

2023-2026 PRIORITIES

Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Director Hamdi Mohamed
February 2024



Seattle
Office of Immigrant
and Refugee Affairs

OVERVIEW

The mission of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs is to improve the lives of Seattle's immigrant and refugee communities through policies, programs, services, and community engagement.

We are an office of 12.5 FTEs with an annual budget of \$6.4 million dollars mostly backed by the General Fund, but also consisting of Payroll Expense Tax and State and local grant funding.



PRIORITY AREAS 2023-2026

Regional & Cross-
Departmental
Collaboration

Optimizing
Community Programs
and Opportunities

Advancing an
Inclusive Economic
Recovery

Ensuring Seattle
Welcomes Refugees

Safety & Access for
Immigrant Families

Community
Partnerships
& Liaison Projects



- **Post COVID-19 plan on equity, health, and integration for immigrants and refugees**
- **Evaluating City policies, programs, and initiatives**
- **Pro-equity policy agenda addressing where the needs are greatest for immigrant and refugee populations**

Strategic Plan 2023-2026



ONGOING PROGRAMS

Language
Access

New Citizen
Campaign &
Program

Ready to Work

Legal Defense
Network

Immigrant
Safety and
Access Network

Ethnic Media



Language Access Program

- Collaborate with departments and train language access liaisons to ensure that every city resident can access city services and information, regardless of the language they speak.
- Streamlined the city's translation system through Smartcat, a cloud-based translation management system, to manage translation projects, translated content databases, and invoicing processes.
- Since the launch of Smartcat in mid-2021, OIRA has trained and onboarded over 50 translators, supported 25 city departments, and has translated over 2.3 million words in the city's top-tier languages. The program is recognized as one of the leading language access programs nationally.



New Citizen Program

- OIRA partners with community-based organizations to provide free naturalization services to low-income immigrants and refugees.
- In 2023, the New Citizen Program assisted approximately 1,000 low-income community members on their path to US citizenship. The program saved these community members over \$800,000 in legal and application fees.
- Over 450 people were naturalized through the NCP program in 2023.



New Citizen Campaign

- Seeks to increase the number of immigrants and refugees who naturalize and engage in civic processes.
- Provides naturalization assistance through group clinics and workshops, conducts broad-based outreach, promotes the benefits of citizenship, and engages with local and national partners.
- In 2023, the NCC assisted approximately 240 community members on their path to US citizenship from 34 different home countries, and a total of 14 different primary languages.



Ready to Work / Workforce Development

- Nationally-recognized model for helping immigrants increase their English-language skills and get better jobs through a free, classroom-based program that offers English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes (Levels 1-4), culturally competent case management, digital literacy skills training, and other employment training.
- RTW served 239 participants in 2023. Participants learned about life skills such as problem solving at work, phone calls on the job, job applications and interviews, customer service, personal budgeting, and career pathways planning.
- The program has successfully placed over a third of participants in job placements in 2023, including roles in childcare facilities which is facing a shortage of workers.



Legal Defense Network

- Provides legal representation in the form of removal defense services and filing for immigration relief and permanent status to low-income Seattle residents, students, and workers who are in immigration detention, facing deportation, or are at risk because of their immigration status.
- In 2023, over 160 people received full direct representation in legal immigration cases each quarter of the year. Our partners filed for relief on behalf of their LDN clients 164 times and attended 44 court hearings and USCIS interviews.



Immigrant Safety and Access Network

- Partnership between OIRA and the King County Office of Equity, Race and Social Justice (OERSJ) that reimagined the OIRA Immigrant Family Institute program.
- Pilot program that began in April 2023 to fund community-based organizations existing interventions and activities that help immigrants, and their families know their rights, navigate victim support services, understand law enforcement systems, and ensure that in-language communications are available throughout criminal legal processes.
- In 2023, partners have provided financial assistance to victims and their families, translation services, and hosted recurring know your rights and bystander intervention trainings throughout the months.



Ethnic Media and External Affairs

- Help city departments integrate ethnic media campaigns into their outreach and engagement strategies to disseminate city updates and initiatives to limited English-proficient residents
- Work with the Mayor's Office to host roundtable discussion.
- Monitor and shape City response to local or federal legislative and policy developments related to immigrants and refugees, e.g., Tukwila migrant issue.
- Roundtables comprised of 45+ reporters, producers, and editors representing 32+ local outlets from Black and POC immigrant and refugee communities.



Questions?

