Welcoming America
Request for Proposals: Certification Program, Standard Setting Consultant
April 6, 2015

PROJECT OVERVIEW
Welcoming America is requesting proposals from experienced consultants to facilitate the development of a standard for its new Welcoming Community certification. We are a rapidly growing, internationally recognized nonprofit that helps communities across the country reach their full economic and social potential by becoming more welcoming to immigrants. Through the Welcoming Community Certification Program we seek to set a standard for cities and counties that value immigrant inclusion while leveraging market forces to inspire a race to become the most welcoming city. Interested applicants should submit a proposal, including information outlined at the end of this rfp, to Meg Shoemaker Little, Director of Special Projects, by April 24, 2015 (meg@welcomingamerica.org).

KEY DATES
April 24th – Proposals due
April 28th and 30th -- Initial interviews with qualified candidates
May 4th or 5th -- Second interview with finalists
May 11th -- Consultant selected
March 2016 -- Draft standard completed and ready for piloting
December 2016 -- Final standard released

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW
Welcoming America is a national nonprofit that helps communities across the country reach their full economic and social potential by becoming more welcoming to immigrants. We bring together a broad network of nonprofits and local governments from across the U.S. and strengthen their work with the know-how, tools, and incentives they need to transform their communities into vibrant, prosperous places where all residents can contribute. Based in Atlanta, GA and established in 2009 by founder and Executive Director David Lubell, Welcoming America currently supports welcoming initiatives in over 80 communities across the United States and employs a staff of 14 with a 2014 budget of $1.9 million.

History and Impact
Eight years ago, a city wrestled with changing demographics, overcame its fears, and became a model for the nation on how people of diverse backgrounds can get along and redesign their community to be more welcoming – becoming one of the most economically vibrant cosmopolitan centers of the New South. This city is Nashville, and the initiative that helped ignite this renaissance grew to become Welcoming America, a national organization that has led an innovative charge to reshape America’s response to arguably the most complex – and promising – issue of our time: immigration.

For the last five years, we have supported thousands of community leaders and organizations to respond positively and proactively to immigration. In that short time, we have grown into an award-winning enterprise, working with partners in 30 states across the country and strengthening our burgeoning network with innovative tools, ideas, and inspiration that have propelled a growing movement of welcoming efforts. From small-town Nebraska, to downtown Detroit, to the White House, to the stage of a United Nations awards ceremony presided over by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, we
have shifted perceptions and policy towards immigrants nationwide. Today, nearly 1 in 8 Americans lives in a community that is working with us to advance welcoming policies and culture change.

Theory of Change, Strategy, and Programs
Welcoming America's vision is to create an inclusive nation in which all people, including immigrants, have the opportunity to reach their greatest potential, engage with their community, and fully contribute their talents – expanding prosperity and well-being for all. This work begins in communities, where government and civil society work hand-in-hand to create a plan to make their community more welcoming, resulting in local policy and culture shifts that enable immigrants to succeed. Welcoming America’s unique role is in igniting and scaling this community change process across the nation; providing knowledge, connections, and incentives; and leveraging our network through national campaigns and partnerships. Our model includes four powerful change levers:

- **Network**: Our network is the core of our model and includes nonprofit and municipal government members implementing high-impact welcoming work across the country. The network also allows for deep dives in strategic communities as we support members to co-create and implement immigrant-friendly policies and practices. The network works in tandem with our other three programs, which serve our members and act as an avenue for member recruitment.

- **Educate**: Training, coaching, and tools that bolster the impact of thousands of practitioners and organizations.

- **Incentivize**: Recognition at a national scale that helps reshape the way cities invest in inclusion. Once completed our certification program will be part of this effort and will tie measurable policy and culture change to economic incentives.

- **Leverage**: National assets leveraged to support our network and local welcoming initiatives. For example, our national campaigns influence federal and local policy while reframing the issue of immigration, creating an overall environment that is conducive to local change.

