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2010 Innovations Awards Application

Deadline: March 1, 2010

ID # (assigned by CSG): **10-MW-02IL**

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Illinois

Assign Program Category (applicant): Human Services (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name Illinois Welcoming Center
2. Administering Agency Illinois Department of Human Services
3. Contact Person Silvia Villa, Director of the Illinois Welcoming Center
4. Address 1708 Main St., Melrose Park, IL 60160
5. Telephone Number 708-338-6500
6. FAX Number 708/338-6505
7. E-mail Address silvia.villa@illinois.gov.
8. Web site Address <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=37453>

9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.
The Illinois Welcoming Center (IWC) is a comprehensive service delivery model that addresses immigrant and refugee needs holistically. The IWC eliminates systemic barriers by providing direct access to critical state services and programs, helping immigrants navigate through the service delivery system, and empowering immigrants with the tools necessary to become contributing community members.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2010 to be considered.
The Welcoming Center opened in 2007. It is 3 years old.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?
Illinois has one of the largest immigrant populations in the nation after experiencing an 86% increase in its foreign born population since 1990. DHS recognized that the rapid growth in immigration impacted the healthcare systems, educational systems, and human services, making it critical that the State develop strategies to integrate immigrants successfully. In addition, DHS realized that the existing bureaucratic, segregated service delivery system ensured that immigrants and other difficult to serve communities were falling through the cracks. Starting in 2003, DHS began to move away from the deficit-based view of immigrants and towards an asset-based approach that recognized the valuable contributions that immigrants make in the US.

The Illinois Welcoming Center (IWC) was designed as an innovative model to change the way state services are delivered by offering immigrants the ability to access quality services from multiple state agencies and community providers in one location. The center is a multi-agency collaboration that includes

active participation and funding from 9 state agencies in order to provide comprehensive, integrated state services. The state agencies that partner with the Welcoming Center are:

- Illinois Department of Human Services
- Illinois Department of Health and Family Services
- Illinois Department of Education
- Illinois Department of Aging
- Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Illinois Community College Board

The IWC is culturally competent, with bilingual staff available to provide direct state services, refer customers to community partners, and assist customers in navigating the state service system. This is critical to helping immigrant families succeed in the US by creating a comprehensive continuum of services and programs that allow immigrant families to meet their basic needs and increase employment opportunities.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.
 - a. 2005 – Governor’s Office Executive order #10 – mandated that State agencies begin rigorous efforts to meet the needs of LEP customers, established the New Americans Policy Council composed of 22 key leadership in the area of immigrant services.
 - b. 2005 – Interagency taskforce – Established by the New Americans Policy Council. Provided vision of the Illinois Welcoming Center model of service delivery and established cooperation of 9 state agencies to contribute to the IWC.
 - i. Interagency meetings – Meetings with 9 state agencies to establish which programs to make available at the IWC and service delivery model, including program administration and referral procedures.
 - c. 2006-2007 – New Americans working group – Comprised of Governor's office and DHS staff to handle program design and planning for the first Welcoming Center.
 - i. Labor relations – Work with Human Resources, Union representatives, and Labor Relations staff to come to an agreement on hours of operation and hiring protocols. The IWC has non-traditional office hours, including weekend office hours, to accommodate customer work schedules.
 - ii. Location – Conducted research on community demographics to target best location for the Welcoming Center by number of foreign born, non-English speakers and high need area.
 - iii. Immigrant focus groups – Held focus groups with immigrant community leaders to understand needs of immigrants and barriers that prevent access to state services.
 - d. 2007 – New Americans working group – Comprised of Governor's office and DHS staff to handle implementation and logistics management to open the Welcoming Center.
 - i. Staff Hiring – worked with Human Resources to design staff position descriptions to accommodate needs of the office. Recruited, interviewed, and hired IWC staff.
 - ii. Service Map – developed plan for providing direct state services and procedures for referring IWC customers to state agencies and community partners.
 - iii. Technology development – Worked with MIS to develop a database for the tracking of customer needs, services, and programs.
 - iv. Staff Training – Conducted staff training on the Welcoming Center vision and service delivery model, cultural competency, etc.
 - v. Co-location Development – Established co-location policies to provide programs and services from partnering state agencies.
 - vi. Community Calendar – Developed a calendar of events to foster community relationships, conduct outreach to the immigrant community, and increase visibility and awareness of state services available for immigrants.
 - e. 2007 – Illinois Welcoming Center Opens in Melrose Park, IL.
 - i. Services - The Illinois Welcoming Center can directly provide a range of services including: access to SNAP (Food Stamps), Medicaid, All Kids Health Insurance, Family

Care, Unemployment Insurance, Employment Counseling, Job Training (Illinois WorkNet), and specialized assessments for Rehabilitation Services In addition, the IWC offers workshops covering financial education, adult and family education, health and nutrition, and family/parenting skill development. Finally, IWC provides referrals for food pantries, legal assistance, citizenship classes, developmental and rehabilitation services, and health screenings. The Welcoming Center has served over 2,000 customers with a 98% customer satisfaction rate.

