



Seattle
Office of Immigrant
and Refugee Affairs

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Responses to Council Questions
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1) Why do you want to be the Director of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs? What are your primary goals for the Department?

My drive to be the Director of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs is rooted in my lived and professional experience. Witnessing the impacts of decisions made by governments strengthened my desire to gain expertise in the areas of organizational development, decision making, and public policy. I understand the needs of our immigrant and refugee community and have a strong desire to lead a department focused on providing essential services to improve the lives of Seattle's immigrant and refugee neighbors, engaging communities in decisions about the City of Seattle's future, and improving the City's programs and services to meet the needs of all constituents.

My personal and professional life has been closely tied to the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA). Nearly a decade ago, I was one of the many community members who advocated for Seattle Ordinance 123822, officially establishing OIRA, which at the time relied on a \$238,000 appropriation from the General Fund to create two OIRA staff positions. Then in 2014, I served on OIRA's Immigrant Voting Task Force and helped produce a report that analyzed and addressed the civic and political issues affecting immigrant communities. While on the Task Force, I helped provide recommendations for improving local voting infrastructure, for expanding the right to vote for immigrants, and for removing legal barriers to voting.

Today, I continue to have both the lived and professional experiences to ensure OIRA meets the unique needs of Seattle's most vulnerable immigrant and refugee communities. We will do this by ensuring newcomers have equitable opportunities to thrive and by helping streamline services throughout the City of Seattle's infrastructure. I have lived through and understand how crucial it is for governmental agencies to work together to ensure immigrants have access to opportunities. And I believe that local government is uniquely poised to help expand these opportunities by delivering an all-inclusive approach through coordination between City departments and enhanced cooperation with local, state, and federal government entities. All levels of government have a role in ensuring that new Americans can thrive.

Before joining the City of Seattle, I served as a policy advisor for King County, where I provided informed input on the county's \$12 billion budget and managed initiatives directing funds and investments in small businesses, community organizations, and COVID-19 responses. I have also worked for community-based organizations like CARE International and the Refugee Women Alliance (ReWA) in roles dedicated to fighting poverty and empowering immigrants. I also served as a Deputy District Director for U.S. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, herself an immigration policy champion, in a role advocating for policy change at the federal level.

What are your primary goals for the Department?

I hope to develop a Strategic Plan in partnership with community members that addresses several COVID-19 recovery issues and learnings. I will create a plan centered on equity, health, and integration for immigrants and refugees and evaluate current City policies, programs, and

initiatives to ensure they meet the most pressing needs. My goal is to set a pro-equity policy agenda for our office that addresses where the needs are greatest for immigrant and refugee populations.

This upcoming year I have six priority areas

- I. Regional and Cross-Departmental Collaboration
- II. Equitable Healthy Seattle Initiative
- III. Advancing an Inclusive Economic Recovery
- IV. Ensure Seattle Continues to Welcome Refugees
- V. Expanded Safety and Access for Immigrant Families
- VI. Community Partnerships and Liaison Projects

I. Regional and Cross-Departmental Collaboration

I have a renewed focus on breaking down both inter-and intra- governmental silos so that governments can work better together to meet community needs. It is crucial that every department at the City of Seattle engages with immigrant and refugee constituents in culturally competent and informed ways.

Some specific examples include:

1. Collaborating with the Seattle Office of Economic Development (OED) to explore how we can engage and re-engage immigrants into the workforce and also ensure that we are providing the support needed to immigrant-owned businesses, such as collaborating on technical assistance and access to grants.
2. Serving as an active partner to the Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE). The BIOPIC community has been calling on government agencies to work together to address the climate crisis, which for me means ensuring immigrant and refugee, speakers of languages other than English who live in South Seattle and who are inequitably exposed to toxic industrial air emissions have the resources they need and are prioritized in conversations surrounding policy budget priorities at the City.
3. Stronger regional collaboration with other state and county agencies, e.g., the State Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA), located within the State of Washington, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), and King County's immigrant and refugee program.

II. Equitable Healthy Seattle Initiative

The pandemic has underscored the clear fact that immigrant communities and BIPOC residents need better access to health care coverage and services.

According to Public Health – Seattle & King County data, the majority of people who are uninsured in the City of Seattle are immigrants and refugees. And, while Washington State recently passed Cascade Care, a program designed to help fill the gaps in current coverage networks (such as Apple Health and Affordable Care Act), it will take a few years to design and implement the programs. I believe that it is our responsibility to ensure that we have effective health care plans now, and that we can implement programs and policies that support our

communities in the current moment. The Healthy Seattle Initiative, one of Mayor Harrell's priorities, is focused on ensuring our most vulnerable Seattle residents have access quality care. My goal is to ensure the ideas and lived experiences of immigrant and refugee communities are included in the policy-making and decision-making processes.