WELCOMING COMMUNITY CERTIFICATION
To motivate local communities to address immigrant inclusion and welcome, Welcoming America has set about developing a nationally recognized and respected certification for municipal governments. By establishing clear and measurable criteria for community-level immigrant inclusion, Welcoming America, its stakeholders, and partners will take an important step toward a number of strategic goals including equipping communities with a road map for success; recognizing and rewarding effective immigrant inclusion; and elevating immigrant welcome as a serious policy matter and ensure its future success.

Setting the Standard for Certified Welcoming Communities
The Welcoming Community Standard will be developed by an appointed governing body and informed by broad stakeholder engagement including interviews with key advisors and periods for public comment.
The governing body will be composed of diverse thought leaders and policymakers with expertise in areas of critical importance to effective immigrant integration. During the standard setting process this body will break into technical committees to allow thought leaders to focus on criteria, indicators, and means of verification within their area of expertise. Each technical committee will designate a chair tasked with finalizing the standard. The governing body will be convened primarily by phone. An initial in-person “orientation” will be held for the full group. Technical committee chairs will commit to two additional in-person meetings. See attachments A and B for a description of the proposed process and governing body.

Many fields central to immigrant welcome have taken steps to define indicators of inclusion, such as the linguistic and cultural access criteria included in The Joint Commission’s standard for hospitals and healthcare providers. We expect the Welcoming Community standard to draw heavily from established norms and incorporate such standards into the welcoming certification. The standard should also be informed by Welcoming America’s guiding principles (to be provided with the request for proposals) and Welcoming Framework (see attachment C).

The process for setting a draft standard for piloting is expected to run from May 2015 through January 2016. A final version of the standard should be completed by late 2017.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE**

Welcoming America seeks an experienced consultant to:

1. Clarify and finalize the objective of Welcoming Community certification;
2. Guide and inform decision making on the type of standard best suited for the Welcoming Community certification;
3. Provide research and expertise on approaches for accommodating variations in local realities;
4. Provide research and expertise on models for assessment;
5. Assist in preparation for, and facilitation of, meetings of the standard setting governing body and ongoing communications with that body; and
6. Assist in actual writing of the Welcoming Community standard.

To achieve these goals, the consultant will be expected to produce:

1. Agendas and background materials (in collaboration with Welcoming America staff) for each meeting of the governing body;
2. Written recommendations for a) the type of standard to be used, b) accommodation of local realities, and c) assessment process;
3. Multiple drafts of the Welcoming Community standard for public comment (in collaboration with the governing body and Welcoming America staff); and
4. A final written standard (in collaboration with the governing body and Welcoming America staff).

In partnership with the Welcoming America project lead, the consultant will also be responsible for putting in place a process for keeping executive leadership and the Welcoming America Board abreast of progress on the standard development.
CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS
The ideal consultant will have extensive knowledge of certification systems and standard development and experience writing and developing social standards. Candidates should have excellent facilitation skills both in person and over the phone, as well as experience facilitating discussions of diverse stakeholders. Past work should demonstrate an appreciation for the importance of transparent stakeholder engagement. Experience working with local governments and/or the business community preferred.

APPLICATION PROCESS
Interested applicants should submit a proposal by email to Meg Shoemaker Little, Director of Special Projects, by April 24th (meg@welcomingamerica.org). Proposals should include will include:

1. Background: Background information including relevant work experience and work performed for clients similar to Welcoming America.

2. Interpretation: Please describe your approach to this project and achieving the desired outcomes. What is your understanding of the needs outlined in this RFP? What are initial considerations about potential conclusions?

3. Organizational Capacities: Your experience with standard setting and certification. Do you have a preferred approach? How would you customize your approach for this project?

4. Qualifications. Please provide a description of your specific skills related to this project, including similar projects undertaken. In addition, please include a brief biography of each person that would work on the project and specify the project lead.

