Standard Operating Procedure

Version 1.7

-This page intentionally left blank-

Dear Colleague,

I am excited your local government has chosen to take the first steps in becoming Certified Welcoming.

Welcoming America created the Welcoming Standard and the Certified Welcoming program to support all places— from small towns and rural counties to large cities— in building more inclusive communities and harnessing the wealth and vibrancy that comes when diverse individuals can fully participate and invest in their hometowns.

Following you will find a detailed overview of our standard operating procedures. This guide is meant to give you a detailed look at how we assess if a community meets the Welcoming Standard and the obligations of communities that are Certified Welcoming. You can find more information on the Welcoming Standard and the criteria local governments need to meet in order to be Certified Welcoming at www.certifiedwelcoming.org.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to connect with the Certified Welcoming team at certified@welcomingamerica.org or (404) 631-6593.

I look forward to working with you closely over the next several months to build a detailed picture of the welcoming efforts currently in place and identify ways to create a stronger, more inclusive, and more competitive community.

Yours in service,

Melissa Bertolo
Certified Welcoming Manager

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This Guide describes the underlying procedures for Certified Welcoming. It was written with local governments participating in the certification process in mind, but the procedures included apply to all parties involved in Certified Welcoming, including Welcoming America staff and independent auditors. A list of topics covered can be found in the Table of Contents.

Questions about Certified Welcoming should be directed to the Certified Welcoming team assigned to your local government or to certified@welcomingamerica.org. Questions can also be mailed to Welcoming America, P. O. Box 2554, Decatur, GA 30031.

For translation of this document into another language please contact certified@welcomingamerica.org

Key Definitions

Audit: The process used to gather evidence of welcoming efforts in a community. Audits are conducted by Welcoming America staff or independent auditors contracted by Welcoming America. Each audit is focused on documenting whether a place is fulfilling the criteria set out in the Welcoming Standard. The scope and structure of an audit can vary depending on what the auditor is looking to corroborate. For more on audits see pages 9-11.

Audit Action Plan: A plan developed for a city or county to receive its Certificate after an audit found the city or county seeking certification non-compliant with one or more criteria required for certification. For more on Audit Action Plans see page 12 .

Auditor: A person qualified to carry out audits on behalf of Certified Welcoming. The auditor may be an employee of Welcoming America or an independent contractor. Each community will be assigned a certification team, including auditors after submitting their intake form to the Certified Welcoming program.

Certificate: The document issued by Certified Welcoming that formally recognizes a local government meets the criteria set out in the Welcoming Standard. Certificates are valid for three years.

Certification: The process of receiving a certificate from Certified Welcoming. In addition to the initial certification, local governments must go through certification every three years in order to maintain their certificate. This is called recertification.

Certification Fee: The amount payable to Welcoming America for services provided by Certified Welcoming.

Criteria: The policies, programs, processes, and partnerships set out in the Welcoming Standard. Some criteria must be in place in order for your local government to receive a certificate. These criteria are considered core to the Welcoming Standard. For more on criteria and scoring see page 7 and Appendix A.

Observation: Comments expressing potential flaws or shortcoming about core and/or additional criteria listed as compliant in the Final Audit Report. Observations made concerning core criteria must be addressed during recertification.

Welcoming Standard: The Welcoming Standard (the Standard) captures the heart of what it means to be welcoming. Developed by Welcoming America in collaboration with local governments, advocates, and diverse experts, and with input from the public at large, the Welcoming Standard provides a comprehensive roadmap for immigrant inclusion and welcome. The Welcoming Standard addresses a range of essential policies and programs, from language access to hiring practices. The current Welcoming Standard is available at certifiedwelcoming.org.

THE WELCOMING STANDARD AND CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATION

The Welcoming Standard captures the policies, programs, processes, and partnerships at the heart of a welcoming community, and is the backbone of the Certified Welcoming program.

For local governments to receive a certificate they must meet certain criteria set out in the Welcoming Standard (called the core criteria). For local governments to maintain their certificate at the time of recertification they must continue to meet the core criteria and address any observations made during the audit.

The following section details how the Welcoming Standard is organized and conditions for certification. The complete Welcoming Standard can be downloaded at certifiedwelcoming.org.

Content of the Welcoming Standard
The policies and programs that make up the Welcoming Standard fall into seven areas essential to immigrant inclusion and welcome:
- Government Leadership (GL)
- Civic Engagement (CE)
- Equitable Access (EA)
- Education (ED)
- Connected Communities (CC)
- Economic Development (EC)
- Safe Communities (SC)

The Standard sets out specific criteria for communities in each of these areas. The criteria are organized into requirements and indicators. Requirements contain broader criteria and may contain indicators. Indicators provide more detailed information about how the requirement is met.

The Standard also sets out four essential strategies for how communities should approach and implement each criteria (both requirements and indicators).
- Engage longer-term residents
- Set goals, monitor impact, adjust strategies, as needed
- Design for equity and inclusion
- Implement in partnership

Core and Additional Criteria
For the purposes of Certified Welcoming, the criteria in the Standard are sorted into two further categories - core criteria and additional criteria. For a core requirement to be

considered compliant, all core indicators must be compliant. Similarly for an additional requirement to be considered compliant, all additional indicators must be met. If a core requirement has indicators marked as additional, they do not need to be compliant in order for the requirement to be compliant.

Example: In order for GL4 to be met, GL4.1 and GL 4.2 must also be met. GL 4.3 does not need to be compliant.

