



## 2026 Certified Welcoming Foundation Cohort Program

*A technical assistance program for local governments seeking to become Certified Welcoming*

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### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Welcoming America is currently accepting applications to its Certified Welcoming Foundation Cohort, a national technical assistance program for local governments seeking a 1-, 2-, or 3-star Certified Welcoming designation. The cohort provides participants with direct support in achieving their certification goals through peer learning opportunities and tailored assistance from Welcoming America staff. The program is built to help local governments get organized, build stakeholder commitment, collect evidence, and further institutionalize welcoming work in their government structure and throughout their communities. Over the course of the program, participants will complete their self-assessment, prepare for an audit, receive their report, and celebrate their success.

Applicants for this program should have a staff member working on immigrant inclusion within their local government and be looking to further institutionalize their work.

If your community is interested in Certified Welcoming, but is not ready to get started yet, complete the [interest form](#) and someone will be in touch to share additional information and answer questions!

*Please note: Welcoming America currently runs the Certified Welcoming cohort program annually and alternates between Foundation (1-, 2-, and 3- star designations) and Leadership (3-, 4-, and 5-star designations). If you're interested in pursuing a 4- or 5-star designation, its application will open in the fall of 2026.*

[Take the pre-assessment](#) to discover which star designation is right for your community!.

### PROGRAM BENEFITS

Each participant of the Certified Welcoming Foundation Cohort will receive:

- An opportunity to accelerate your community's immigrant inclusion and welcoming work
- Regular **networking opportunities** with other cohort members
- Assistance from a dedicated Welcoming America staff member providing **project management and coaching support**
- **Best practices and tips** from other local government staff who have undergone certification
- **Public relations and marketing assistance** for your certification announcement
- How-to **guides, resources**, and other project management **tools**



## 2026 Certified Welcoming Foundation Cohort Meetings (Details/Key Dates)

| DATE/TIME                                    | TOPIC                                                            | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>January 13 , 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:30pm ET | Creating Your Certification Team                                 | Welcome to the Foundation Cohort! Cohort participants will receive guidance and support on community messaging, mapping out stakeholders, and building a strong team to achieve their Certified Welcoming designation. |
| <b>February 10, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 4:00pm ET | Welcoming Standard Bootcamp                                      | Cohort participants will receive comprehensive training on all seven framework areas and criteria of the Welcoming Standard up to the 3-star designation.                                                              |
| <b>March 3, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:30pm ET     | Engaging Stakeholders and Collecting Evidence                    | Cohort participants will receive guidance and brainstorm strategies for engaging stakeholders and collecting evidence for their self-assessment.                                                                       |
| <b>March 31, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:30pm ET    | Validating and Confirming Evidence                               | Cohort participants will receive guidance on key parameters for evidence and strategies for validating and confirming evidence for their self-assessment.                                                              |
| <b>April 15, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:00pm ET    | Office Hours: Self-assessments                                   | Opportunity for cohort participants to ask or hear questions from peers while working on their community's self-assessment.                                                                                            |
| <b>May 19, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:00pm ET      | Office Hours: Self-assessments                                   | Opportunity for cohort participants to ask or hear questions from peers while working on their community's self-assessment.                                                                                            |
| <b>June 23, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:30pm ET     | Preparing for Your Audit                                         | Cohort participants will receive guidance and resources on preparing for their audit.                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Self-assessments Due June 30, 2026</i>    |                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>August 4, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:00pm ET    | Office Hours: Audits                                             | Opportunity for cohort participants to ask or hear questions from peers while preparing for their community's audit.                                                                                                   |
| <i>Audits August - September 2026</i>        |                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>October 6, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:30pm ET   | Communicating Results and Celebrating Success                    | Cohort participants will learn about strategies for sharing information regarding their certification report and begin to think through how they want to announce their Certified Welcoming designation.               |
| <b>November 10, 2026</b><br>2:00 - 3:30pm ET | Closing Meeting: Sustaining and Growing Welcoming Infrastructure | Cohort participants will reflect on their Certified Welcoming journey and strategies for sustaining and growing infrastructure, including commitments beyond certification.                                            |



## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must:

- Be a local government (e.g. county, city, town).
- Show evidence of and a commitment to continue advancing welcoming work in your community.
- Commit at least one staff person from the local government to participate in the cohort. Staff should plan to spend approximately 10 hours each month on Certified Welcoming.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS + PROGRAM FEES

**Complete the [application](#) by the extended deadline of Thursday, October 30, 2025.**

Applications must be submitted by the local government seeking certification and will not be considered if submitted by a non-profit partner.

There is no cost to participate in the Certified Welcoming Foundation Cohort, however, localities must pay the [Certified Welcoming fees](#) (\$12,000) and will be invoiced at the beginning of the program. Welcoming Network Members receive the following discount:

- Fees waived for members seeking the 1-star designation.
- 30% discount for members seeking the 2-5 star designation.

Not a member of the [Welcoming Network](#)? Indicate your interest in joining when submitting your application for Certified Welcoming. [Learn more about Network benefits and membership dues structure.](#)

## LEARN MORE

**Informational Webinar:** Watch the [recording](#) and check out the [slide deck](#) of our Informational Webinar held on Wednesday, October 8, 2025.

Webinar attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the 2026 Foundation Cohort and the process of becoming Certified Welcoming, including the timelines, program benefits and resources, the application process, and more.

[Schedule 1:1 Office Hours](#) with a member of the Certified Welcoming Team.

*Certified Welcoming is a program of [Welcoming America](#). Learn more about [Certified Welcoming](#) and review the [Welcoming Standard](#).*