



A YEAR OF WELCOME FOR AFGHAN NEWCOMERS

The welcoming of Afghan newcomers continues one year after the fall of Kabul

After the fall of Kabul in August 2021, the United States faced the unprecedented challenge of welcoming nearly 80,000 Afghan evacuees in just a few months. The U.S. government had resettled just 11,400 people the year before, and the nine organizations typically involved in refugee resettlement were overstretched and overwhelmed.

By spring 2022, Afghan newcomers were moved off military bases and into communities across the United States, but America's mission to welcome Afghan newcomers isn't over, and there are ways Americans can help right now. Afghan newcomers still face challenges in building their new lives.

Many of our new Afghan neighbors continue to face challenges in 3 primary areas:



Legal Services

While Afghans have been granted humanitarian parole for two years, they are now facing the deadline for applying for permanent legal status – a process that can be overwhelming and often requires support from legal professionals. A recent survey of Afghans resettled in the U.S. under Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), ranked immigration status as the most pressing need.



Employment

The same survey found that over a third of employed respondents are currently working in jobs below their professional skill level. While the recent announcement by the federal government to streamline the employment authorization process is an important and helpful step forward, ensuring Afghan allies can access career opportunities – not just entry level jobs – is still a major need. Transportation, or lack thereof, also has a clear impact on the ability to work and to access new opportunities.



Essential Goods

While securing affordable housing remains part of the ongoing work, once newcomers are in a home there are basic goods needed, ranging from furniture to cooking and kitchen supplies, and even items such as diapers, hygiene products, or cleaning supplies.

These are three issues that require a whole-of-society response, across government, corporate, and public sectors. Welcome.US is working with its partners to offer further solutions – including hiring fairs and corporate engagement that would help Afghans secure employment at their skill level, access critical legal assistance for their asylum claims through the Welcome Legal Alliance, and through tech platforms and tools developed for resettlement organizations to access essential goods including [Welcome Essentials](#) and the [Welcome Exchange](#).

This past year has proven the power of what can happen when we work together across public and private sectors to bring communities into the work of supporting newcomers.

Welcome.US partnered with hundreds of local nonprofits, resettlement agencies, veterans groups, Afghan American-led organizations, faith groups, civic organizations, and Operation Allies Welcome to provide opportunities for Americans to help welcome our Afghan allies. And it has worked! In fact, the recent OAW survey found that 81% of Afghan respondents felt welcome in the U.S.

This cross-sector approach can be used to expand our country's capacity to welcome and support newcomers on a much greater scale. The United States must expand the private sponsorship program, like the model offered under [Uniting for Ukraine \(U4U\)](#), to additional populations in need of urgent refuge, and to build a private sponsorship program at scale. The uptake of U4U, other countries' experiences of success with private sponsorship, and the capacity and willingness of the American people to welcome proves that this approach works, and can be an extraordinary opportunity to vastly modernize and expand our system of welcoming newcomers.

Welcome.US was formed in the wake of the crisis in Afghanistan to help mobilize the private sector and Americans and American institutions to support the resettlement of Afghan evacuees, and supplement government action.

What we saw clearly was that Americans from every corner of the map and of every political party raised their hands to help our Afghan allies in search of safety:

Private Sector



Nearly 40 of America's most **iconic companies** formed the [Welcome.US CEO Council](#), which has provided over **\$240 million** in goods, services, and other resources to support newcomers.



40 businesses provided more than **\$18 million** of essential goods like mattresses, kitchen supplies, diapers, and personal hygiene items on the [Welcome Exchange](#).



More than **200 companies** posted more than **68,000 jobs** on the [Employment Exchange](#).

55 companies participated in the first two installments of a series of **local hiring fairs** planned nationwide focused on helping newcomers find employment commensurate with their education and professional experience – a key component of successfully rebuilding their lives in the U.S. **These two events helped more than 150 Afghan newcomers find career paths – not just jobs – on the spot.**

American People



Everyday Americans have gone above and beyond by donating over **376 million airline miles**, sourcing essential goods, opening their homes via Airbnb.org to more than **20,000 Afghan newcomers** and raising more than **\$17 million** in funds to directly fund organizations helping welcome newcomers.



Lawyers, paralegals, and volunteers formed the **Welcome Legal Alliance**, which has already helped more than **540 Afghan newcomers** with pro bono legal services and is on track to expand considerably this fall, meeting the legal needs of thousands more.



The **Sponsor Circles** program, the innovative new policy approach – which empowered Americans to directly sponsor hundreds of Afghans in a matter of months – proved that there is significant capacity and will among the American public to engage in private sponsorship. And this historic policy change laid the foundation for yet another innovation this past spring, the Biden administration's **Uniting for Ukraine** program, that has made it possible for tens of thousands of Americans to step up to sponsor displaced Ukrainians seeking refuge in the United States.

One year since the fall of Kabul, progress has been made, but we are far from the welcoming of our new Afghan neighbors being complete.

The long-term success of our new Afghan neighbors, and our long-term success as a nation of welcomers, rests on capitalizing on our learnings from this past year and approaching refugee resettlement in a radical new way: the overhaul of our traditional refugee resettlement system by providing on-ramps for American communities to be partners in this work.

The American people are leading the way on this change – proving once again that our communities have a capacity and will for bringing us closer to the best version of America that far outweighs policy measures alone.