> REQUIREMENT GL 4 (core): A program is in place to manage a community-wide plan for immigrant inclusion.
> INDICATOR GL 4.1 (core): The program includes processes to regularly assess the needs and priorities of the local immigrant community in each of the categories of this standard and use that feedback to strengthen the plan.
> INDICATOR GL 4.2 (core): The program includes processes to engage cross-sector and diverse stakeholders in the maintenance and implementation of the plan, including stakeholders from the immigrant community and receiving community.
> INDICATOR GL4.3 (additional): The program includes accountability and learning mechanisms to regularly assess the effectiveness of activities outlined in the plan.

Core criteria set the threshold for initial certification. In order for a local government to receive a certificate for the first time, it must meet all core criteria either by:
   a. having all core requirements and indicators in place at the time of the audit,
   b. having at least 91% of core requirements and indicators in place at the time of the audit along with an approved Audit Action Plan to meet remaining core requirements and indicators, or
   c. meeting 91% of core requirements and indicators through the implementation of an approved Audit Action Plan based on audit findings.

Additional criteria do not need to be met to become certified, but play an essential role to encourage continuous improvement during recertification.

Scoring

All criteria— core and additional, requirements and indicators— have assigned points. The points system takes into account the impact of the criteria, the resources required to implement the criteria (in other words how accessible a criteria is to cities and counties regardless of budget, population, jurisdiction, and other factors), and whether the criteria is core or additional. Points for requirements range from 101 to 200 with all core requirements receiving 200 points. Indicator points range from 1 to 100 with all core indicators receiving 100 points.

Certified Welcoming Score

Your Certified Welcoming Score is generated by averaging the number of points you received for additional criteria. Points for core criteria are not included in this score as they are used to determine your certification. Your Certified Welcoming Score captures a useful snapshot of strengths and opportunities for improvement beyond meeting the core criteria. Scores set a baseline by which to define improvement during recertification. In the future, we anticipate communities will be able to use their scores to compare local welcoming efforts to national averages. For a detailed list of points assigned to each criteria, see Appendix A.

THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The certification process is rigorous. The process itself also yields some of the most significant benefits for participating communities. Each step provides opportunities to engage or reengage partners, identify best practices and potential for innovation, and leverage new resources. In later stages of the certification process, local governments receive an extensive report on local welcoming efforts including areas for growth and programs in their community that are on the cutting edge nationally.

Certification Timeline
The entire certification process should not take longer than one year. Local governments that are unable to complete the process in a year may be asked to re-enter the program.

Certification Fees
Welcoming America charges a fee for participation in Certified Welcoming. The current certification fee amount is available at certifiedwelcoming.org. This fee is calibrated to cover the staffing, travel, and administrative costs related to each certification process. Up to $1,500 of paid Welcoming America membership dues may be applied toward the total certification fee. An invoice for the certification fee is sent upon receipt of the Certified Welcoming application.

Should you decide to discontinue pursuing certification prior to submitting the self-assessment, 91% of the paid certification fees are refundable. If you discontinue pursuing certification after submitting the self-assessment, the certification fees are non-refundable.

Usually, there are six steps in the initial certification process, although advanced communities may complete the process in five steps:
1. Intake
2. Self-Assessment

3. Desktop Review and Audit
4. Final Report
5. Audit Action Plan and Activities
6. Receipt of the Certificate

Step 1: Intake
Local governments enter the Certified Welcoming program by requesting and completing an application. The application covers general information about the local government and community including government structure, authority, and budget. You will also be asked to provide billing information.

Once you submit the application, you have formally entered the certification process and you will be invoiced for the certification fees.

Additionally, at this point, Welcoming America will send:

- Certified Welcoming Contract: Due within a month and a half after receiving the contract (30 business days), the Certified Welcoming Contract outlines the legal obligations, such as the use of confidential information and payment of fees, for both the local government and Welcoming America.

- Self-Assessment Form: Due within the two and a half months (50 business days), the self-assessment form asks local governments to document current welcoming work and assess themselves against the Welcoming Standard. More detail is provided below.

- Information about the certification team assigned to your audit: Each local government is assigned a set of Welcoming America staff and/or consultants to conduct their audit and write the post-audit report. This team will be introduced to you at this time.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The Certified Welcoming Process takes approximately 6 months to complete; however some communities may finish it in less or more time.

Step 1
Complete intake form, sign contract
Month 1-2

Step 2
Complete self-assessment
Month 1-3

Step 3
Complete a 2-3 day in person audit
Month 4-5

Step 4
Receive Final Report
Month 5-6

Step 5
Create Audit Action Plan (not required for all communities)
Month 6-12

Step 6
Receive Certificate
Month 6-12

Step 2: Self Assessment

Upon completing the intake, local governments focus on conducting a self-assessment of current welcoming efforts. The self-assessment process is guided by a detailed self-assessment form provided by Welcoming America.

The form walks local governments through the Welcoming Standard criteria, asking them to evaluate whether and how they have met each requirement and indicator. Certified Welcoming participants are asked to provide evidence— which may take the form of a detailed paragraph describing a program to a website link to an attachment of a specific signed policy— for each requirement or indicator they believe they have met. Self-assessments should be completed in two and a half months (within 50 business days).

Completing the self-assessment often requires reaching out to partners, and we have found that the process of mapping current work can lead to new or renewed partnerships across agencies and a deeper understanding of the extent of work in your community.

Step 3: Desktop Review and Audit

Once your certification team receives the completed self-assessment form they will begin the desktop review and audit process.

Desktop Review

The desktop review verifies information provided in the self-assessment and prepares the certification team and the local government to make the best use of the audit. The desktop review will include:

a. A review of self-assessment and identification of and research on stakeholders involved in your welcoming work,
b. Online research to verify evidence to the extent possible,
c. A review of media coverage related to the local welcoming work,
d. A screen of civil rights investigations and infractions, and
e. Additional research regarding local government jurisdiction and programming.

