

**Bloomberg Associates**

# Global Cities Respond to Migrant Homelessness: Immediate and Long-Term Considerations

Linda Gibbs  
Clyde Hunt  
Tamiru Mammo

October 2024

“Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety, and a better future. It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family.”

- Ban Ki-moon

8th and Former Secretary-  
General of The United Nations

# Table of Contents

About Bloomberg Associates	4
About the Authors	5
Part I: The Challenge	6
Part II: Executive Summary	7
Part III: Background and Context	9
Part IV: What Data We Have and What It Tells Us About Migrant Homelessness	11
Part V: Current State of Thinking on Best Service Framework for Response on Migration	12
Part VI: What Work is Being Done to Support Mayors in These Challenges	15
Part VII: What Those Efforts Say About Homelessness	17
Part VIII: Current Situation of Urban Response to Migrant Homelessness	19
Part IX: Suggested Framework	28
Endnotes	31

## About Bloomberg Associates

Bloomberg Associates is a philanthropic consultancy that advises cities around the world. Founded in 2014, it is a part of Bloomberg Philanthropies, which encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's giving and works to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. Bloomberg Associates takes a strategic, collaborative, and results-oriented approach to make cities stronger, safer, more equitable, and efficient. The team of experts has worked with cities across the globe on hundreds of projects in order to ignite change and to translate dynamic visions into real impact for residents.

## Our Clients:

[Athens, Greece](#)

[Atlanta, Georgia, USA](#)

[Bogotá, Colombia](#)

[Bratislava, Slovakia](#)

[Chicago, Illinois, USA](#)

[Detroit, Michigan, USA](#)

[Houston, Texas, USA](#)

[Kansas City, Missouri, USA](#)

[Lima, Peru](#)

[London, United Kingdom](#)

[Los Angeles, California, USA](#)

[Mexico City, Mexico](#)

[Milan, Italy](#)

[Nashville, Tennessee, USA](#)

[Newark, New Jersey, USA](#)

[Oakland, California, USA](#)

[Paris, France](#)

[Phoenix, Arizona, USA](#)

[Rio de Janeiro, Brazil](#)

[Tampa, Florida, USA](#)



---

## About the Authors

**Linda Gibbs** is a Principal for Social Services at Bloomberg Associates, a not-for-profit consultancy that serves Mayors in achieving their vision in meeting unique municipal challenges. She is also a Senior Fellow at Results for America, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting government at all levels in harnessing data to solve the greatest challenges. Gibbs served as New York City Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services from 2005-2013.

Prior to her appointment as Deputy Mayor, Gibbs was Commissioner of the New York City Department of Homeless Services and held senior positions with the Administration for Children's Services and the Office of Management and Budget.

She is co-author of the 2021 book *How Ten Global Cities Take on Homelessness*, published by University of California Press. This book tackles one of the most formidable issues facing metropolitan areas today: the large number of people experiencing homelessness.

**Clyde Hunt** joined Bloomberg Associates and its Social Services Practice in 2020. He brought seven years of operations and project management experience from his previous roles in the energy sector. His skills help the team accelerate the use of data to develop more integrated cities.

He is both a graduate of Tuskegee University, where he received his B.S. in Electrical Engineering, and Yale School of Management, where he received his Master of Business Administration, focusing on social impact. He is passionate about building sustainable systems to help those who cannot help themselves.

**Tamiru Mammo** joined Bloomberg Associates in March 2014. Prior to joining Bloomberg Associates, he served as Chief of Staff to the President at the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, the largest municipal healthcare organization in the country, serving 1.4 million people every year. Before that, he served as a Senior Health Policy Advisor to the NYC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services from 2006 to 2011.

Tamiru earned a Master of Public Health from the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, and a Master of Health Science from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

## I - The Challenge

Migration usually occurs in planned ways through the granting of work, study, humanitarian, and family reunification visas. However, when an event arises, such as a war or climate catastrophe, migration can be sudden and unplanned. Rapid migration and demographic shifts in cities are often made more complicated by national policies governing work authorization and conferring authorized status, and by the local tensions that accompany rapid change and ambivalence toward newcomers.

Cities routinely absorb newly arrived populations organically through networks of family, friends, and community, and through mutual aid organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support inclusion. Fortunately for cities, there are ways to build an infrastructure that can be more responsive and proactive in incorporating migrants and addressing the real and perceived competition for resources that can emerge in balancing short-term needs (such as housing and healthcare) with longer term benefits, especially around workforce in cities and towns with aging or declining populations. Increasingly, cities are also establishing dedicated offices and resources devoted to incorporating migrant populations, recognizing that this ongoing capacity is critical to establishing social cohesion and removing barriers to long-term economic, civic, social, and cultural participation.

However, when the number of arrivals is so great they go beyond community and local institutional capacity to absorb, and in the absence of adequate national response, mayors are on the front lines and left with the challenge confronting a new crisis. Mayors struggle with this challenge – meeting the need for emergency food and shelter in the context of existing service systems which are often insufficient to meet the underlying needs of the current residents. In the face of national dialogs on migration that are often driven by negative stereotypes, hostile to newcomers and even violent in the face of need, mayors are faced with the reality of an increasing population of people without a place to go or support system. The best path to follow is not always clear.

This paper attempts to lay out guidance for mayors when confronting the need to provide shelter for newly arrived migrants to their cities. The guidance is culled from an array of international advocacy and relief organizations, and from current practices shared by cities globally. We need to hear from more mayors and partners to help build an understanding of what works to provide better options for paths to take when such a situation arises. The focus is practical; the paper shares strategies to employ when experiencing an unanticipated migrant surge. The guidance is equally useful for longer term strategies to build best practices to support any homeless migrant.

