



August 28, 2024

# OUR CITY OF NATIONS

“Varied Journeys, Shared Dreams and Traditions: Standing Together as Neighbors”

## Executive Summary

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### Introduction

Our City of Nations (OCON) 6.0 was a one day in-person meeting. The conference focused on ways to protect the rights and address the needs of persons in forced or voluntary migration worldwide and support their transition to a dignified life. We came together to strengthen relationships across sectors and understanding of all newcomers. The 2024 conference welcomed speakers of diverse professional backgrounds providing services to and with refugees or those transitioning to life in the United States. We heard perspectives from refugee leaders in the community, and discussed barriers, opportunities and education perspectives on best practices.

### Vision

Provide a platform for improved skills attainment, sharing, and captivation of advanced research and practices within the prism of human wellness, being interchangeably influenced by local and global factors.

### Goal

Mobilize and harness the diverse knowledge, capacities, and services of various stakeholders engaged to learn from and with those who interface with refugee and immigrant communities in the United States.

### Educational objectives

1. Gain an understanding of how newcomer neighbors are arriving and two new skill sets as best practices to best serve them
2. Understand how to create a welcoming environment and two ways to build belonging together with newcomer neighbors

### Quotes from participants

*“I very much enjoyed the session with Welcoming America, and the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.”*

*“I have learned the importance of having continued conversation with people we know and don’t know; the importance of showing up”*

*“Loved the Thrive On King space. Loved the cultural foods.”*

*“I have learned about visa status information and services coordinated by other agencies, learning about MPS partnerships and the resources they use, ”*

### **Action**

OCON 6.0 was a hybrid also offered on zoom but built as an in-person conference on August 28, 2024. The convening was hosted at ThriveOn King in Milwaukee which administered by the Medical College of Wisconsin. There were 140 registered participants who represented 54 different organizations. These organizations represented six diverse sectors including business, community service, government, healthcare, higher education, and K-12 education. There were 12 diverse speakers and moderators who provided distinctive insight from their professional and personal backgrounds including healthcare professionals, state and local government officials, community service leaders, and refugees.

The conference covered the following areas: U.S committee for refugees and immigrants and our mission, how communities are utilizing the welcoming standard to promote belonging and build a resilient welcoming infrastructure, frontline and resettlement systems panel, education perspectives on best practices to engage newcomers, newcomer systems change, strengthening connections with an opportunity to share, learn, and network.

### **Symposium Evaluation**

Participants’ formal feedback on the conference was documented through an online, 14 question survey that was conducted anonymously through email, after the conclusion of the conference. The evaluations collected expressed that the conference improved their ability to deliver services to newcomers. The majority of respondents agreed that the conference theme was timely and relevant and that they were able to identify two new resources and agency connections to share with colleagues and the populations they serve. However, the majority only somewhat agreed that a one day conference provided sufficient time. A comprehensive narrative of the full summary of responses is available upon request.

### **Future Steps**

The future direction for OCON 7 which will be held on April 23-24, 2025 at the Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) will be a continuation of conversation of this sixth convening and timely topics after the 2024 presidential election. However, formal feedback on the conference was documented online and some suggested to focus on workforce development and placement, a panel of people who volunteer and enable resettlement groups like LSS to extend their services beyond the mandated 90 day period, hearing from potential employers of refugees/immigrants, medical issues and resources, refugee successful journey, and preserving cultural identity. Additional feedback was conducted live during the end of the conference using a shared platform and some suggested housing advocates throughout the state, mental health services, community health workers, more interactive activities, how urban suburbs are welcoming refugees, higher education opportunities, etc. OCON is committed to working together for the betterment of our neighborhoods, cities, and region.

### **Gratitude**

The Medical College of Wisconsin’s Office of Global Health is the fiscal and administrative home of OCON’s initiatives. **We are grateful to the following 2024 conference co-sponsors for their generous donation to sustain this educational opportunity.**

