WA MASS](#)) Project is a pilot initiative designed to create a coordinated network of over twenty nonprofit service providers across Washington State. This network addresses the short-term basic needs of newly arrived immigrants and asylum seekers by offering culturally responsive case management, immigration-related legal assistance, and housing support. Operating on a “hub-and-spoke model,” the *Reception and Navigation Hub* serves as the central point for



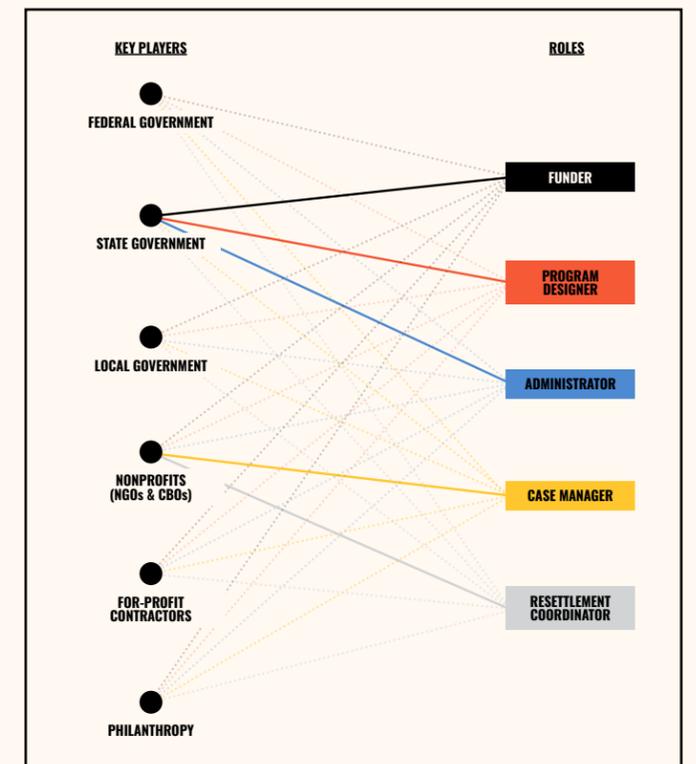
DENVER: INTEGRATING TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

The City of Denver launched the Denver Asylum Seekers Program (DASP) in April 2024. Operating on a transitional support model, the program supports asylum seekers by providing six months of housing, food assistance, and job training. The program prioritized individuals already within the city’s shelter system as of April 10, 2024. DASP integrated case management services to connect participants with legal support, job readiness programs, and English-language instruction to transition asylum seekers out of emergency shelter.



NEW YORK STATE: DEVELOPING A FORMAL IN-STATE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

The New York Migrant Relocation Assistance Program ([MRAP](#)) is a collaborative initiative between New York State and New York City designed to assist eligible recently arrived families to transition from the city's shelter system to housing in welcoming communities across the state. MRAP offers up to one year of rental assistance and supportive services to families relocating to NY counties. Local nonprofit service providers in these areas aid participants in securing housing, obtaining furniture and clothing, enrolling children in schools, accessing employment opportunities, and connecting with medical services. The program also provides comprehensive community fact sheets and presentations to facilitate integration and ensure families are well informed about available resources in their new communities.