## II- Executive Summary

In the period leading up to the 2024 Summer Olympic Games, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo brought attention to a series of human rights issues which, in the spirit of the Olympic games, should animate our understanding of the humanity we share as members of a global community. She invited Bloomberg Associates to convene a group of experts to advise a discussion among mayors on the challenge of homelessness experienced by migrant newcomers to cities.

This paper examines the critical role cities must play in meeting these unplanned increases in migration that are most often outside international treaties or control. They are often driven by crises like war, natural disasters, or political instability. While planned migration through formal channels, such as work or study visas, can be absorbed over time, unplanned migration poses significant challenges globally. National leaders debate issues like border controls and enforcement. Meanwhile, city leaders face the reality of human need in their communities. These surges can overwhelm local infrastructure, housing, healthcare, and social services, requiring swift, coordinated responses from mayors and city governments.

This document highlights how local governments can rise to the challenge, especially when national-level support is delayed or insufficient. Mayors find themselves responsible for managing the immediate humanitarian needs of new arrivals, including food, shelter, and medical care. As such, they must adopt both immediate and long-term strategies to ensure that cities can remain resilient and continue to function efficiently.

This paper provides several key recommendations for mayors to effectively manage homelessness related to migration, including:

**Planning for Long-Term Urban Resilience:** The strongest recommendation is to be ready well in advance by developing long-term strategies that incorporate migration into urban planning. This includes creating a welcoming city philosophy and investing in social services that can support a more diverse population over time. Forward-looking policies can help cities transform migration into a driver of economic growth and innovation.

**Coordination with National and International Organizations:** Effective responses require close collaboration with national governments and international agencies. By aligning with these bodies, cities can access additional funding, expertise, and resources necessary to support the arrival of new residents.

**Fostering Social Cohesion and Reducing Tensions:** Cities must be proactive in building bridges between newcomers and existing residents to prevent conflicts over resources. Mayors should implement community engagement programs, promote cultural exchanges, and ensure that policies are inclusive to avoid deepening divisions within the local population.

**Strengthening Local Infrastructure:** Mayors should focus on enhancing local infrastructure, particularly in housing, healthcare, and education systems, to absorb the increased population. This includes leveraging public-private partnerships and working with community experts to meet the extraordinary need through temporary shelters, service navigation, and rapid pathways to housing. This requires effectively maintaining connections to newcomers through confidential recordkeeping.

**Workforce Integration and Economic Participation:** Cities with declining or aging populations can benefit from migration by integrating newcomers into the local workforce. Mayors can develop programs to help migrants quickly acquire language skills, navigate labor markets, and match them to job opportunities, particularly in sectors experiencing labor shortages.

**Utilizing Technology and Data:** Mayors can enhance their city's capacity to respond by leveraging data analytics and technology to track migration patterns, predict future needs, and allocate resources more effectively. This helps ensure that responses are targeted and scalable as the situation evolves.

This paper argues that while migration challenges are complex, they also present opportunities for cities to become more inclusive, dynamic, and resilient. Cities that adopt these strategies can not only manage demands presented by migration but also thrive by tapping into the economic and social contributions of new residents. Ultimately, the role of mayors as frontline responders makes them key actors in shaping how cities navigate the challenges of migration in a rapidly changing world.

The paper calls for global leaders and policymakers to engage more deeply with these issues and contribute to refining the best practices discussed. This collaborative approach will ensure that cities are better equipped to handle the pressures of migration while fostering social harmony and economic growth.

Bloomberg Associates would like to thankfully acknowledge the members of the steering group that advised this discussion, including representatives from The Institute for Global Homelessness, the National Alliance to End Homelessness in the USA and the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless, and of course representatives of the mayor's office in Paris. Their counsel was invaluable. We are also grateful for the guidance provided by several organizations working to support mayors around migration, including Welcoming International and its partner organization Welcoming America, the Mayors Migration Council and Cities for Action. We hope this paper does justice to their collective commitment to advance a world where people's dignity everywhere is honored, and no one should be without a home.



## III - Background and Context

For this paper's purpose, a migrant is a person who relocates across national borders. We will use the terms migrant and newcomer interchangeably in this document, intentionally avoiding designations like “illegal immigrant” that perpetuate negative frameworks for thinking about and addressing newcomer needs.

In our global world, migrants are relatively rare. The World Bank estimates this number to be 184 million (though the Migration Policy Institute estimates it may be as high as 280 million [\(1\)](#). These include both authorized (e.g., workers with visas) and unauthorized (e.g., entering a jurisdiction without proper permissions or overstaying visas) migrants [\(2\)](#).

Just thirty-seven million of the 184 million migrants are refugees—authorized migrants seeking safety under international rules of protection. The largest proportion of migrants are authorized workers traveling internationally on work visas.

The share of the world’s total population who are migrants has been relatively stable since 1960 (hovering around 3%). In absolute numbers, however, the growth has been great. The Migration Policy Institute reports there has been a quadrupling of the number of migrants since 1960, from just 77 million to 280 million in 2020 [\(3\)](#).

There is great variation among the countries that experience the arrival of migrants. While 43% of migrants live in low- and moderate-income countries, migration has grown three times faster in high-income countries over the 1960-2020 period [\(4\)](#). The United States is the largest destination country, accounting for almost 20% of all global migrants (at 50 million).

The push of migration, meaning the reasons driving people away from their country of origin as the primary cause of migration, is projected to continue from climate displacement, civil war, persecution, and lack of opportunity in low-income countries.