After submitting your self-assessment, the certification team may request additional information from what they have learned during the desktop review. We ask that you reply to the additional information request within 10 business days.

Audit

The purpose of the audit is for the certification team to gather additional evidence through meetings with public servants, community leaders, and stakeholders to evaluate fulfillment of the Welcoming Standard. The audit also provides an opportunity to identify best practices to lift up to the Welcoming America Network.

You and your assigned certification team should complete the audit within six (6) months of signing the contract. The audit is expected to last two-three (2-3) full days. Welcoming America reserves the right to extend or shorten the audit. Initial audits are typically on-site, at your location, but may also be conducted remotely via telephone or electronically.

Audits for initial certification are announced and you will receive at least two (2) weeks notice for all announced audits. Unannounced audits may occur after certification due to concern of lack of compliance with the Welcoming Standard.

Your certification team will work with you to determine a mutually convenient audit date and to develop the scope of the agenda. Once the audit date has been determined, you will receive an audit preparation letter, containing detailed information on the scope of the audit, including a proposed agenda with a list of requested stakeholders to be involved in interviews. See Appendix B for details related to the audit agenda.

Although your certification team will work with you to develop the agenda for the audit, it is your responsibility to schedule the meetings with stakeholders and to meet the requests included in the audit preparation letter to the best of your ability. If someone is not available for an in-person meeting during the scheduled audit, your certification team may require a telephone interview or e-mail correspondence to complete the audit.

In addition to meetings with stakeholders engaged in partnership programs, an audit will typically include meetings with:
- Immigrant and receiving community leaders
- Senior government leadership
- Public school officials
- Law enforcement

Audits typically begin with an opening meeting with the staff involved in the local government's immigrant inclusion and welcoming efforts. The opening meeting provides an opportunity for the certification team and you to review the agenda and ask/answer any remaining questions. Audits typically end with a closing meeting with you, the certification team, and any additional stakeholders or government leadership you would like to include.

During the closing meeting of the audit, the certification team will present a summary of initial findings and discuss next steps. The summary of initial findings will include highlights of best practices with a request to share with the Welcoming America Program Team and a summary or list of criteria initially determined that do not meet the Welcoming Standard. The auditor may request additional information that was not able to be gathered during the audit in order to make a decision about compliance with any of the criteria. If the auditor requests additional information during the closing meeting, the auditor will also send a

written or electronic request for the information within five (5) business days of the closing meeting. You are expected to provide the additional information within one month or 20 business days of the closing meeting.

Filming or recording of audits is not allowed without prior approval by Welcoming America and the auditor(s).

Step 4: Final Report
The final report provides a detailed analysis of the audit findings, including innovative programs or strategies that set the community apart in its pursuit of certification. The final report includes compliance results for each requirement and indicator listed in the Welcoming Standard. It also includes an overall performance score on additional criteria, which is used to encourage continuous improvement.

Many communities have recognized the final report as an effective tool to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. The final report has been used to help guide strategic planning and to involve additional stakeholders and commitment to the work.

Welcoming America will send you the final report within 30 business days of the audit. Contact Welcoming America at certified@welcomingamerica.org for a sample final report.

Step 5: Audit Action Plan and Additional Activities
Only clients who do not meet all of the core criteria are required to complete an Audit Action Plan in order to receive their Certificate. The Audit Action Plan is a tool used to help identify the cause of non-compliance and necessary actions to fulfill the requirement or indicator.

Your certification team will provide basic assistance to create an Audit Action Plan, including examples of what other communities have done in similar scenarios. If you require additional coaching, you will be referred to Welcoming America's Network Team. Coaching provided by the Network Team may be provided through your Welcoming America membership or may be subject to additional fees.

When completing the Audit Action Plan, you will be asked to conduct a root cause analysis by explaining why the criteria was not fulfilled (e.g. lack of funding, insufficient capacity, etc.) and steps you will take in order to meet the criteria with a timeframe for fulfillment. You are expected to send the Audit Action Plan to your certification team within 30 business days of receiving the final audit report.

You can view the Audit Action Plan form by visiting https://www.tfaforms.com/4663326.

You are expected to implement the Audit Action Plan within 6 months of its approval. If you do not implement the Audit Action Plan or provide sufficient evidence, sanctions may apply. See pages 18-19 for information related to sanctions.

Step 6: Receipt of the Certificate
If you have met 100% of the core criteria, you will automatically receive the Certified Welcoming Certificate.

If you have met at least 91% (41/45) of the core criteria, you may receive a provisional certificate after first submitting and receiving approval of the Audit Action Plan from your certification team. This certificate is valid for one year. Once you have completed your Audit Action Plan, you may receive your full Certified Welcoming Certificate, which, including the provisional certificate, is valid for three years.

If you have not met 91% of the core criteria, you may still receive the Certified Welcoming Certificate after you have submitted and received approval of your Audit Action Plan and implemented the Audit Action Plan to meet at least 91% of the core criteria. You must notify your certification team when you have implemented the Audit Action Plan and show evidence of its completion. An additional audit and subsequent fees may be required for this scenario.

Once you have received either your provisional certificate or the Certified Welcoming Certificate, Welcoming America will work with you for marketing and promotional purposes. Your status as Certified Welcoming lasts for three years, at which time you must apply for recertification to maintain your community's status as Certified Welcoming. To maintain initial certification, communities must always meet the core criteria listed in the Welcoming Standard and address all core observations listed in the final audit report.