5. References. Please provide three business references.

6. Budget. Please provide a detailed project budget for time and travel associated with this project.

BUDGET AND TIMELINE
Exclusive of travel costs, the budget for this contract is $50,000. We expect the project to be completed by the end of 2016 with the majority of the work happening in 2015.
Attachment A - Standard Setting Governance

Key Advisor Interviews
General Stakeholder Input

Stakeholder Engagement Coordinating Body

Connected Communities Technical Committee
Civic Engagement Technical Committee
Economic Opportunity Technical Committee
Equitable Access Technical Committee
Education Technical Committee

Technical Committee Chairs Group

Welcoming America Board
Attachment B - Standard Setting Process

All Technical Committee Orientation Meeting

Individual Technical Committee Calls

Stakeholder and Advisor Consultation Period

Board endorsement of standards (Beta and Final)

Field Testing

Individual Technical Committee Calls

Individual Technical Committee Calls

Meeting of Technical Committee Chairs

Stakeholder and Advisor Consultation Period

Beta launch
Welcoming Cities and Counties Framework

This framework gives an outline of the different policies and programs that a community’s welcoming plan could include. Plans should include both immigrant-focused and receiving community-focused strategies.

Welcoming plans include programs and policies that advance immigrant integration and inclusion under the following categories:

- Leadership and Communications
- Equitable Access
- Economic Opportunity and Education
- Civic Engagement
- Safe and Connected Communities
1. **Leadership and Communications**

Welcoming Cities and Counties uplift positive communications about immigrants in order to gain buy-in from the community and celebrate immigrants’ contributions. Local leaders from diverse sectors also work together to spearhead efforts to build comprehensive welcoming plans that advance immigrant-friendly policies, programs, and practices and institutionalize these efforts within institutions.

Welcoming plans could include:

- Launching a communications campaign to promote the city/county as a welcoming destination for businesses, residents, and visitors
- Establishing a position to coordinate and facilitate immigrant inclusion across departments and in the community
- Leading a community planning process to identify programs and policies that will increase immigrant inclusion
- Participating in National Welcoming Week
- Implementing inclusionary hiring practices and leveraging diverse government employees to support a welcoming workforce

**Examples Within Welcoming America’s Network**

**St. Louis** seeks to become the fastest-growing U.S. metropolitan area for immigration by 2020, bolstered by a business case developed by a local economist with Saint Louis University who showed how immigrants were key to the city’s future prosperity and economic growth. The report led to the formation of a regional task-force and ultimately the creation of the **St. Louis Mosaic Project**, which works toward “regional prosperity through immigration and innovation.”

A planning process often underpins sustainable efforts, such as **Dayton**, Ohio’s **Welcome Dayton Plan**. Government, non-profit, and business sectors engaged in a series of extensive community conversations regarding immigration in the region. As a result of the conversations, the Welcome Dayton Plan was created and adopted unanimously by the City of Dayton Commission. The Plan and its ongoing implementation rely on commitments and engagement by the broader community and is not just the work of government.

A number of cities have sustained their efforts both through the creation of an office that enables better coordination of services and the ability to leverage private resources in support of immigrant welcome. For example, in 2014, **Atlanta** established the Office of Multicultural Affairs and **Nashville** created the Mayor’s Office of New Americans. In another example, the **Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA)** in **San Francisco** promotes civic participation and inclusive policies that improve the lives of San Francisco’s residents, particularly immigrants, newcomers, and underserved and vulnerable communities. OCEIA seeks to bridge linguistic and cultural barriers to ensure that San Francisco’s diverse residents have equal access to city services and opportunities to participate and contribute in meaningful ways to the success of the community. The office also provides funding to nonprofit organizations serving immigrant communities, thereby building the capacity of community partners as crucial service providers as well as advocates.

A number of communities has focused on the important role of communications through concerted media and public outreach to present a positive and inclusive vision for immigrant welcome – ranging from the **Immigrants Contribute campaign**, which featured posters throughout the Metro system in
Washington, DC, to programs bringing community members together through volunteerism and the arts during National Welcoming Week. For example, the City of Philadelphia hosted a citywide celebration of immigrant heritage and bridge-building programs during 2014 National Welcoming Week through its XCultural Passport to PHL week featuring over 40 events throughout the city.

2. Equitable Access

Welcoming communities ensure that immigrant residents have access to city and county services and cultural assets by actively removing barriers to participation and inclusion.