The largest driver of migration projected for the future, however, will be demand – a pull from destination countries seeking employees driven by local workforce gaps resulting from the aging of populations in high- and mid-income countries. These demographic changes are driving global competition for workers [\(5\)](#).

Modern migration is also increasingly urban, appealing to those seeking higher wages and a broader range of employment opportunities in large urban areas, despite higher costs and housing shortages [\(6\)](#).

Migration is often invisible to most community members – recent arrivals blend into the local landscape with the support of networks of families and friends, employers, and resources accumulated in advance of a move. Alongside many informal and mutual aid networks, many local governments, in partnership with civil society, can and do invest in migrant inclusion policy and practice, taking proactive steps to institutionalize services that intentionally incorporate people over time - what we would call “welcoming infrastructure.” While not always on the scale of or with the response mechanisms to accommodate large numbers of new arrivals in a short period of time, this infrastructure both exists and can be built upon to meet extraordinary needs.

At times, however, the increases in migration can be so great that the informal systems of support, and welcoming infrastructure where they exist, are insufficient to meet demand. Migrants can turn to local services when in need, often with hesitation about the consequences of detection. When no other resource is available, they may find themselves turning to the city’s homeless services, or even sleeping on city streets.

“Migration isn't a one-directional process; it's a colossal process that has been happening in all directions for thousands of years.”

- Mohsin Hamid

British-Pakistani Novelist  
and Writer

## IV - The Data We Have and What It Tells Us About Migrant Homelessness

We have very poor data on how many migrants are served in city shelter systems or sleeping on the streets. The knowledge is case by case, and there is no international compilation that routinely tracks this information. In fact, in many places, the policy is to intentionally avoid questions about immigration status so that the fear of detection does not act as a barrier to seeking services.

What we do have are numerous reports from global cities that confirm the significant presence of migrants who are homeless. In most countries, migrants are not the majority of the homeless population, even if they tend to be over-represented in homelessness statistics, especially among rough sleepers. Anecdotally, their numbers are perceived as growing. Yet, across parts of Europe, foreign-born individuals comprise near or over half of the street population, including in Paris (7), London (8), and Madrid (9). Cape Town, South Africa, has a single encampment of nearly 1,000 migrants from North African cities. In the US, New York City's shelter system has ballooned from 2022 to 2024 to accommodate over 70,000 migrants, primarily from Latin America and Africa, with more remaining on the streets despite the City's vast response and right to shelter.

European migration once followed clear patterns, largely tied to post-colonial shifts and economic opportunities. However, recent decades have witnessed an expansion in both the quantity and diversity of migrants, with newcomers arriving from various corners of the globe, bringing with them greatly varied languages, cultures, and religions. These include asylum seekers, refugees, mobile migrants within the European Union (with a notable phenomenon of roofless and destitute people from Eastern European countries), as well as ethnic and cultural minorities who are not recent immigrants, environmental refugees, and trafficking victims (10).

Across North America, a parallel experience is seen, as migration flows intensify along both southern and northern borders. The migrant population comprises individuals hailing from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Central Asia, Europe, and Central and South America, each with unique backgrounds and challenges.

In South America, more than 1.2 million Venezuelans have migrated to other countries, mostly as refugees but some as asylees, to countries inside the continent such as Colombia, Chile and Peru (11). And in Central America, some countries such as Costa Rica have taken in tens of thousands of asylum seekers and refugees, mostly from neighboring Nicaragua, with smaller numbers from Venezuela and Cuba, as well (12).

Throughout Africa, millions of people have been displaced, often to neighboring countries. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports more than 900,000 refugees originating from the Democratic Republic of Congo, while 800,000 people migrated from the Sudan in 2022 (13). Uganda welcomed almost 1.5 million refugees and asylees in 2022, the largest number of refugees in Africa, mostly originating from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Access to homeless services for migrants is frequently dictated and complicated by national immigration policies, with stricter policies prohibiting nationally financed shelter to migrants without legal status, often correlating with more invisible homeless migrants and higher numbers of rough sleepers (14).

Without consistent definitions across countries of who is a migrant or who is officially homeless – and equally inconsistent data collection systems riddled with gaps, it is difficult to make any statements about overall trends in homeless migrants or to properly address their needs (15).

## V - Current State of Thinking on Best Service Framework on Migration

Here are numerous international bodies and efforts to address the needs of migrants – particularly those who are refugees:

The [UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration \(GCM\)](#) is a non-legally binding framework adopted in December of 2018 by the UN General Assembly to support cooperation and a common understanding of the rights of migrations globally. Also, in December 2018, the UN General Assembly adopted the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), a blueprint for governments, international organizations, and stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives.

[The International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) is the leading inter-governmental organization promoting humane and orderly migration with a presence in 171 countries to improve migration management. IOM serves as the Coordinator and Secretariat of the [United Nations Network on Migration](#), which was created in May 2018. IOM publishes [the World Migration Report](#) every two years and also released a [Migration Guide for Practitioners](#) in 2018.

[The United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), or UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization responsible for implementing the official model of service delivery for refugees (Refugee Coordination Model) that includes partnerships with NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to mobilize resources and support government counterparts on the ground.

The [UN Refugee Forum](#) is held every four years and is the world's largest international gathering on refugees. It is designed to support the practical implementation of the objectives set out in the Global Compact on Refugees.

[The United Nations Human Settlements Programme \(UN-Habitat\)](#) is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities and is the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system.

