

# WELCOMING COLORADO

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## BACKGROUND

For years, immigrants, service providers, business owners, faith leaders, community organizers and other leaders throughout Colorado have discussed the need to shift the messages Coloradans hear about immigrants and immigration from mainstream media and misinformed sources. As the rhetoric regarding immigrants and immigration has become ever more polarizing, steeped in fear and blame, these individuals felt an urgent need for a more thoughtful, friendly, and true discussion of immigration and treatment of immigrants. In Colorado, this harmful stream of misinformation ignores the history of our state, where a diversity of peoples, cultures and languages has always been part and parcel of the rich tapestry that is our state's communities.

A model for changing the discussion on immigration did exist. It came in the form of so-called "Welcoming" Initiatives, efforts enacted in various states throughout the US, from Tennessee to Massachusetts, Alabama to Washington. **The intent of these efforts, just like that of *Welcoming Colorado*, is to transform the public dialogue on immigration into one of respect and dignity through relationship building, community education, and strategic use of the media.**

## STRATEGY

Welcoming Colorado encourages immigrants and non-immigrants to meet and exchange stories, break bread together, and build connections and relationships. It offers groups and individuals different ways of exploring immigration and the role of immigrants in their community through workshops, book and film discussions, among other activities. The Initiative will also use the media to reach a larger number of people with positive messages about immigrants and immigration. This will include newspapers, television, radio and potentially billboards and benches. Welcoming Colorado asks that everyone who is moved by this effort take concrete action to make Colorado a more welcoming state for all, by endorsing the campaign, becoming a presenter, speaking with the media, approaching elected officials, and various other activities.

Organizations and individuals joining this effort are encouraged to have conversations regarding immigration and immigrant rights with their memberships, constituencies and/or communities in ways that are most appropriate for them. Through these steps, conditions for more humane and sensible treatment towards immigrants and all community members will be created. Welcoming Colorado has created a toolkit to assist groups and individuals in engaging with this effort and to start talking to neighbors, co-workers and fellow parishioners about what it would mean to live in communities that respect the rights and dignity of individuals, that celebrate diversity, and that truly welcome all people, no matter what their perceived immigration status. **If you are interested in becoming involved with Welcoming Colorado please contact:**

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*Colorado. Where we all belong.*