- ii. Satellite Office – The Welcoming Center established a Satellite Office at the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church Outreach Office, a respected and trusted community service provider, to provide community programs, conduct outreach, and offer expedited referral services to immigrants in need of state services.
- iii. Welcoming Day events – Welcoming Day events are comprehensive resource fairs that provide information and access to state services for local residents. These fairs provide information on health care, housing, child care, English language training, employment, and education. In addition, participants are able to receive free health screenings. In 2008, Welcoming Center staff worked with the communities of DuPage, Rockford, and Douglas Park to serve more than 4,000 individuals, cumulatively.
- iv. Community Alliance - a council of thirty local agencies which work to streamline services, raise awareness of local services, and promote the Center. The Community Alliance has developed into an information exchange and meeting point for community leaders to engage on key issues that impact the Melrose Park community.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

The Illinois Welcoming Center (IWC) represents innovative and proactive State policies and programs that embody the values of the 2010 Innovation Awards. Its first success was the collaboration between 9 state agencies to ensure that the IWC could provide direct access to a comprehensive array of state services. Sharing the start-up costs for the IWC between the partnering state agencies helped decrease the overall financial burden for each agency. In addition, the IWC built a public-private partnership that unites faith-based and community organizations with government leaders for the common goal of meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee communities. The IWC is a model for how states can make immigrant integration a deliberate, strategic priority. Rather than forcing these communities to adapt to bureaucratic procedures that are culturally insensitive and difficult to navigate, the Welcoming Center provides a one-stop location for comprehensive and direct service delivery in a culturally sensitive, safe, and customer-oriented environment. This allows immigrants and refugees to receive necessary state services to address many of their basic human needs, which further enables them to integrate into their adopted homeland quickly and seamlessly in order to continue their path to self-sufficiency.

14. What were the program’s start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The Illinois Welcoming Center is a collaboration between 9 state agencies. Each agency contributed to the start-up costs of the center.

Expenses

Items	Costs
Staff salaries	340,200
Interpretation (language line)	20,000
Translation	30,000
Consultant (one-time)	5,000
Office Space	104,016
Office Equipment (one-time)	6,500
Computer Equipment (one-time)	20,000
Commodities	1,740
Printing	4,000
Telecom	3,000

Client Management Software System	100,000
Staff Training	12,000
Miscellaneous	2,500
Grand Total	648,956

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?
Currently, the Welcoming Center's budget is \$566,100.
16. How is the program funded?
The Welcoming Center is now funded through the Immigrant Integration state budget line item. In addition, DHS, ICCB, and other grant sources fund specific programs and staff positions, while other state agencies continue to contribute to on-site programs and co-location efforts.
17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.
The Governor's Office issued the New Americans Executive Order #10 on November 19, 2005, which mandated that State agencies begin rigorous efforts to meet the needs of LEP customers. This Executive Order also mandated the development of an Interagency Task Force, led by the Governor's office, to coordinate policies to meet the needs of LEP customers. In Phase 1 of the effort, the Interagency Task Force recommended the creation of a Welcoming Center that could serve as one-stop location for immigrants and refugees to receive state services.
18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?
The Illinois Welcoming Center uses a case management system known as the Universal Health System that helps register the customer, determine barriers, and develop an individualized service plan. Staff can use the UHS system to track customer outcomes and issues performance reports. In addition, the Illinois Department of Employment Security has trained IWC staff on Skillsmatch to track performance measures for employment training and services.
19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.
Yes. The Welcoming Center was a recommendation from the Interagency Task Force, which is composed of key leadership from each of the nine state human service agencies. The Chair of the Interagency Task Force Human Services Sub-committee and lead champion at DHS for the Welcoming Center is:
- Grace Hou
Assistant Secretary
Illinois Department of Human Services
401 S. Clinton Street
Chicago, IL 60607
312-793-2347
grace.hou@illinois.gov.
20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?
Although the Illinois Welcoming Center is first in the nation to provide comprehensive, integrated state services, Pennsylvania has a not-for-profit organization called the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanian's that primarily focuses on employment readiness and training for immigrants. Meanwhile, state representatives from New York, Colorado and Boston, have visited the Illinois Welcoming Center to learn about the Center's innovative service delivery model and learn of best practices for the development of such centers in their states.
21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?
As a new project, the IWC is still in the process. Currently, there are plans to expand the Satellite Office in Melrose Park and open a new Welcoming Center in another community with a large immigrant presence. Staff have also begun to develop relationships with communities in other parts of the state that have large

migrant populations and are working to establish cooperation agreements for the provision of state services to these communities.