These bodies emphasize the importance of local leadership, cooperation, and innovation in creating inclusive and welcoming cities for migrants and refugees. By adopting a rights-based and participatory approach, mayors can play a critical role in advancing the well-being and social integration of migrant populations within their cities. These groups offer the following guidance and services:

- **Inclusive Urban Governance:** Encouraging mayors to adopt inclusive urban governance approaches that recognize the diverse needs and contributions of migrants within their cities. This involves engaging migrants and local communities in decision-making processes related to urban development, service provisions, and policy formulation.

- **Policy Development:** Providing support to mayors in developing and implementing migrant-inclusive policies at the local level. This may include policies related to access to education, healthcare, housing, employment, and social services, and measures to promote social cohesion and integration.
- **Capacity Building:** Offering capacity-building initiatives and training programs for city officials, local authorities, and service providers to enhance their knowledge and skills in responding to the needs of migrants and refugees. This may involve workshops, seminars, and technical assistance on topics such as cultural sensitivity, diversity management, and human rights.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Encouraging mayors to collect and analyze data on migrant populations within their cities to better understand their demographics, needs, and vulnerabilities. This information can inform evidence-based policymaking and program planning and facilitate monitoring and evaluation of initiatives aimed at supporting migrants and refugees.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Facilitating partnerships and collaboration between cities, national governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector to leverage resources, expertise, and best practices in addressing migrant needs. This includes promoting networking opportunities, knowledge sharing platforms, and joint initiatives aimed at promoting migrant inclusion and integration.
- **Communication and Awareness:** Supporting mayors in communicating with their constituents and raising awareness about the benefits of migrant inclusion, diversity, and social cohesion. This involves fostering dialogue, promoting positive narratives about migration, countering xenophobia and discrimination, and celebrating the cultural diversity that migrants bring to urban communities.

These entities sometimes provide direct humanitarian relief, but their impact is as important in the guidance they offer for the most informed approaches for welcoming and accommodation, particularly of those migrants who are most in need, frail, carry histories of trauma, and are at – risk of exploitation and abuse even in the places of their destination.

The World Bank is a prominent partner in this international guidance and thinking. Their 2023 report “Migrants, Refugees, and Societies” (16) lays out a person-centered approach on how countries can frame their thinking and action based on international law and labor economics. The perspective adopted is a developmental approach, recognizing that migration is a huge force in furthering the well-being of both the migrants and their families, and their host destination countries. It attempts to ameliorate the challenges and tensions associated with cross-border mobility by identifying the alignment of interests of the migrants and their destination.

They offer a Match and Motive Framework, seen on the next page.

	<b>Motive - Opportunity at Destination</b>	<b>Motive - Fear at Origin</b>
<b>Strong Skills Match</b>	Many Economic Migrants	Refugees with skills in demand at destination
<b>Weak Skills Match</b>	Distressed Migrants, many irregular	Many Refugees

A match relates to the extent to which a migrant’s skills meet the demand in the destination’s local economy. Motive refers to the circumstances under which a person moves – whether in search of opportunity or a need for safety and protection.

Regardless of motive, where the migrants’ skills meet local labor needs, the match is high, and this alignment can be leveraged to integrate migrants quickly and effectively into the local labor market to stabilize lives and minimize demand on public resources.

Where the skills match is weak, but people have left for a well-founded reason, the social obligation to host refugees is paramount. Where people are not entitled to refugee protections, the destination must decide whether the migrants’ basis of departure deserves consideration nonetheless or may decide to return them to their country of origin. Humane policies are required regardless.

The World Bank report delves into the strategies that can be developed to help migrants integrate more successfully and quickly into their destination locations. The core theme of that work involves skills-matching strategies to move people quickly to productive employment. While the guidance offered by these organizations is largely intended for international and national governing bodies, some recommendations are instructive at the local government level.

These would include:

- Acknowledging labor needs
- Facilitating labor market inclusion
- Preventing segregation and facilitate access to services
- Combating discrimination and promote positive narratives
- Financing development of skills that are in demand

An added emphasis is placed on data and evidence, including harmonizing data collection methods, and building new types of surveys to inform policy making. Finally, they recommend the inclusion of migrants in planning and decision-making.

## VI - Current Best Practice Guidance to Mayors on Migration

When faced with a sudden increase in migrants entering their communities, mayors must shape and respond to public opinion, which can be deeply compassionate and strongly hostile in equal parts. They must act quickly in the face of great human need while addressing the chronic underlying housing and economic needs of their own communities. They are often alone in the need to respond to the issue, while more distant governments at the regional and national levels do not have the same imperative to act.

They also face local economies that need willing and able workers across a variety of formal and informal employment opportunities, and in many cases with rapidly aging and declining indigenous populations. This presents a chance to reframe and respond to the issue of migration as an opportunity to be embraced. It is an opportunity to fill local labor needs and accelerate economic independence to reduce pressure on public services. It is an opportunity to destigmatize migrants and open paths for community integration that is respectful of the diversity and cultures represented. It is an opportunity for the community to share what is best about them through care and compassion for the humanity represented. It is also an opportunity to build a larger, more engaged constituency that can advocate for better regional and national cooperation and policy and reinforce democratic norms.

There are several nascent entities who are filling the void at the city level to provide leadership, convening opportunities, technical assistance and guidance to mayors and other local leaders. They provide pragmatic yet aspirational recommendations on holistic strategies to meet needs. **Welcoming America** and its alliance of global partner organizations, Welcoming International, leads efforts to advance a welcoming and inclusive environment in localities around the world. They provide frameworks, standards, and certifications for localities addressing the needs of migrants (17). Their **Advancing a Welcoming Infrastructure for Humanitarian Relief** guide covers five strategies for local leaders to create equitable and welcoming environments as part of their humanitarian response.