Welcoming plans could include:

- Implementing a language access policy and education process within local government
- Building the cultural competency of government employees and community providers so that they have the skills to effectively provide services to people from diverse backgrounds
- Working with all agencies to design programs that serve all residents more effectively
- Ensuring program performance measures incorporate immigrant access as a key metric

**Examples Within Welcoming America’s Network**

Montgomery County, Maryland’s Language Access Policy is one example of a policy that furthers access to services for limited English proficient residents, with implementation of the policy focused on broad education and training, hiring of bilingual staff, supporting agencies with more accessible interpretation services, and ongoing monitoring. The county also makes substantial investments in English language learning programs.

Allegheny County’s Department of Human Services provides basic services for immigrants in Pittsburgh and has worked through an Immigrant and International Advisory Committee to ensure that services are culturally competent and accessible. Over time, the committee has established foundational relationships between government, community-based organizations, and local residents, giving participant communities a voice while also implementing a host of innovative projects that no member agency could do on its own—ranging from ensuring greater language access through translation and interpretation, to deploying a cadre of AmeriCorps members to help agencies better manage caseloads, to supporting international youth mentoring programs.

3. Economic Opportunity and Education

Welcoming Cities and Counties must place a particular emphasis on ensuring that immigrant residents have the skills, assets, and education they need to succeed in school and in the workforce.

Welcoming plans could include:

- Supporting English language and workforce development initiatives to build skills and ensure access to high-quality programs
- Creating new or adapting current economic development initiatives to support immigrant entrepreneurship and small business development
- Partnering with local community organizations and financial institutions to support financial literacy and inclusion and support asset development
Creating robust parent involvement programs that fully engage parents of all backgrounds in local schools in order to enhance academic performance

**Examples Within Welcoming America's Network**

**Chicago** has opened city-funded internship, volunteer, and job opportunities to undocumented students, providing young DREAMers with experience and opportunities that can enrich their educational and career pathways. Through Chicago’s broad-reaching New Americans Plan, the City is also working with Chicago Public Schools to increase access to other summer enrichment programs and ensure that early childhood sites are well-placed and well-equipped to serve immigrant children across the city.

The NYC Economic Development Corporation launched the Immigrant Bridge Program to help move unemployed and underemployed skilled immigrants in New York City into gateway jobs earning $30,000-40,000 annually in high-demand fields where employers are having difficulty hiring. A similar program on Long Island, funded by Citi Community Development, provides skilled immigrants access to microloans to cover the costs of credential evaluations, recertification, and relicensing.

**Philadelphia** has taken a number of steps to support immigrant entrepreneurs, including adapting existing services and tools to ensure they are accessible for immigrant entrepreneurs, including manuals on starting specific types of businesses and licensing and permitting. Using federal Community Development Block Grant funding and AmeriCorps volunteers, the city has also provided substantial support to organizations that provide technical assistance and small business loans to immigrant entrepreneurs through an Existing Business Technical Assistance Program (BTAP). In addition, the city’s Department of Commerce launched a lending circle model that connects immigrant entrepreneurs to the financial mainstream, linking the micro loan process to credit building.

**Oakley, California**’s You, Me, We = Oakley! initiative partnered with its local school district to help immigrant parents become more involved in their children’s schools. For example, the partnership hosted dialogue dinners that brought together immigrant and U.S.-born parents and community members for a meal and discussion about the changing community. The parents spoke about their common values and goals for helping their children succeed in school, and English-speaking parents gained a newfound appreciation for the challenges that immigrant parents face and were motivated to lessen these barriers. As a result, the Parent Teacher Student Association has begun translating more materials and working to become more language-inclusive.

In **Boise, Idaho**, the City has worked closely with the Department of Parks and Recreation to establish the International Summer Youth program, a summer enrichment program which pairs refugee students with U.S.-born peers.

4. **Civic Engagement**

Welcoming Cities and Counties actively ensure that newcomers can fully participate in civic life, including increasing access to leadership, citizenship, and democratic opportunities.