III. Advancing an Inclusive Economic Recovery

In the City of Seattle, we hold a significant amount of power in influencing the economy of the state of Washington. This region has been blessed with incredible wealth, but equity is still an issue.

My goal is to make sure we are doing everything we can to leverage our region's prosperity and create real pathways to economic success for our immigrant and refugee community. We could do this in several ways:

- a. Through partnerships with immigrant and refugee neighborhood business districts to lead job fairs and engage employers with potential employees.
- b. Advance labor standards by supporting and protecting our workforce and workers, for example helping immigrant and refugee gig economy workers and independent contractors ensuring they have access to basic needs and advocating for their rights.
- c. According to the [National Endowment for the Arts](#), the arts and cultural sector adds more to the economy than the construction and transportation/warehousing sectors combined. I am supportive of increasing access and expanding arts programs to preserve our various immigrant communities' cultural practices and art forms.
- d. Immigrants contribute to the many forms of artistic expression and creative art and output being enjoyed by Americans of all backgrounds, and it is important that we foster this creativity and promote cultural diversity.

IV. Ensure Seattle Continues to Welcome Refugees

- Roughly 6,000 people born in Afghanistan lived in Washington as of the 2019 [census data](#) and about 2,900 more have come since late September after temporarily residing in several U.S. military bases.
- Since 1975, Washington has welcomed nearly 150,000 refugees from 70 different countries, including myself and my own family. Seattle is home to one of the largest immigrant and refugee populations in the state. Today, millions of people have fled their homes in Ukraine because of the Russian invasion, with many seeking to temporarily or permanently reunify with family members already residing in the Seattle area.
- A few week ago, President Biden committed to welcoming 100,000 Ukrainian refugees into the U.S., and mentioned his administration is working to expand and develop new programs.
- Many Ukrainian refugees arrived in Washington than any other state in the U.S.
- Our office has already taken action by holding a webinar attended by over 150 participants on immigration legal options for those impacted by the crisis in Ukraine. And we remain committed to taking action to protect and address the needs of the

refugee communities including our Ukrainian friends and neighbors. Our goal for the recent webinar was to communicate accurate information out to our legal service providers, advocates, and members of the Ukrainian American community. The discussion included the refugee and asylum processes, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), tourist visas (B1/B2), and humanitarian parole.

V. Expanded Safety and Access for Immigrant Families

I believe that immigrant and refugee communities deserve full health wellness and the support from local government to make this a reality. Immigrant and refugee communities need culturally relevant and responsive:

- Resources to address grief, mental health, and overall well-being.
- information for families who experience homicide and gun violence.
- Internal and external cultural relevant information and resource guides for community members and government agencies
- Guides for the Medical Examiner's office and other government agencies working with immigrant and refugee populations.
- Language resources for community members and nonprofit agencies to help immigrant and refugee communities navigate the bureaucracy within our government.

According to the King County Department of Juvenile Detention, the second most arrested group in the City of Seattle are East African young people. As the only Black Immigrant in my office and the only Black Muslim department Director, I bring a unique lived experience regarding safety and access for immigrant families at the City of Seattle. I believe we must focus on building leadership and collective power from within our communities. This means engaging with our East African mothers (who reach out to me every day) so that they can help influence public policy and drive social change.

VI. Community Partnerships and Liaison Projects

- I plan to launch a listening tour to build and strengthen lasting community partnerships with the City.
- I hope to partner with the Seattle Department of Neighborhood and other departments, with our Councilmembers, and the Mayor's Office to create cohesive programs that avoid duplicative actions and to ensure we are aligned in our goals and values.
- Community Liaisons
 - We need immigrant and refugee community liaisons that advise on outreach and policy efforts
 - These liaisons will participate in and convene focus groups dedicated to advocating for our communities and providing us with information to guide our policy and outreach decisions.
- I will also leverage the collective knowledge base of the Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission and rely on them for support as well.

2) What have you learned in the first few months on the job? What are the biggest opportunities and challenges for the Department?

Since joining the City of Seattle and OIRA, I have hit the ground running, as I have been meeting with community leaders and department directors, developing budget strategies, and conducting team-building activities.