**The National Association of Welcoming Cities and Territories (ANVITA)** is a network of French cities known for sharing best practices and supporting political advocacy to enhance dignified hospitality and local participation in national policies. ANVITA unites local authorities and elected officials to promote unconditional reception and hospitality for exiled populations.

**Mayors Migration Council** is a mayor-led coalition that accelerates ambitious global action on migration and displacement to create a world where urban migrants, displaced people, and receiving communities can thrive. It manages the Global Cities Fund, supporting twenty-eight city grantees for delivering solutions.

**Cities for Action** is a network of U.S. mayors and county leaders working together to advocate for pro-immigrant policies at the federal level while also implementing innovative, inclusive programs and policies within their local communities (18).

In summary, their guidance centers on a holistic and developmental approach to services. The main themes include:

- **Inclusive Policies:** Establish and enforce policies that prohibit discrimination based on immigration status, nationality, or ethnicity. Ensure that government services, information, and resources are accessible in multiple languages to accommodate diverse linguistic communities.

- **Community Engagement and Integration:** Establish community centers or hubs that serve as spaces for cultural exchange, language learning, and community-building activities. Provide training for local service providers, educators, and law enforcement personnel to enhance cultural competence and sensitivity.
- **Education:** Ensure that all children, regardless of immigration status, have equal access to quality education. Implement language support programs for migrant students to facilitate their integration into the educational system.
- **Healthcare:** Ensure that migrants have access to affordable and culturally competent healthcare services, regardless of their immigration status. Implement health education programs to promote wellness and preventive care within the migrant community.
- **Employment and Economic Empowerment:** Offer job placement services and vocational training programs to help migrants secure employment opportunities. Facilitate programs that support migrant entrepreneurs, such as small business grants and mentorship initiatives.
- **Legal Support and Rights Protection:** Provide access to legal aid services to help migrants navigate immigration processes and address legal challenges. Launch campaigns to educate migrants about their legal rights and protections.
- **Housing:** Develop affordable housing initiatives to ensure that migrants have access to safe and affordable housing options. Implement policies that prevent housing discrimination based on immigration status.
- **Public Safety and Policing:** Foster positive relationships between law enforcement and the migrant community through community policing initiatives. Provide support services for migrant victims of crime, including access to legal assistance and counseling.
- **Social Services:** Develop programs that encourage social integration, such as cultural exchange events, mentorship programs, and community celebrations. Provide support services for migrant families, including childcare, counseling, and family reunification assistance.
- **Advocacy and Collaboration:** Advocate for fair and just immigration policies at the national level, collaborating with other mayors and organizations. Establish partnerships with local NGOs, community organizations, and businesses to enhance the effectiveness of support programs.



## VII - What Those Efforts Say About Homelessness

None of the guidance reviewed above offers a framework for addressing migrant homelessness. Migration has been a constant for many years, and these well-developed frameworks offer guidance on holistic approaches to supporting migrants across the community. It is the exception, not the rule for migrants, like any other population, to become homeless. When the numbers increase, the volume can be more than informal systems can accommodate, and migrants spill over into shelters or onto the streets. Welcoming systems routinely respond to that need, but some circumstances place extraordinary stress beyond system capacity.

As the number of cities that are addressing migration challenges grows, local practices are expanding and maturing. Peer learning is developing.

What follows here are some highlights of the extraordinary efforts that cities are making to meet these needs with care and a deep sense of humanity, while appreciating the often difficult social and fiscal dynamics.

We hope by reviewing practices and learnings that localities are employing, we can contribute to a foundation for mayors to advance successful strategies and spread learning across jurisdictions.

“ Migration powers economic growth, reduces inequalities, and connects diverse societies. Yet it is also a source of political tensions and human tragedies.”

- António Guterres  
9th and Current Secretary-  
General of The United Nations

## VIII - Current Situation of Urban Response to Migrant Homelessness

### 1. Welcoming

To start with an abundance of good examples is the general welcoming framework for newcomers – meeting a broad array of needs not limited to homelessness. These include:

#### Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA

Lancaster City, known for its long history of welcoming newcomers, resettles 20 times more refugees per capita than the national average. Recently, the city passed an ordinance to uphold a 3-star rating on [Welcoming America's Certified Welcoming Standard](#).

This 3-star commitment includes advancing inclusive policies, protecting newcomers' rights, and ensuring equitable access to education, employment and services.

#### Heidelberg, Germany

The Heidelberg Migration Hub is a locally supported network that meets the full range of needs of people with a migration history. To inform newcomers comprehensively about these services, they have published [Arriving in Heidelberg: An Overview of Key Services](#) which sets the landscape for all services available from public and civil society partners in the city. They bring together around 50 initiatives and organizations that provide resources for individuals in need from basic services such as food, housing, and clothing, to more acute supports such as psycho-social counseling and assistance, trauma assistance, and addiction counseling.

#### Bogotá, Colombia

Bogotá developed a [Public Policy](#) for the Welcoming, Inclusion, and Development of New Bogotans, which is a plan to adapt institutional capacity for migration management and governance (19). As part of this policy, an information and guidance network was launched, called '[Integrate Centers](#),' where migrants, refugees, returnees, and host communities can address their inquiries and access the city's service system. Approximately 36,000 individuals have received assistance through the Centers in approximately a year and a half. These centers are integrated into the city's general care network, ensuring that individuals are attended to upon entry, just like any other Bogotá resident.

Additionally, in localities with a significant migrant population, there are service centers specifically for migrants, refugees, and returnees. These centers provide direct access to city services, and Colombian nationals also receive assistance at these sites.