Continuous Improvement Planning and Recertification
After you receive your certificate, your certification team will provide you with a Continuous Improvement Planning Toolkit that will help you address observations made during the audit and additional criteria you want to pursue. Using the Continuous Improvement Planning Toolkit is not required for recertification; however, you must address all observations made regarding core criteria in order to be recertified.

Your certificate is valid for three years. You may begin your recertification process any time during the second year of your certificate, but must begin at least 3 months prior to the date of expiration. We do not recommend letting your certificate lapse. If your certificate lapses, you may be required to re-enter the process as a new applicant.

The recertification process is very similar to the initial certification process and follows the same six steps outlined above (Intake, Self-Assessment, Desktop Review and Audit, Final Report, Audit Action Plan and Activities, and Receipt of the Certificate). Your self-assessment form will be based on results included in the Final Report and Audit Action Plan, if applicable, from your last valid certificate.

DECISIONS AND APPEALS

Certification Decision Making
Certification teams may require additional guidance and assistance when making certification decisions. For cases that require additional expertise and insight, certification teams may consult with content experts. For examples of content experts, please see the list of individuals consulted for creation of the Welcoming Standard.

Certification teams also have the option to take questions and concerns to the Certified Welcoming Advisory Panel (hereafter referred to as Advisory Panel). This panel is hosted by the Welcoming America Network Leadership Committee. When decisions require additional guidance from the Advisory Panel, the Network Leadership Committee will be informed of the content and the Leadership Committee will select three members to provide guidance on the particular issue. For additional information about who currently serves on the Leadership Committee, please visit https://www.welcomingamerica.org/about/board-and-leadership

Appealing Non-Compliance with the Welcoming Standard
You have the right to appeal any decision made about your certification. If you wish to appeal a decision, additional evidence must be submitted for the appeal to be considered. Appeals are accepted online at https://www.tfaforms.com/4663366.

If you decide to appeal a decision made by the auditor about compliance with any of the criteria, core or additional, in the Welcoming Standard, you must file the appeal form within 20 business days of receiving the final audit report. Your assigned certification team will review appeals made. If you are uncomfortable with the certification team reviewing your appeal, you may request it be sent to either the Chief Program Officer or the Deputy Director for review. The Advisory Panel and/or content experts may be consulted for additional guidance.

Welcoming America will make a decision regarding the appeal within 20 business days of receiving the submitted appeal form. All appeal decisions are final.

Appealing Sanctions

If you decide to appeal a sanction, you must file the appeal form within 10 business days of receiving the sanction notice from Welcoming America. Sanction appeals will be sent to either the Chief Program Officer or the Deputy Director for review. The Advisory Panel and/or the Certified Welcoming Manager may be consulted for additional information and guidance. Although individuals involved in making the sanction decision may be consulted, they will not be part of the appeal decision making process.

COMPLAINTS

Welcoming America takes certification very seriously. Most often, a community member or stakeholder will be aware that a client is no longer compliant with the Welcoming Standard before Welcoming America. Welcoming America encourages community members and stakeholders to address concerns of non-compliance directly to the local government holding the Certified Welcoming Certificate. In the case that the local government does not appropriately address non-compliance concerns or if someone does not feel comfortable addressing their concern directly with the local government, individuals may file a complaint directly with Welcoming America.

If a complaint is filed against you, the process outlined below will be followed.

Complaint Submission and Review
Any party that is not satisfied with the compliance of a Certified Welcoming community with the Welcoming Standard may file a complaint with Welcoming America. All complaints must be submitted in writing, explaining the nature of the complaint and including all documented evidence to support the claim. Complaints must be filed online at https://www.tfaforms.com/4672952 This form is available online at certifiedwelcoming.org

Within five (5) business days of receiving the complaint, Welcoming America will notify the complainant and the defendant (client) it has received the complaint. You may provide a response to the initial notice, but are not required to before Welcoming America determines if the complaint has merit.

Welcoming America will assess the complaint submission for completeness and will have the option to contact the complainant for additional information or clarification, where necessary.

All complaints will be reviewed by the Certified Welcoming Manager and the Chief Program Officer to determine if the complaint has merit. This determination will be based on whether the complaint raises legitimate and substantiated issues about noncompliance with criteria under which they are certified.

Welcoming America will determine if the complaint has merit within 15 business days of receiving the complaint. During this time, Welcoming America may consult with the Advisory Panel for guidance. Additionally, Welcoming America may approach the complainant, the client, and/or stakeholders in the Certified Welcoming community for clarification or additional information.

If Welcoming America determines the complaint does not have merit, the complaint will be closed. If Welcoming America determines the complaint has merit, you will be asked to resolve the complaint through the corrective action process. If you decide to not resolve the complaint, you may receive sanctions, including decertification.

All complaints filed with Welcoming America and notes related to the review will be saved for at least three years in the client's Certified Welcoming file.

Complaint Resolution

Once a complaint is determined to have merit, the client should formally resolve it through the corrective action process, or it may receive sanctions, including decertification. The corrective action process is outlined below.

Corrective Action Process
1. The client will develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) within 15 business days of receiving notice that the complaint filed has merit. The Corrective Action Plan form is available online at https://www.tfaforms.com/4673141.
2. The CAP should address:
    a. Cause of non-compliance
    b. Steps to rectify non-compliance
    c. Time frame CAP will be implemented and completed
    d. Evidence available to demonstrate compliance with CAP
3. The Certified Welcoming Manager will review the proposed corrective action plan to determine if it will lead to satisfactory resolution of the complaint. The Certified Welcoming Manager may seek guidance from the Advisory Panel and/or the Chief Program Officer.
4. The Certified Welcoming Manager will inform the client within 10 business days if the CAP is accepted or if amendments are required. If the client is required to make an amendment to the CAP, it should do so within 10 business days of receiving the notice.
5. The client is expected to notify Welcoming America once its CAP is fulfilled. Failure to notify Welcoming America or to implement the CAP may result in sanctions, including decertification.
6. Welcoming America will review evidence, which may include interviews with stakeholders and an audit, to ensure the complaint has been successfully resolved. Once the complaint has been determined to be successfully resolved, the complaint will be closed. Welcoming America will keep record of the complaint, CAP, and resolution for at least three years in the client's Certified Welcoming file.