I have met with over 30 community-based organization leaders and conducted need assessment surveys from our program grantees to help inform our office about the most pressing community problems. I have been leading our office in responding to the evolving Afghan and Ukrainian refugee crises through regional partnerships. And I have brought my longstanding relationships with leaders on the federal, local, and state levels with me to ensure our offices working better together to address the region's most pressing needs.

The biggest opportunities for OIRA are around our capacity to provide constituent services to our immigrant and refugee communities. Our office is uniquely situated to serve as an open-door for our communities through our outreach efforts, policy decisions, and the programs we provide. It is one of my priorities to ensure that OIRA is the first call for our immigrant and refugee communities whenever they need support. The biggest challenge facing OIRA would be the constraints on the budget in relation to serving current needs. The world has been faced with devastating crises in both Ukraine and Afghanistan, which require significant financial resources to aid migrants from those regions.

3) How do you plan on managing your time effectively between your full-time position as leader of this important office of 11 employees with a \$5 million budget, while serving as one of the five elected Port Commissioners?

I have excellent time management skills and have a strictly defined schedule so that my responsibilities do not interfere with each other. My existing knowledge of the government financials, advising on King County's over \$12 billion budget, and managing initiatives that invested millions into community organizations, allow me to offer the best financial solutions to OIRA's \$5 million budget. Currently, at OIRA, I have weekly meetings with all staff members and biweekly check-in with staff from both the Human Resources and City Budget Office on all business related to OIRA's evolving work.

All Commissioners have full-time jobs outside our official duties at the Port of Seattle. For example, Ryan Calkins is a Port of Seattle commissioner and the executive director of the Edge Cluster, a nonprofit dedicated to statewide economic development through emerging technologies. Toshiko Hasegawa is a Port of Seattle commissioner and was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee as Executive Director of Washington State's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs. There are thousands of Port of Seattle staff, from airport employees to operators of our grain terminal, from our economic development team to our longshoremen, who are ensuring Port of Seattle's daily operations are met.

4) Do you foresee any conflicts of interest between your duties as a Port Commissioner and your position as the Director of the City's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA)?

I do not foresee any conflicts of interest between the two roles. I have accessed legal counsel to evaluate the ethics regarding my separate responsibilities and will continue to actively seek guidance from the Seattle City Attorney's Office and the Ethics & Elections Commission for when to recuse myself from any topics that may pose a conflict of interest. The Port of Seattle and the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs do not have a history of collaborating on projects, nor have they ever had a shared contract.

5) OIRA is often expected to respond to quickly changing or emergent needs. How will you balance this need for responsiveness to immediate needs with the long-term goals and strategies of the Department?

As someone who has been carrying an immigration portfolio for over a decade on the local and federal levels, I have a deep understanding of the day-to-day challenges of working in the immigration field and navigating the ever-changing environment.

I am identifying rapid response team members and committees to help address emergent immigration-related issues, and we have both policy advisors and a special projects and policy specialist on our team that have flexibility in their portfolio to take on emerging immigration issues.

Currently, I am working on the first-ever, OIRA Strategic Plan with the team. This will establish a direction for our office and will help us sharpen our focus in order to meet those goals. When emergent needs arise and we are responding quickly, our strategic plan will still serve as a "north star" that will help us return to the strategic plan goals and help focus the team on their efforts on meeting those goals. Our strategic plan will also enable us to track progress. In my experience, when departments and teams understand the organization's larger strategy, their progress can directly impact its success.

Under my leadership, we have responded to emergent crises, including working with the Mayor's Office (MO) to implement Executive Order (EO) 2022-04 regarding the war in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees and immigrants.

6) Given the budgetary challenges facing the City, how will you prioritize spending in the Department and protect the essential services provided by OIRA?

Given OIRA's small size and large body of work, this presents a significant challenge. In our short history, OIRA has established a host of successful ongoing programs that continue to operate, in almost all cases, with one or fewer FTEs each and without inflationary increases for providers/program expenses. We will be mindful to manage within budget wherever possible and pared-back administrative costs.

OIRA's community focus is realized through ongoing collaboration with dozens of community partners, government agencies, faith-based institutions, businesses, the City of Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission, and City departments to define and achieve desired outcomes for City investments for immigrants and refugees.

7) What is your overall philosophy towards management of your team? Specifically, describe your philosophy towards managing a team, developing and implementing a budget (for your department), overseeing data collection and information systems, addressing internal personnel issues, and ensuring that work plans are followed?