In addition, many of the service delivery ‘best practices’ implemented at the Welcoming Center have universal application for reaching other underserved and disadvantaged communities. Recently, DHS reviewed the successes of the IWC model and compared them with another pilot program, the Open Door Program, which seeks to provide critical services for persons in crisis or who have multiple service needs. DHS is now seeking to merge the successful aspects from both programs to create a single comprehensive, integrated service delivery model that is able to provide culturally and linguistically competent services to assist customers in immediate crisis situations and those with multiple needs to navigate through the service delivery system. As technology improves, the state is looking to harness these advances to proliferate this single comprehensive, integrated service delivery model across the state.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program’s effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

The Illinois Welcoming Center has exceeded its expectations, having served over 2,000 customers in its first few years of operation and receiving a 98% customer satisfaction rate. Per customer assessments, 90% of all barriers were removed. Community leaders in DuPage, Rockford, and Douglas Park have also benefited from the Welcoming Day events which provided services to over 4,000 residents, increasing the clamor by communities across the state for similar events for their residents. Thus, the IWC is building a strong partnership between the state and local communities to address the needs of at-risk, underserved immigrant communities.

There have been many “best practices” developed as well:

- Providing linguistically appropriate, culturally sensitive services in non-institutional settings increase the comfort and trust of immigrants and refugees who are often suspicious of government officials.
- Immediate, hands-on case management increases the probability of a customer being connected to a state or federal funded program.
- Access to multiple state services and thorough case management, including the facilitation of system navigation, allows for the customer to access services more efficiently.
- Evolution of service delivery may be more effective than revolution of service delivery.

The following are a few “real world” examples of how the Welcoming Center has been able to assist customers through the provision of comprehensive services:

A man came to the Illinois Welcoming Center seeking employment services. Through the intake process, the caseworker found the customer was eligible for additional services, including English language classes, citizenship assistance, and senior services. The caseworker helped him obtain employment services, provided a referral to a community agency that provides citizenship assistance, and enrolled him in English as a Second Language Level 4 classes at the local community college.

A woman came to the Illinois Welcoming Center seeking assistance in obtaining health insurance. During the assessment, IWC staff found that she also lacked adequate food, had limited English skills and was eligible for citizenship. The caseworker helped her apply for and receive FamilyCare coverage, processed her SNAP (food stamp) application, helped her enrolled in English as a Second Language Level 2 classes at the local community college, and provided a referral for legal assistance for citizenship.

These examples demonstrate how the IWC staff are able to connect customers to a wide variety of services, from meeting their basic food needs, to providing referrals to help them become citizens. What is equally important is that connecting customers to ESL classes and employment services help immigrants obtain the assistance that enable them to become self-sufficient and contributing members of their community.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The Illinois Welcoming Center has been embraced by the immigrant community and has built relationships that will continue long after its initiators have moved on. The IWC's success depends upon the support of the 9 partnering state agencies and local community leaders. The Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church Outreach Office continues to leverage its status as a trusted community leader to gain community acceptance of the IWC. In addition, the Community Alliance has become a key advocate for the provision of comprehensive and integrated services, with many local community leaders embracing the IWC's service delivery model and relationship with state government. The creation of an Immigrant Integration state budget line item provides a consistent funding source for the IWC. This ensures that the improved outcomes of the individuals and families that have benefitted from the programs, services, and opportunities that IWC has provided will continue to occur.

Furthermore, as a result of the best practices established at the Welcoming Center, the State of Illinois is currently seeking to replicate universal aspects of its integrated service delivery model in human service agencies across the state. The approach undertaken through this initiative fulfills the DHS mission of offering a path to independence and self-sufficiency for Illinois residents, new or native.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

One major challenge is to ensure that the state's leadership is visionary and passionate about changing the way that state services are delivered to immigrant communities. The State of Illinois benefits from the commitment and will of state leaders to make immigrant integration a priority. By building a strong, community-based model, Illinois was also able to engage community leaders, which encourages the development of a strong public/private collaborative. However, it has achieved this success by making incremental changes at multiple points and by ensuring a manageable budget. Furthermore, a strong and successful immigrant integration program that focuses on programs and services that help stabilize communities and allow individuals to become self-sufficient, makes it difficult for opponents to criticize. Ultimately, this initiative is a win-win for the state that results in more members of the community contributing to society to the maximum extent possible.

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2010 Innovations Awards Application Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations and Technology

- Administration
- Elections
- Information Systems
- Public Information
- Revenue
- Telecommunications

Health & Human Services

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

Human Resources/Education

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

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The Council of State Governments
2760 Research Park Drive, P.O. Box 11910
Lexington, KY 40578-1910

Contact:

Nancy J. Vickers, National Program Administrator
Phone: 859.244.8105
Fax: 859.244.8001 – Attn: Innovations Awards Program
The Council of State Governments
E-mail: nvickers@csg.org

This application is also available at www.csg.org.