

# The Linking Communities Project: Creating Welcome for Refugees

Protecting and resettling refugees honors the United States' legacy of welcoming those fleeing persecution and searching for freedom. Offering this protection not only strengthens America's national and international standing, but also strengthens American society through the many contributions that refugees bring to their communities.

Through the Linking Communities Project: Creating Welcome for Refugees (TLC Project), partners—Church World Service, the Center for Applied Linguistics, HIAS, the International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and World Relief, consulting with Refugee Council USA and Welcoming America—aim to increase support for refugee resettlement and the overall level of welcoming for refugees in local communities. The partners hope that sharing lessons learned in project states will have a broad and positive impact throughout the country.

The TLC Project seeks to implement some of the recommendations issued in the report [\*Resettlement at Risk: Meeting Emerging Challenges to Refugee Resettlement in Local Communities\*](#), which was funded by the J.M. Kaplan Fund and released in February 2013. In the past few years, some communities have seen a backlash against refugee resettlement. The purpose of the report was to start a discussion about what is driving these state and local government anti-resettlement activities and how stakeholders in the U.S. refugee resettlement program can work together to increase support for resettlement and stave off further backlash.

Included in the recommendations is a call for refugee resettlement agencies to build and support capacity at the national and local levels to generate and maintain broad-based commitment to resettlement in local communities. The report recommends that the national resettlement agencies launch a funded, proactive organizing initiative—coordinated nationally but strongly rooted in local action—to raise awareness in communities about the benefits of resettlement and proactively build support and prevent backlash. The TLC Project aims to implement this recommendation with the understanding that the work of promoting resettlement must be done locally, and that many communities have already begun to take creative, positive steps toward working together to achieve these goals.

However, local advocates need more support, training, and resources. The TLC Project provides this assistance by convening individuals invested in creating more welcoming communities, encouraging new and strengthened relationships, offering information and training about effective techniques, and providing tools to develop plans and activities for promoting resettlement. The TLC Project also contributes financial support to local organizations to execute activities. By building diverse stakeholder teams of resettlement agencies, resettled refugees, service providers, immigration advocates, community, business, and faith leaders, and others, the TLC Project aims to help communities develop and implement plans to strengthen support for resettlement and create a structure that will be useful in the event of anti-refugee resettlement action.

As the TLC Project enters its second year, it will leverage and build upon the success of the first year of the project in the pilot states of Ohio and Pennsylvania, and expand into North Carolina and Northern Texas. ([Read more about activities that were funded in the first year of the project in OH and PA.](#))