#### Athens, Greece

Athens initially established a [Migrant Integration Center \(KEM\)](#) in 2015 when they experienced a significant increase in newcomers to help them navigate the public service system and know their rights, access legal assistance and health services, start learning the language, and get advice and assistance around job opportunities. The KEM evolved into the Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee issues (ACCMR), a hub of services coordinated by the Municipality of Athens that includes over 100 organizational members providing information, supports and referrals to new arrivals (20).

#### Portugal

Portugal's new [Action Plan for Migration](#) features 41 measures aimed at improving immigration procedures and enhancing support for migrants. Key actions include bolstering consular services, prioritizing entry channels, expanding temporary and emergency housing, and improving professional training. The plan also prioritizes the resolution of pending cases, increasing healthcare access, and boosting educational opportunities for migrants.

These initiatives aim to streamline migration processes and support effective integration in Portugal.

## 2. Narrative

No place on the globe is devoid of biases against newcomers and discrimination based on their status. Newcomers are scapegoated for longstanding and deep seeded social ills not of their making, and the actual burden their needs place on localities can frustrate leaders grappling to address many competing demands.

Yet, economies are dependent on their labor to survive, and history has shown the incredible contributions they have made to thriving and safe communities, advances in the arts and sciences, and to economic growth and opportunity.

Ultimately, localities have little control over whether migrants will arrive, and the drive for opportunity with the demand to fill jobs has proven to be more powerful than any enforcement effort can thwart. Those policies and practices are reserved to international tables, and cities are left to address the consequences.

Fostering compassion and inclusion and overcoming fear and hate through positive and proactive messaging can build the environment to best meet urgent humanitarian need, acknowledge the local demand that draws migrants in, and foster social harmony.

### Denver, Colorado, USA

Denver has made significant efforts to shift the narrative around immigrant populations in the media. The city has published articles debunking common immigration myths, used public art and theater to showcase the positive contributions of immigrants, and launched the Denver Asylum Seekers Program, which outlines ways to help immigrants integrate smoothly into the community. These efforts are aimed at fostering a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of immigrants in both news outlets and public discourse.

### Lisbon, Portugal

Lisbon has been a prominent advocate for a coherent immigrant policy in Portugal that dignifies people, creates more efficient visa and/or asylum application processes, and meets the workforce needs of the country as well (21). City leadership has welcomed people with dignity and has spoken out against the xenophobia, racism and violent attacks against migrants experienced in other localities (22).

## 3. Rough Sleeping (Unsheltered)

Less guidance is available to advise cities experiencing such a large number of newcomers that their need for housing exceeds local capacity and homelessness grows within local shelters or on the streets. Or in certain cases, newcomers may not take up offers of temporary accommodation in the traditional homelessness system sometimes citing concerns about safety, quality or convenience (23). This phenomenon has been increasingly experienced by urban centers across the globe, and local residents express frustration with the presence of growing street encampments and expect their mayors to do more to meet need and maintain a safe and secure environment within their communities.

Mayors are left to navigate the challenge locally, and most often without the support of regional or national officials. Little in the form of guidance or direction currently exists. There cannot be a one size fits all approach to addressing homelessness. Cities, service providers and their front-line staff are learning to address the unique needs of newcomers. For example, homeless asylum seekers who have traveled thousands of miles may have distinct mental health needs, for instance, and if there are more families than individuals, local educational systems must expand capacity for schooling and language needs.

### London, England, UK

Non-UK nationals make up almost 60% of London's rough sleepers (24). As part of its response, the Greater London Authority created the London Migrant Accommodation Pathways Support (MAPS) service, a program designed to assist non-UK nationals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in London. The program helps these rough sleepers know their rights and entitlements to housing and support, access to accommodation, and get linked to professionals who can assist when eligibility for public benefits is unclear or in pending application. Also, the Roma Rough Sleeping Service assists Roma rough sleepers, local authorities, and non-government organizations by providing support to access immigration and employment assistance in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. The city's training program on supporting non-UK nationals provides staff with continuing education and training to better support non-UK national rough sleepers. Finally, London Councils provides for four sub-regional immigration advice services for people who are unsheltered or at risk.

### Chicago, Illinois, USA

Chicago is addressing the unique aspects of new coming migrant rough sleepers (people experiencing unsheltered homelessness) through measures that go beyond providing temporary accommodation and basic services, such as legal aid, job training and interpretation and translation services, and even cultural orientation programs to help migrants understand local customs, traditions, and expectations. However, newcomers must be engaged in an effective and appropriate way that addresses unique issues such as language barriers and cultural differences. The city takes a collaborative approach between local government, non-profit organizations, and community groups to better inform migrants about available resources and services. This includes tailoring the messages and services offered, distributing information in multiple languages, and even providing assistance with transportation.

## 4. Reception and Intake

Creating a central place for newcomers to receive an assessment and referral to appropriate services as well as intake to shelter if needed can simplify a complicated system. A fixed location can become well known within migrant communities to streamline access to a full array of core needed resources. Some notable efforts to meet significant need deserve attention and provide valuable lessons for cities in the future. These include:

### New York City, New York, USA

New York City has experienced perhaps the largest influx of migrants of any US city in the past decade, with over 200,000 arriving in the city since 2022. The number appeared so suddenly and dramatically that the underlying service system became incapable of supporting the demand. The city pivoted to create a parallel and independent reception and sheltering system to welcome newcomers, provide shelter, and steer them to services and support.

The city laid out its strategy in a **Blueprint** describing its overall approach. Central to that approach was the creation of a central navigation center at the New York Roosevelt Hotel. This first-of-its-kind Asylum Seeker Navigation Center (25) is operated on behalf of the City by Catholic Charities of New York, with 12 additional satellite sites run by community-based organizations (CBOs) across the five boroughs.