I believe in servant leadership and a serve-first mindset, and I am focused on empowering and uplifting those who work on my team. My goal is to always serve instead of command. This pandemic has taught us all the importance of showing humility and patience instead of brandishing authority. My goal is to always create environments that foster development, support my staff members' own leadership and unlock their potential, and encourage creativity to allow them to have ownership of our office's mission and vision.

Second, managing and overseeing our budget is one of my top priorities. I meet with the City Budget Office and OIRA's finance manager every week to develop and implement OIRA's next budget.

I believe there are two main responsibilities for successful budgetary management:

- Budget preparation, which includes determining expenses, setting spending limits, and creating a tracking system.
- Budget tracking, which includes keeping an updated list of all expenses and income to balance the department's actual money against costs.

Regarding, "addressing internal personnel issues, and ensuring that work plans are followed," I meet with OIRA's Human Resources team every two weeks to address managing changes, developing recruitment and hiring plans, controlling costs, and addressing employee concerns. Human resources weekly team meetings are a good forum for project management. Regular status reports, information sharing, deadlines, and budget assignments during projects help keep us all on track and accountable. Weekly meetings, project assignments, project completions, and project analysis are all priority topics in our regular meetings.

In addition, I work with HR and OIRA's finance manager around compiling weekly status reports for monthly or quarterly reporting.

8) The culture of an office or organization is critical – what will you do to ensure that OIRA is an inclusive, supportive work environment where employees feel safe to voice concerns?

On April 28, 2022, I brought together the entire team at OIRA, for the first time since the pandemic, to meet in-person at City Hall. We spent the day connecting around the accomplishments staff members have achieved over the last year, what the team hopes to

produce for the community as an office, and brainstormed new partnerships that may advance our mission and vision.

Headwater People Consulting facilitated the retreat, and afterward conveyed, “Director Hamdi Mohamed led the design and execution of an agenda that opened doors for new vision, for the celebration of the work that has been done even in very difficult circumstances and invested in stronger and more effective working relationships. This team senses the transition into a new phase, where the worst of the pandemic is hopefully, behind them, where immigrant and refugee community work can return to more strategic thinking after several years of necessarily being reactive, and where new challenges are emerging in City Hall, including significant budget restraints. This team seems to be very ready to face these challenges successfully, and on behalf of the communities they serve.”

My goal is to foster a gratitude practice in our workplace. I believe that gratitude is particularly important during times of change, precisely because effective change cannot be done alone. This is true now more than ever — given the challenges of coping with pandemic stress and the constant change workers have been facing in recent months. My goal is to always show authentic empathy and build psychological safety at work for everyone. In my weekly emails to staff members, I include a message of gratitude and appreciation. I also believe in promoting dialogue, which means that I strive to create a space for all participants to equally contribute regardless of their position and title and provide opportunities. For instance, it is important for me to foster an environment where each staff member can choose to lead in our meetings and retreats.

9) Tell us about an important assignment or task that you delegated. How did you ensure that it would be completed successfully?

We recently received a complaint from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) regarding the Seattle Relief Fund with a request to respond by April 17, 2022. This was the first time OIRA had received an official complaint. First, I contacted the investigator at OCR to access additional information about the nature of the complaint and requested an extension to respond by April 25, which was granted. While I am always ready to “roll up my sleeves,” I prioritize effectively delegating assignments as well.

Furthermore, I met with my team to share the issue of the complaint and delegated the drafting of the response letter to two staff members who had the capacity to lead the process. We established a communication channel with the OIRA liaison from the City Attorney's Office so, that everyone involved felt comfortable asking questions and providing progress updates. In addition to monitoring the progress of the letter, I provided feedback and the letter was submitted by staff before the deadline of April 25. Later, I followed up with OCR, and we were consistently in good standing with our office response. This matter has also been fully resolved, with a “Finding of Fact & Determination of No Reasonable Cause.”

10) Tell us about a tough decision you had to make recently at work, how did you go about making the decision?

One difficult decision I immediately faced was establishing how and where staff members should work. As our department prepared to return to the office, many of my staff members shared a great deal of concern for the safety and health of themselves and their families. There were a number of critical considerations before I decided on the future of the OIRA workplace, including balancing individual staff members' wishes with the needs of the team, professional growth, and the ability to serve our immigrant and refugee communities which often seek direct service.

As a community-facing department, relationships are the cornerstone of who we are as an organization. Bringing staff members together to connect with and learn from each other adds value, improves outcomes, and is vital to breaking down program silos. For several weeks, I held space during our all-staff meetings and during my one-on-one meetings with staff to directly hear from each team member. I asked questions to help better understand each staff member's needs. I also conducted a thorough all staff survey on their opinions on return-to-office policies.