Records

Welcoming America will maintain a record of each complaint received, including all correspondence and related evidence, from initiation through final outcome. Complaint records will be kept on file for at least three years.

All complaint decisions are considered final. Complainants and defendants retain the right to submit a complaint against the Complaint Resolution process.

SANCTIONS

Welcoming America may decide to apply one of the certification sanctions outlined below against a client based on its compliance with the Welcoming Standard, its Audit Action Plan or Corrective Action Plan, or refusal to comply with the corrective action process.

Denial of Certificate

If this sanction is applied, it means that the client must stop using the Certified Welcoming Certificate immediately. If a client is denied certification, Welcoming America will not recognize the client as a Certified Welcoming place on its website or in any promotional efforts or materials.

Examples that may lead to denial of certificate could be:
1. A client does not meet 91% of the core criteria.
2. A client has not provided an Audit Action Plan within the allotted time frame.

Suspension of Certificate

If this sanction is applied, the client cannot advertise or refer to maintaining a valid Certified Welcoming Certificate. If a client is suspended, Welcoming America will not it recognize as a Certified Welcoming place on its website or in any promotional efforts or materials. The duration of suspension is dependent upon completing all required corrective action components.

Examples that may lead to suspension could be:
1. A client has not fulfilled its Audit Action Plan within the allotted time frame.
2. Welcoming America has confirmed that a client is no longer compliant with the core criteria in the Welcoming Standard.

Decertification

If this sanction is applied, it means that the client must stop using the Certified Welcoming Certificate immediately. If a client is decertified, Welcoming America will not recognize it as a Certified Welcoming place on its website or in any promotional efforts or materials.

Some examples that may lead to decertification include:
1. The client did not submit or fulfill its Corrective Action Plan within the defined time frame after suspension.
2. The client did not adhere to contractual responsibilities, e.g. non-payment of certification fees, refusal of audits.
3. The client did not honor the suspension rules.
4. During the recertification process, the client no longer meets core requirements and does not fulfill its Audit Action Plan.

Re-entry after Decertification

A client may reapply after it has been decertified under the following conditions:

1. The client must agree to undergo a re-entry audit, if deemed necessary by Welcoming America.
2. The client must have corrected all major non-compliances.

If a client re-enters Certified Welcoming within 12 months of the date of decertification, the client will not be required to pay a new application fee. However, the expiration date of the initial certificate will still apply. Any outstanding certification fees from the period prior to decertification must be paid prior to re-entry after decertification.

If the client re-enters Certified Welcoming after 12 months of the decertification date, the client will be required to complete the application process, including paying the full certification fees.

CONFIDENTIAL AND SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Welcoming America recognizes that the rigorous certification process may require clients and stakeholders to share sensitive information. Welcoming America guarantees to treat all information obtained during the certification process with care and caution.

Welcoming America will not share information gathered during the certification process except with Certified Welcoming staff/contractors and its Advisory Panel and when required by law and with expressed permission from the client. Clients are encouraged to share the Final Audit Report with Welcoming America Network staff in order to receive individualized coaching and technical assistance.

Welcoming America may request additional use of information gathered during the audit to be used to build its resource library. Additional consent must be provided before any information gathered during the audit is shared with the public. Clients can provide verbal or written consent to share information.

Confidential Information
Welcoming America considers all proprietary information about clients confidential. Such information includes:
1. Self-assessments
2. Audit reports and related correspondence
3. Audit Action Plans
4. Corrective Action Plans
5. Appeals
6. Complaints
7. Additional information as identified by the client

Public Information
The following is considered public information:
1. Certification status of client
2. Name and location of client
3. Any information that does not allow the client to be identified

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Welcoming America promotes an ethical culture and assures that the certification process is conducted in an ethical manner. Welcoming America's Core Values and the ISEAL's Principles of Assurance guide Certified Welcoming's work. See Appendix C for Welcoming America's Values and Appendix D for the Principles of Assurance.

Welcoming America recognizes that clients often wish to show hospitality to their certification team during an audit. However, gifts or gratuities, including meals, which could influence or be perceived as influencing their independence and impartiality, are not permitted. The certification team is expected to remain impartial and avoid any possible conflict of interest by refusing gifts offered to them throughout the entire certification process.

Certification teams should not use their official position or information gained through the position for private purposes.

If any member of the certification team has a relationship with a client that may raise doubts about their ability to remain impartial, the relationship should be made known to their immediate supervisor. If it is determined that impartiality is not able to be maintained through the certification process, the individual will be recused from participating in the client's audit and certification.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CERTIFIED WELCOMING POINTS

Compliance Criteria					Points
Category	#	Requirement/ Indicator	Description	Type	
Government Leadership	GL1	Requirement	A policy is in place that designates a unit focused on immigrant inclusion work.	Core	200
Government Leadership	GL1.1	Indicator	The unit is formalized, active, and has dedicated staff.	Core	100
Government Leadership	GL1.2	Indicator	The unit's governance includes multi-sector representation, and representatives reflect the diversity of the immigrant community and the receiving community.	Additional	60
Government Leadership	GL2	Requirement	The unit advances immigrant inclusion through partnership and collaboration across community sectors and government agencies.	Core	200
Government Leadership	GL2.1	Indicator	The unit engages other jurisdictions on immigrant inclusion especially those jurisdictions that have impact on the policies and programs included in this standard.	Core	100
Government Leadership	GL2.2	Indicator	The unit supports local government agencies in setting goals for immigrant inclusion and monitoring progress toward those goals.	Additional	90
Government Leadership	GL3	Requirement	A program(s) is in place to provide information on community services.	Core	200
Government Leadership	GL3.1	Indicator	The program(s) provides information on government resources such as local government services and public benefits.	Core	100