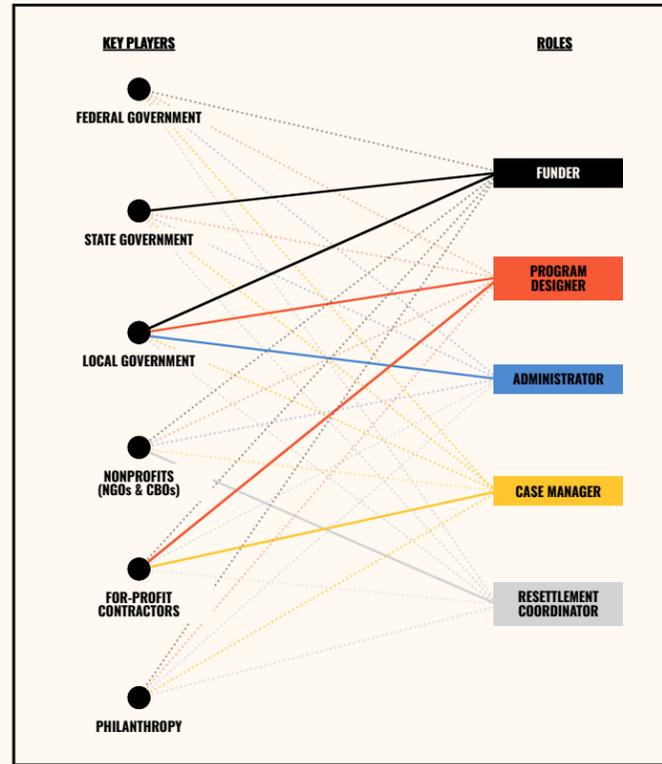


APPENDIX

RESETTLEMENT ECOSYSTEM

NEW YORK CITY AND ST. LOUIS: INFORMAL CASE MANAGER–FACILITATED

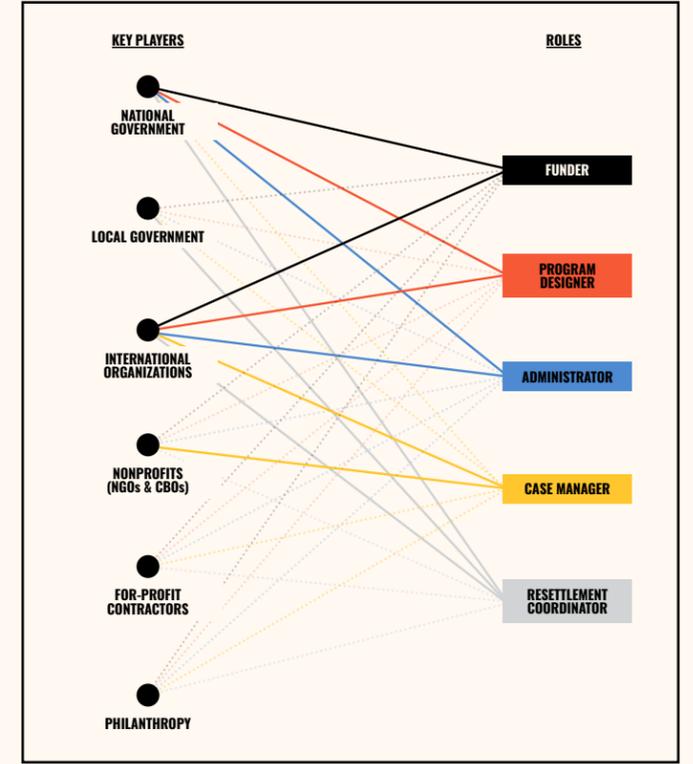
This model for recent immigrant resettlement is case manager–led, focusing on facilitating resettlement as part of a broader case management approach that seeks to support individuals and families in stabilizing, including opportunities to resettle outside the city. The program coordinates with resettlement agencies in the receiving city. Initially, NYC case managers primarily assisted clients with immediate needs, such as school enrollment, legal services, and benefits applications. However, as the city invested in higher-quality case management at a higher cost, caseworkers could take a more comprehensive approach. This included developing individualized plans with clients and connecting them to job training, employment, and stable housing. With these deeper relationships and resources in place, case managers became better positioned to link a small subset of clients who were interested in exploring options outside of NYC with a resettlement agency in St. Louis, ensuring a smoother transition to long-term stability.