Welcoming plans could include:

- Encouraging citizenship through community partnerships and inviting civic leaders to participate in citizenship classes and ceremonies
Implementing citizen and leadership academies that help immigrants be successful in participating in and influencing decision-making in the community

Implementing strategies that ensure local boards, commissions, and civic organizations have leadership that is representative of local demographics and working with these groups to create a welcoming culture

Creating outreach mechanisms that help immigrant community members participate in planning and inform the work of government

**Examples Within Welcoming America’s Network**

“Your Path to Citizenship Starts at the Los Angeles Public Library” is a joint effort by the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service to help eligible Los Angeles residents start their own personal journey to become citizens. The establishment of “Citizenship Corners” in all 73 library locations that provide information and resources, meeting room space, and access to study materials and a robust and information-rich website has established LAPL as the starting point on a person’s personal path to citizenship, while also helping local libraries reach a new market of library users.

The MyCity Academy in Nashville empowers New Americans to understand and participate in Nashville’s government. Over the course of six months, MyCity participants meet with leaders from Metro departments and tour Metro facilities. In doing so, they gain a better understanding of how their government works and learn how to resolve issues and obtain information. Upon graduation, MyCity participants are able to help their communities understand and access government services. MyCity graduates also have the opportunity to interact with New Americans from other communities through their participation in the MyCity alumni network.

5. **Safe and Connected Communities**

Welcoming Cities and Counties foster trust and build relationships between immigrants and local law enforcement. These communities also actively create programs that build relationships between immigrant and U.S.-born residents, fostering trust and mutual respect.

Welcoming plans could include:

- Creating a Welcoming Ambassadors program that brings together receiving community members and immigrants to help people become connected to each other and build greater knowledge of immigrants in the community
- Encouraging volunteerism and mentorship among receiving community members to help build resources, capacity, and knowledge of integration services
- Supporting community dialogues to help all community members voice their concerns, find common ground, and set the stage for a more inclusive community
- Working with local law enforcement to build trust with the immigrant community
- Convening cross-sectoral collaborations to build and strengthen networks that promote immigrant inclusion and welcome

**Examples Within Welcoming America’s Network**

In Norcross, Georgia, the city expanded a Citizens Police Academy to engage Spanish-speaking residents and build trust and knowledge between residents and police. At a larger scale, New York has focused on a number of ways to enhance police community relations and public safety. The city has passed an
executive order that prohibits local law enforcement from inquiring into an individual’s immigration status unless a serious crime has been committed. NYPD also recruits in immigrant communities in efforts to diversify the police force in order to become more representative of the community they are patrolling. A New Immigrant Outreach Unit of the police has also created youth sports leagues to reach immigrant youth and their families, including soccer leagues with Middle Eastern and African immigrant communities and cricket leagues with South Asian communities.

In St. Louis, the Mosaic Ambassadors Program brings together immigrants with U.S.-born St. Louisans. Ambassadors are residents of St. Louis who make a simple commitment to share information, visit at least three immigrant restaurants or businesses in the area, and, importantly, make that vital message of welcome real by inviting a new immigrant home for dinner. Other ambassadors operate “pop-up” sites at local corporations with large numbers of immigrant employees where they promote St. Louis’ welcoming and integration services and distribute helpful information. Mosaic surpassed its initial goal of recruiting 50 Ambassadors with over 200 applications in the first three weeks.

**Principles**

- It is essential to engage the receiving community in ways that build greater understanding, particularly among people who may have concerns about or are unaware of the changing demographics of their community
- People of all backgrounds – socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, religious, etc. – have unique talents that can be brought to bear to make our communities vibrant, and welcoming should be as inclusive as possible to all groups
- Programs intended to help immigrants navigate the community and learn about local norms should also be respectful of and leverage the cultural and leadership assets and knowledge that immigrants bring
- Leaders can play a catalytic role by recognizing, rewarding, and investing in community partners who are essential to building a community’s capacity for this work
- The voice of both immigrants and the broader community are critical to defining a welcoming agenda