Government Leadership	GL3.2	Indicator	The program(s) provides information on English language learning opportunities.	Core	100
Government Leadership	GL3.3	Indicator	The program(s) provides information on naturalization.	Additional	20
Government Leadership	GL3.4	Indicator	The program(s) provides information on professional licensing and starting a business.	Additional	20
Government Leadership	GL4	Requirement	A program is in place to manage a community-wide plan for immigrant inclusion.	Core	200
Government Leadership	GL4.1	Indicator	The program includes processes to regularly assess the needs and priorities of the local immigrant community in each of the categories of this standard and use that feedback to strengthen the plan.	Core	100
Government Leadership	GL4.2	Indicator	The program includes processes to engage cross-sector and diverse stakeholders in the maintenance and implementation of the plan, including stakeholders from the immigrant community and receiving community.	Core	100
Government Leadership	GL4.3	Indicator	The program includes accountability and learning mechanisms to regularly assess the effectiveness of activities outlined in the plan.	Additional	90
Government Leadership	GL5	Requirement	A program(s) is in place to promote and strengthen the capacity of Community Based Organizations working on immigrant inclusion.	Additional	112
Government Leadership	GL6	Requirement	A program(s) is in place to promote employing a local government workforce	Additional	105

			that reflects the diversity of the community.		
Government Leadership	GL6.1	Indicator	The program(s) identifies and addresses barriers to inclusive hiring and employee retention including barriers to accessing information on open positions.	Additional	35
Government Leadership	GL7	Requirement	A program(s) is in place to advance local and minority, including immigrant, owned business sourcing and contracting.	Additional	105
Government Leadership	GL7.1	Indicator	The program(s) identifies and addresses barriers to sourcing and contracting.	Additional	28
Equitable Access	EA1	Requirement	No locally mandated government policies exist where the primary purpose of the policy is to exclude or disenfranchise immigrants.	Core	200
Equitable Access	EA1.1	Indicator	No locally mandated government codes exist where the primary purpose of the code is to exclude or disenfranchise immigrants.	Core	100
Equitable Access	EA1.2	Indicator	No locally mandated government policies exist where the primary purpose of the policy is to increase the rate of immigrant detention or deportation.	Core	100
Equitable Access	EA1.3	Indicator	No government policies exist where the primary purpose of the policy is to exclude or disenfranchise immigrants based on other facets of their identity including gender, sexual orientation, race, ability, age, or religion.	Core	100
Equitable Access	EA1.4	Indicator	A process(es) is in place to regularly audit and improve local policies and	Additional	90

			codes to strengthen immigrant inclusion.		
Equitable Access	EA2	Requirement	A program(s) is in place to ensure language access across government agencies with the goal of expanding equitable access to programs, services, and activities.	Core	200
Equitable Access	EA2.1	Indicator	The program(s) assesses and addresses language needs for accessing important community information including safety services and emergency and alert systems.	Core	100
Equitable Access	EA2.2	Indicator	The program(s) includes training for staff.	Core	100
Equitable Access	EA3	Requirement	A process(es) is in place to identify barriers to equitable access to programs and services, and develop partnership programs to address those barriers.	Core	200
Equitable Access	EA3.1	Indicator	Partnership programs to achieve equitable access provide services that are responsive to diverse cultural practices, languages, and literacy levels.	Core	100
Equitable Access	EA3.2	Indicator	Partnership programs to achieve equitable access address fraudulent services and scams targeting the immigrant community.	Core	100
Equitable Access	EA4	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to achieve equitable access to health services for immigrants.	Additional	171
Equitable Access	EA4.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) provides information on health insurance options and promotes access to health insurance.	Additional	27

Equitable Access	EA4.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) promotes access to health services including treatment, testing, preventative health services, and mental health services.	Additional	63
Equitable Access	EA5	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to achieve equitable access to housing for immigrants.	Additional	171
Equitable Access	EA5.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) promotes non-discrimination in housing regulations and tenant protections.	Additional	63
Equitable Access	EA6	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to achieve equitable access to transportation for immigrants.	Additional	162
Equitable Access	EA6.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) promotes affordable transportation services and opportunities.	Additional	27
Equitable Access	EA7	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to achieve equitable access to justice for immigrants.	Additional	136
Equitable Access	EA7.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) promotes access to justice in local court proceedings including access to legal advice.	Additional	64
Equitable Access	EA7.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) promotes conflict resolution strategies such as mediation.	Additional	16
Equitable Access	EA8	Requirement	A comprehensive language access policy is in place that cuts across government agencies.	Additional	171
Equitable Access	EA8.1	Indicator	The policy establishes a process(es) to identify essential government services and programs	Additional	81

			and prioritize language access to those services and programs.		
Equitable Access	EA8.2	Indicator	The policy includes training for staff on working with diverse populations.	Additional	36
Civic Engagement	CE1	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to develop immigrant knowledge of local government workings and advance immigrant civic engagement.	Core	200
Civic Engagement	CE1.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) provides information on civic engagement opportunities along with general information on the responsibilities of local government	Core	100
Civic Engagement	CE1.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) supports immigrant participation in democratic spaces (i.e. hearings, council meetings).	Additional	50
Civic Engagement	CE1.3	Indicator	The partnership program(s) supports immigrant participation on commissions and boards, and advances immigrant civic leadership.	Additional	50
Civic Engagement	CE2	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to support naturalization.	Core	200
Civic Engagement	CE3	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to support eligible immigrants in voting.	Additional	105
Civic Engagement	CE3.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) works with relevant local government and state agencies to identify and address barriers to voting for eligible immigrants.	Additional	28