The Navigation Center serves as a central location and referral network for asylum seekers to receive free and confidential assistance in accessing necessary services including health care, shelter, health care benefit enrollment, vaccinations, school enrollment, immigration legal orientation, and local identification (IDNYC) enrollment.

Since opening in May 2023, the hotel's lobby has been transformed into a processing center that has registered and provided care to over 150,000 people from over 160 countries. In addition, the hotel's more than 1,000 rooms have been dedicated to housing over 3,000 people at any one time, mostly families with children. This is just one of scores of new facilities opened by the city to meet the exceptional need.

## Ireland

While not a city example, and to the credit of the national government in Ireland, at the outset of the war in Ukraine, the Irish government took extraordinary steps to provide safe haven to fleeing refugees. We include it here for the fact that the demand was such that a separate sheltering system was put in place for the Ukrainians alone, with important lessons to consider by others.

In the Irish case, the leadership was driven at the national level with a coordinated service and support response. This included comprehensive intake, and shelter referral where needed, and income support equivalent to that received by Irish nationals, many times more generous than the underlying support provided other refugees. In March of 2024, this was revised downward to the level of other refugees, applicable moving forward for new arrivals. Notably, presumptive refugee status was given to anyone showing their last address was in Ukraine, allowing them to be immediately eligible to receive a full package of benefits and to work.

The overwhelming response by 86,000 Ukrainians to the Irish offer created an unprecedented surge in demand, a huge challenge for a nation of just 5 million people. The Government of Ireland, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), established an intake center near the Dublin Airport to register Ukrainian nationals and their families. An airport shuttle brings refugees directly to the center, which functions as a comprehensive service hub, facilitating the issuance of social protection numbers and helping with accommodation. IOM is providing technical assistance to ensure these individuals receive temporary protection residence cards (26) (27) (28) (29) (30).

## Denver, Colorado, USA

Denver, a city of under 1 million people, has welcomed nearly 42,000 newcomers from the U.S. southern border since 2022, providing essential services and resources. While pleading with the national government for relief, the city has proactively embraced the newcomers and their needs with a full array of support and services. At its peak, the city housed 5,000 migrants in shelters opened to accommodate this surge.

An extraordinary effort that involved a broad array of city agencies, the City of Denver gathered their lessons to share with others in the city's [Newcomers Playbook](#). The Playbook outlines a 15-step plan with recommendations for integrating migrants, focusing on the need for temporary shelter, with immediate assistance for supporting newcomers to find jobs and housing. This guide offers a replicable approach for other cities to meet shelter needs and provide related support effectively.

## 5. Sheltering

Most cities managing shelter systems will find newcomers among those receiving services on any given day. While some jurisdictions, like the UK discussed below, bar ineligible individuals from service, most offer services without distinction to nationality or status. Case workers within shelter systems are familiar with local resources to support newcomers, and typically refer to those services to meet the needs of migrants.

However, what we are seeing with greater frequency is the creation of stand-alone shelter services that are structured to address a rising surge of newcomer population beyond the capacity for the underlying system to accommodate. This creates the opportunity to specially tailor services to meet extraordinary needs.

## Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

The City of Ottawa has met a demand for shelter from newcomers by converting an ice rink into a 75-bed respite center (31). The facility provides access to meals, showers, crisis intervention services, referrals to primary care services, and a place for clients to rest throughout the day and night.

Most of the clients in this center have migrated from various countries in the African continent, and the employment and housing supports are structured to match their situation. With a population primarily comprised of working age men, the city uses a rapid employment and housing strategy that stabilizes them quickly in community.

### **Chicago, Illinois, USA**

The city of Chicago recently announced that it would be merging its mainstream homeless shelters with its migrant shelters, no longer managing these as independent systems. The maturation of this approach was based on the logic of efficiently leveraging the mainstream navigation and social supports the city provides in a comprehensive, equitable, single system rather than independently.

### **6. Service Referrals and Connections for Those Who are Homeless**

Connecting to existing service networks is a common sense leveraging of opportunity to help expedite needed support and minimize periods of homelessness. Cities that leverage effective public-private partnerships can greatly enhance the effectiveness of meeting newcomer needs. Cities that have an underlying infrastructure for welcoming migrants are advantaged by tapping into those resources. Regardless, for newcomers who become homeless, barriers to permanency will result from ineligibility for many services and housing supports. Many cities have built supplemental programs designed to meet these gaps, using flexible resources, entirely unencumbered local funds, and philanthropic and charitable donations. These are often custom built to a specific population (like the Irish case for Ukrainian refugees mentioned above), and time limited.

### **Manchester, England, UK**

In Manchester, and across the UK, many migrants without immigration status are denied access to welfare benefits, local authority housing, or homelessness assistance and are referred to as a category of people having “no recourse to public funds” (NRPF). The Manchester Homelessness Partnership, a multi-stakeholder collaboration supported by Mayor Andy Burnham, has prioritized charitable contributions for this category of individuals to offer a handful of furnished self-contained flats as temporary placements. These flats come with utility payments, as well as access to other supportive services. Once an individual secures “Leave to Remain” (a legal immigration status) and benefits are in place, the person or family is transitioned to more stable housing. Additional private support has been used to provide long-term resources to help newcomers get housing and transition to independent living.