Based on the survey responses, I made the decision to continue a hybrid workplace, for our team to come together for business reasons and community benefits. We agreed to develop an office policy collaboratively that addresses the needs of the staff and the needs of our work. My top priority is to ensure strong measures to mitigate health risks at our office, and my goal is to find the right balance for our OIRA team. I value listening to employees' feedback. I always strive to create an environment where everyone feels heard, acknowledged, and included. As a small team of 11 people, I am always available to each team member and mindful of each person's situation. I make informed decisions based on data, discussions with staff and other departments, and also on what is best for employee engagement, and the community members we serve.

11) What is your general philosophy for working and communicating effectively with the City Council? How do you plan to ensure that Councilmembers and their staff receive information from your department to make policy and financial decisions? How will you be responsive to Council requests, specifically regarding priorities that may differ from those of the Executive Branch?

While the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs is part of the Executive Branch, maintaining a strong channel of communication with City Councilmembers and leadership is one of my priorities. And the Mayor also encourages this goal. I have a standing monthly meeting with Councilmember Morales. I have followed up with Councilmember Nelson who sought more information about OIRA's Immigrant Family Institute program. My goal will be to provide the Neighborhoods, Education, Civil Rights & Culture Committee with a quarterly report that the chair could share widely with all council members and any other reports requested.

I am always happy to schedule a meeting with any of the Councilmembers to discuss any items you may be interested in. Transparency and clear communication are the kinds of trust-building practices I strive for with the Council even through this tough time.

12) Please discuss how you will further incorporate the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative into the Department and into your leadership OIRA. How will you improve racial equity through your management of the Department, the Department's community partnerships, and program development and administration?

As the only Black Immigrant in my office, I bring a unique lived experience to the Department. I believe the City must focus on building leadership and collective power in our community, engaging our BIPOC communities, influencing public policy, and driving social change.

My goal for the Department is to eliminate the root causes of inequities and create systems to build the capacity for our community partners and employees, and implement RSJI policies and practices in operations, policies, budget, workplace, and workforce.

Our operations, services, and leadership must reflect the RSJI policies. I will work to increase employees' sense of responsibility to advance RSJI across OIRA programs. To ensure our operations and services reflect our RSJI values, we must invest in our programs and services where community needs are most significant and respond to local demographic changes. I will implement a quarterly RSJI Plan Evaluation and progress report to track our progress and ensure we are holding ourselves accountable. I will also incorporate RSJI values as part of the budget analysis and develop a budget equity tool tailored for our department programs. All OIRA staff members will be trained on using demographic data and equity impact tools and will work together to develop measurement tools and a public reporting framework for RSJI implementation. For workforce development, I will focus on creating opportunities for sharing in the decision-making process and will work to eliminate bias in hiring practices and create pathways to promotion. Supporting the workforce also means reducing language barriers for hiring immigrant workers and supporting gender wage equity so that all our communities in the region can grow and thrive together.

13) What are your specific ideas for addressing institutional and structural racism in the workplace?

My high-level race and social justice goals for OIRA are:

- To be intentional. Develop a pro-equity agenda with the team.
 - Identify leads in the office to work with the Office of Civil Rights and include the pro-equity projects as part of the staff scope of work which includes, but is not limited to race and social justice, workforce equity, and gender justice.
- Establish clear goals tied to becoming an anti-racist workplace and attach owners and success metrics to them so that we can track our organization's journey over time.
- Apply an [intersectional](#) analysis as I personally seek to understand and improve the experience of my team, while recognizing the overlapping and interdependent systems

of discrimination some of them may face because of their race, gender, sexuality, ability, and other critical forms of identity, and center their experiences in this work. Part of this work also includes analyzing the effects that my actions have on LGBTQIA+ employees, people with disabilities, older workers, and people with caregiving responsibilities — and then work to develop more inclusive policies.

- Devote resources toward efforts that actually enhance the lives of Black communities and communities of color. It is my priority to invest in structural changes that will genuinely benefit communities of color. For me, this means:
 - Strategic planning process that centers on anti-racism;
 - Hiring facilitators that specialize in racial equity and racial healing;
 - Designing long-term programs to develop and retain talent.
 - Set significant resources aside for training that effectively teaches people of all races and genders how to combat racist behavior, including unconscious bias and microaggressions.

14) How can the City do a better job prioritizing the needs and viewpoints of immigrants and refugees in their policy development and program administration?