Civic Engagement	CE4	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to engage immigrants in community service activities.	Additional	105
Civic Engagement	CE5	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to address the unauthorized practice of immigration law and related fraudulent services.	Additional	105
Connected Communities	CC1	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to nurture connections between the immigrant community and receiving community	Core	200
Connected Communities	CC1.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) brings the immigrant community and receiving community together to work on issues of common interest.	Core	100
Connected Communities	CC1.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) promotes regular interaction and communication between leaders in the immigrant community and leaders in the receiving community.	Core	100
Connected Communities	CC1.3	Indicator	The partnership program(s) builds relationships between the receiving community and the immigrant community, and supports immigrants in building diverse personal networks.	Additional	80
Connected Communities	CC1.4	Indicator	The partnership program(s) includes activities specifically targeted at connecting immigrant and receiving community youth.	Additional	30
Connected Communities	CC2	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to promote a welcoming culture through communications activities across diverse media and communications platforms.	Core	200

Connected Communities	CC2.1	Indicator	The local government has a public proclamation or resolution declaring itself to be a welcoming community.	Core	100
Connected Communities	CC2.2	Indicator	The local government does not make public statements discouraging immigration or immigrant inclusion.	Core	100
Connected Communities	CC2.3	Indicator	The local government does not make public statements directly attacking any community on the basis of their religion, ethnicity, race, gender, orientation, or ability.	Core	100
Connected Communities	CC2.4	Indicator	The partnership program(s) prioritizes messaging that communicates the community-wide benefit of immigrant inclusion and a welcoming culture for all residents.	Additional	30
Education	ED1	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to work with the primary and secondary school system(s) to attain more equitable educational outcomes for immigrant students.	Core	200
Education	ED1.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) advances immigrant parent engagement in schools and supports immigrant parents in navigating the education system (i.e. provides support with enrollment and information on local school options, resources available to students, and disciplinary procedures).	Core	100
Education	ED1.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) facilitates immigrant student access	Additional	30

Education			to extracurricular or enrichment activities.		
Education	ED1.3	Indicator	The partnership program(s) provides information on services such as counseling, financial assistance, and in-state tuition that increase immigrant student access to higher education	Additional	40
Education	ED1.4	Indicator	The partnership program(s) provides career readiness support for immigrant students.	Additional	70
Education	ED1.5	Indicator	The partnership program(s) addresses early learning and primary school readiness for immigrant children.	Additional	70
Education	ED1.6	Indicator	The partnership program(s) includes training for educators and staff on teaching and supporting diverse student populations.	Additional	50
Education	ED2	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to advance educational and career opportunities for immigrant adults	Additional	105
Education	ED2.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) facilitates access to professional development opportunities.	Additional	21
Education	ED2.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) supports immigrant access to higher education, technical degrees, certification programs and professional licensing.	Additional	42
Education	ED2.3	Indicator	The partnership program(s) facilitates credentialing for immigrants.	Additional	42

Economic Development	EC1	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to support immigrant jobseekers	Core	200
Economic Development	EC1.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) provides information and employment counseling to jobseekers such as information on job search resources.	Core	100
Economic Development	EC1.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) aims to prepare and place immigrants in jobs that pay a living wage and provide the potential for upward mobility.	Additional	70
Economic Development	EC1.3	Indicator	The partnership program(s) supports professional networking and mentorship opportunities.	Additional	30
Economic Development	EC1.4	Indicator	The partnership program(s) connects immigrants to work experience opportunities such as internships and apprenticeships.	Additional	30
Economic Development	EC2	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to engage local employers, chambers of commerce, and other employer networks in immigrant inclusion work	Additional	105
Economic Development	EC2.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) promotes workplace language learning opportunities.	Additional	21
Economic Development	EC2.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) works with employers to improve workplace conditions and culture.	Additional	21
Economic Development	EC2.3	Indicator	The partnership program(s) promotes the recognition of foreign work experience.	Additional	42
Economic Development	EC2.4	Indicator	The partnership program(s) works with	Additional	49

			businesses to identify and address discriminatory practices in hiring and employment.		
Economic Development	EC3	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to advance immigrants in starting, building, and growing businesses.	Core	200
Economic Development	EC3.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) provides information on enterprise development services.	Core	100
Economic Development	EC3.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) includes a process to regularly assess, identify, and address barriers for immigrant entrepreneurs and immigrant business-owners (i.e. access to contracting, financing, networking, and technical assistance opportunities).	Additional	60
Economic Development	EC4	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to identify economic development needs and opportunities for immigrants.	Additional	105
Economic Development	EC4.1	Indicator	A process(es) is in place to integrate the findings of the partnership program(s) and immigrant inclusion best practice into the local government's formal economic development approach.	Additional	35
Economic Development	EC5	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to strengthen immigrants' knowledge of the financial system and financial skills including avoiding predatory services and over-indebtedness.	Additional	105
Economic Development	EC6	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to provide education on workers' rights and workplace safety, improve access to	Additional	136