BRAZIL: NATIONAL GOVERNMENT BORDER-TO-INTERIOR RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

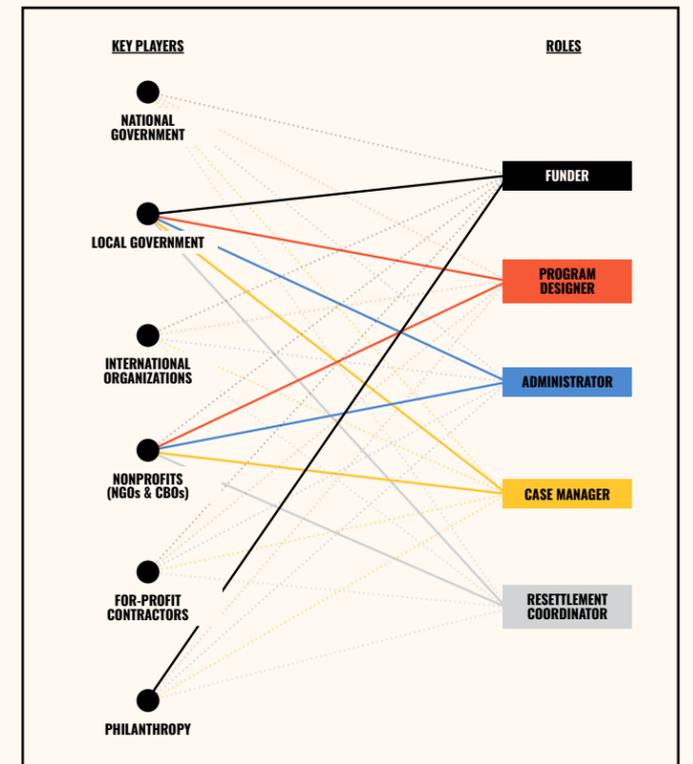
In 2018, the Brazilian Federal Government launched *Operação Acolhida* (“Operation Welcome”) to help Venezuelan refugees at the border voluntarily relocate to interior cities with better opportunities for employment, housing, and education.

In partnership with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Migration Agency (IOM), Brazilian municipalities, community-based organizations, and employers, Operation Welcome has successfully resettled over 120,000 Venezuelans to 1,000 cities along four pathways: shelter-to-shelter, family reunification, employment, and NGO-led resettlement. The program, through its local and international partners, also provides Venezuelan refugees with pre- and post-relocation support, including shelter, financial aid, medical care, and legal and employment assistance.



GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR: SUPPORT TO NEW ARRIVALS IN TRANSIT

In 2024, Guayaquil launched the *Centro Municipal Ciudadanos Integrados*, the city’s first municipal inclusion center. Strategically located at one of Guayaquil’s busiest transit hubs, the center hosts seven immigrant-facing NGOs and INGOs on a rotating basis to provide legal assistance, psychological support, and pathways to inclusion for immigrants, refugees, and Ecuadorian returnees. The center has supported 1,300 immigrants transiting to other communities with family reunification, shelter, and onward transportation assistance. Additionally, the center’s management model—endorsed by 40 local and international partners—has created a standard procedure for client intake and referral and has reduced coordination and administrative costs for service providers. Guayaquil’s Centro Municipal Ciudadanos Integrados was funded by the city and the Mayors Migration Council’s [Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees](#).



CONTRIBUTORS

THE MAYORS MIGRATION COUNCIL (MMC)

The Mayors Migration Council (MMC) is a mayor-led coalition that accelerates ambitious global action on migration and displacement, creating a world where urban migrants, displaced people, and local communities can thrive. To achieve our mission, we provide mayors with advocacy, coordination, and communications support to influence policy decisions at national and international levels. We also connect city governments to the knowledge, technical, and financial resources they need to advance and scale local solutions.

Since its founding, the MMC has grown from 10 founding mayors to nearly 300 city leaders worldwide, driving policy change and mobilizing millions of dollars through initiatives like the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees.

To learn more, visit www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org.

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE (IRC)

The International Rescue Committee helps people affected by humanitarian crises to survive, recover, and rebuild their lives. We deliver lasting impact by providing health care, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always with a focus on the unique needs of women and girls. Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, we now work in over forty countries and thirty US cities.

To learn more, visit www.rescue.org.