I hope to develop a strategic plan in partnership with community members that addresses some of the post-COVID-19 issues and learnings. This plan will focus on equity, health, and integration for immigrants and refugees

My high-level goals for OIRA are to:

- Evaluate City policies, programs, and initiatives.
- Set a pro-equity policy agenda for our office that addresses where the needs are greatest for immigrant and refugee populations.

It is particularly important to understand the intersections of identities that can lead to the unique experiences of multiple layers of marginalization. For example, immigrants and refugees who identify as LGBTQIA+ can experience challenges with acceptance from their own families and communities, in addition to the marginalization, they experience as immigrants. Poverty, disability, gender, limited English proficiency, and lack of education all add further layers of marginalization and barriers to an individual's visibility, acceptance, and ability to access opportunities in mainstream society.

I believe in these few key ways to co-create with the immigrant and refugee communities to be successful.

First you must start with understanding the community.

- Immigrant and refugee communities are not a monolithic group. There are many diverse needs. We have many diverse experiences.
- For folks living with multiple marginalized identities, they experience life in unique ways.

Second, we should be intentional about co-creating.

- It's important to develop a framework for co-creating with community.
- It's not a fast process. You have to be willing to host listening sessions and information sessions before introducing a community co-creating project.

Third, we need to take co-creation to the next level.

- There should be a policy in place and toolkit to support it.
- We should work with community on the policy. When working with community, we need to think about the different cultural practices in the community.
- It's important to make sure we know the language needs, including ASL interpretation and make sure we are serving all community needs.

15) One of the most critical roles of OIRA is ensuring that all residents, including those with limited English or those who are not documented, have access to City services. How will you work with City departments to ensure they are serving these residents? In your view, what needs of the immigrant and refugee community are not being met and are there ways that OIRA can help meet these needs?

It is my priority that OIRA has a Rapid Response/City Navigator position because our office currently lacks capacity within current staffing to manage urgent responses such as responding to inquiries related to the Ukraine and Afghan refugee crises.

Many people only experience government bureaucracy when filing taxes or accessing a driver's license, but for newly arriving refugees, government bureaucracy is a more routine obstacle:

- Lengthy forms full of jargon and fine print can be a big obstacle for an English language learner;
- Commuting to distant agency offices is challenging for someone who has limited access to transportation and childcare support; and
- Inconsistent eligibility criteria and application processes for different programs effectively deter the people most in need of services.

Research proves cutting through the red tape improves participation. The Rapid Response and City Navigator position within the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs will help newly arrived immigrants and refugees to cut through the red tape of local programs and services to ensure equitable access and participation.

16) Historically, OIRA has taken an active role in Federal and State policy advocacy with their coalition partners. What are your priorities for immigration policy and how can the City advocate effectively for changes in Federal and State policy?

Currently, we have a monthly meetings with our congressional delegation to share information and support federal policies. OIRA and the City of Seattle are part of the Cities for Action coalition, which is a coalition of more than 170 U.S. mayors and county executives advocating

for pro-immigrant federal policies and launching innovative, inclusive programs and policies at the local level. And OIRA recently joined the leadership committee for the Cities for Citizenship coalition, as we were invited due in large part to the national recognition of our office's ongoing successful work to help Seattle residents become U.S. citizens.

My priorities are to elevate federal immigration policies to both the Mayor's Office and the council to support. I also plan to ensure OIRA pushes to keep our region welcoming for immigrants and refugees.

17) The past several years have been extremely challenging for OIRA and the communities they serve. Beginning in 2016, the immigrant and refugee community has been responding to significant challenges, including intentionally traumatizing changes to federal immigration policy, the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic impacts of the pandemic, and increasing hate crime and bias in the AAPI community. Both residents, community partners, and staff have worked under extremely difficult conditions and with limited resources. How can OIRA support their partner community organizations as the impacts and harm from these events continue?

OIRA's community focus is realized through ongoing collaboration with dozens of community partners, approximately 30 contracted in our ongoing programs in 2022, with many more actively engaging with us.

OIRA will look to advocates, trusted leaders, community members, and staff from community-based organizations for initial responses and brainstorming based on lived experiences. We hope to further collaborate with them on how to best to leverage the City's resources for ongoing support.

We also recognize that there has been a dramatic increase in hate crimes against AAPI community members and also against people of faith and their places of worship. I am strongly committed to ensuring that the City of Seattle counters this violence through:

- Specialized programs from OIRA and other departments
- Regional collaboration by working with our state, county, and federal partners
- Departmental collaboration, working across City of Seattle departments