			legal advice on employment and workplace issues, and address predatory practices targeting immigrant workers.		
Safe Communities	SC1	Requirement	A program(s) exists to train public safety staff on working with diverse populations	Core	200
Safe Communities	SC1.1	Indicator	The program(s) includes training for staff operating emergency response systems under the jurisdiction of the local government	Core	100
Safe Communities	SC1.2	Indicator	The program(s) includes law enforcement staff under the jurisdiction of the local government.	Core	100
Safe Communities	SC1.3	Indicator	The program(s) includes code enforcement staff under the jurisdiction of the local government.	Core	100
Safe Communities	SC1.4	Indicator	The program(s) engages other jurisdictions whose public safety or emergency response systems impact local residents.	Core	100
Safe Communities	SC2	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to strengthen relationships and promote regular communication between law and code enforcement agencies and the immigrant community.	Core	200
Safe Communities	SC3	Requirement	A partnership program(s) is in place to educate immigrants about their rights and responsibilities under the law.	Core	200
Safe Communities	SC3.1	Indicator	The partnership program(s) includes information on immigration law and enforcement.	Core	100
Safe Communities	SC3.2	Indicator	The partnership program(s) includes	Core	100

Safe Communities			information on relevant local codes.		
Safe Communities	SC4	Requirement	A policy(ies) is in place to provide safety services in a way that builds trust and relationships between the immigrant community and relevant agencies.	Additional	171
Safe Communities	SC4.1	Indicator	The policy addresses victim services.	Additional	81
Safe Communities	SC4.2	Indicator	The policy covers code enforcement.	Additional	72

APPENDIX B: AUDIT AGENDA DETAILS

For a detailed audit template, please contact a staff member at certified@welcomingamerica.org

Framework Area	Time	Description of Audit Meeting and Purpose	Examples of Participants
Opening Meeting	2 hours	Present and discuss audit plan; clarify key information; provide high-level overview of key issues	Lead government staff and additional invited stakeholders, e.g. steering committee chairs, if applicable.
Government Leadership	1.5 hours	Interview participants to gather additional evidence to confirm compliance with the Welcoming Standard and to identify highlights and observations for report.	Government staff; elected officials; community wide plan stakeholders
Equitable Access	1.5 hours		Immigrant/refugee service providers; legal service providers; immigrant community leaders
Civic Engagement	1.5 hours		Immigrant/refugee service providers; legal service providers; immigrant community leaders
Connected Communities	1.5 hours		Immigrant and receiving community leaders; government staff; leadership organizations; youth organizations; community service organizations
Education	1.5 hours		Local school district(s); adult education providers; community college(s) and university(ies);
Economic Development	1.5 hours		Workforce development organization(s); adult education provider(s); chamber of commerce; small business development center; immigrant/refugee service provider(s)
Safe Communities	1.5 hours		Law enforcement staff; immigrant rights organization(s); emergency service staff; code enforcement staff;
Closing Meeting	1 hour	Review initial findings from audit; receive additional information, if required; confirm next steps	Lead government staff and additional invited stakeholders, e.g. steering committee chairs, if applicable.

APPENDIX C: WELCOMING AMERICA VALUES

Welcoming America is driven to build a more welcoming America, achieving excellence in all they do and is guided by the following values and principles:

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Welcoming America believes in opportunity for all. Our ideals remind us that we are all created equal and that our strength lies in the forging of a nation based on shared values and common purpose.

We operate with the conviction that better decisions are reached when multiple backgrounds and perspectives are meaningfully engaged and strive to create an equitable and collaborative environment in which differences are embraced and harnessed to achieve the best results. We consider all facets of diversity, including the areas of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, and sexual orientation, as well as cultural aspects, including values, preferences, and beliefs.

Entrepreneurial and Bold Leadership, Creativity and Learning
We believe leadership requires a willingness to try new things, and effective leadership and decision-making is critical to creating the change we wish to see in our society.

Valuing People and Relationships
We intentionally lead with the heart and believe in engaging those with differing viewpoints than our own. Our communities and organization function best when all members feel they are welcome, and cooperation is key to overcoming common challenges and building inclusive communities.

Transparency and Integrity
We commit to doing what we say we will do and doing it to the highest possible quality.

APPENDIX D: ISEAL ALLIANCE PRINCIPLES OF ASSURANCE

Welcoming America subscribes to the ISEAL Alliance credible sustainability standards and works to incorporate its best practices throughout the Certified Welcoming Program and the Welcoming Standard. Included in the ISEAL Alliance credible sustainability standards are the principles of assurance, which are defined below.

For additional information on ISEAL Alliance please visit www.isealalliance.org

Accessibility: Assurance programmes that are accessible help support the sustainability objectives of the standards system. Accessible assurance is affordable to clients who fall within the scope, is culturally sensitive, comprehensible, and within reach of the target clients.

Competence: Competence applies most directly to the individuals who are engaged in different aspects of the assurance process. Competent personnel have technical knowledge of assurance and are able to interpret and apply the intent of the standards. Having competent management of the assurance programme ensures greater integrity and efficiency in the implementation of the system.

Consistency: Assurance systems that achieve the same results when applied in different contexts or involving different staff are consistent. The objective of having a consistent assurance programme is to ensure replicable results across the programme.

Impartiality: Clients of impartial assurance programmes are treated fairly and objectively. Impartiality can be demonstrated through independence or through provisions for transparency and stakeholder engagement.

Rigour: A rigorous assurance programme is more likely to provide accurate results. The level of rigour refers to the intensity of the assurance process e.g. how many clients are sampled, how often, and how thoroughly, intensity of surveillance, and the breadth of stakeholder engagement in the assurance process.

Transparency: Assurance that is transparent is under the scrutiny of stakeholders so has less risk of corruption or conflict of interest. Transparency also builds confidence in assurance as the public is more trusting of institutions that are open.