### **Medellin, Colombia**

Medellin, hosting a large number of Venezuelan migrants, faced a critical housing shortage during the pandemic. Mayor Daniel Quintero identified housing as a key issue for newcomers and expanded the city's housing assistance through the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees, benefiting over 300 migrant families (32). The city provided three months of paid accommodation in shared facilities and complemented this with legal, psychosocial, and employment services, aiding over 1,200 migrants. This initiative enabled more than 75% of participating families to secure permanent housing. Additionally, the project emphasized the inclusion of children, spurring further investment in education, healthcare, and employment programs for migrants under the [Medellin Futuro](#) plan.

### **7. Education**

Addressing the educational needs of children of migrant families equally puts demands on the local school systems. Sheltering providers need to be well connected to school enrollment processes to ensure children residing in shelters are quickly integrated to schools and that children's needs are met as they move to permanency. Adult educational needs – particularly for language skills and certifications that align to local employment opportunities – can facilitate successful integration.

### **Chicago, Illinois, USA**

In 2023, Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson collaborated with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to launch a pilot Welcome Center aimed at assisting families in transitioning to permanent housing and integrating children into schools (33). The center centralizes support for students in temporary living situations, placing them in the appropriate academic environments based on their language proficiency, academic level, and socio-economic needs (34). CPS currently supports around 17,000 student newcomers, including 9,000 who have arrived since August 2022 (35).

### **Hamburg, Germany**

Hamburg prioritizes educational integration for refugees by offering various language and educational programs through government and community initiatives (36). Refugees benefit from affordable German language classes, online resources, and specialized programs designed for children to learn German and adapt to the local culture. Higher education institutions provide tailored support, including admissions assistance, language courses, orientation sessions, and integration activities. These initiatives help refugees return to higher education, offering access to academic resources, buddy systems, and cultural events. Additionally, Hamburg ensures that foreign qualifications are recognized and provides pathways for refugees to validate their skills and education.

### **Milan, Italy**

Milan is implementing a comprehensive education program for newcomer families with children between the ages of newborn and six years (37). This program bridges the gap as families move on from the national care support after being granted asylum. Children and families are provided with a team of education, psycho-pedagogical, and neuropsychiatric experts who support them with education plans and school enrollment. The program also supports parents and caregivers through language courses and workforce development.

## **8. Workforce and Training**

Whether individuals have migrated for a better employment opportunity, or if they fled their home for their own safety, the reality is that employment is necessary to allow them to afford to meet their own needs and to reduce their reliance on government services. The World Bank report on refugees, discussed at the beginning of this paper, provides a useful way for localities to think about a framework for their own local strategy for migrants and employment. Cities employ strategies like assisting migrants to quickly apply for asylum and to achieve refugee status to enhance eligibility for employment. In situations where direct matching to employment is impeded by lack of permissions required, supporting migrants with training, certifications, other work readiness activities can be used to reduce barriers to securing employment once possible. The quicker and smoother migrants can be helped to find jobs, the quicker their stability can be achieved through independent housing. Many cities have made this their priority.

At the same time, cities have been vocal advocates against labor exploitation that often accompanies precarious legal status of migrants and have adopted oversight activities to enforce against abusive labor practices.

### **Stuttgart, Germany**

The Stuttgart Department of Migration published a **Start in Stuttgart** brochure that provides helpful information for migrants moving to the city. In a city where over 44% of people have a migrant background, this brochure details how migrants can obtain bank accounts, driving licenses, work permits, tax identification numbers, and employment and entrepreneurship services (38).



## Pakistan

The EU-funded and ILO-implemented REFRAME project aims to prevent abusive recruitment practices and protect migrant workers (39). It promotes the ILO's Fair Recruitment guidelines globally, regionally, and nationally. Among the Pakistan-Arab States corridor, REFRAME engages multiple stakeholders, including governments, businesses, and civil society, to ensure fair recruitment.

## 9. Permanency and Housing

Against the backdrop of the lack of affordable housing, limited eligibility for housing assistance and competing homeless populations indigenous to the locality, assisting migrant populations to find housing is daunting. Informal welcoming networks – offering a bed or room in a home of extended family or friend networks – has traditionally addressed most need. Cities employ added support both in the interest of achieving stability for migrants, and to reduce pressure on shelter systems which need to be able to accommodate a flow of newcomers.

### Denver, Colorado, USA

In April 2024, Mayor Johnston announced that the city would provide housing for 800 newcomers for six months while they wait for asylum applications and work authorization to process (40). This package includes six months of rental, food, and utility assistance and access to housing navigation services to secure permanent housing. Since 2023, more than 8,000 people in Denver have received bridge housing services (41). By the end of 2024, Denver expects to have transitioned 1,000 migrants to permanency with comprehensive support.

### New York, New York and Buffalo, New York, USA

New York City in cooperation with the City of Buffalo is enhancing its support for migrants by launching a program to relocate asylum seekers there, focusing on providing stable housing and long-term integration (42). This initiative will move migrants from NYC's strained shelter system to permanent housing in Buffalo, where they will receive comprehensive support, including housing assistance and employment services. Local organizations will play a key role in helping migrants settle and build stable lives. This approach not only addresses immediate housing needs but also promotes permanency and self-sufficiency for migrants, reflecting a positive shift towards sustainable integration.

New York City also piloted the Asylee Moveout Assistance (AMA) program, which gave eligible asylum-seeking families one-time grants of up to \$4,000 to help them transition out of the city's shelter system and into permanent housing. Contracted non-profit partners help families find housing, and the grants cover moving costs and other relevant expenses for families who secure permanent housing (43).

### Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

In response to the influx of Ukrainian Displaced People (UDPs) following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Glasgow City rapidly established a comprehensive support network through existing partnerships with the Scottish Government and NGOs. The city provided accommodation and support for over 2,000 individuals via Welcome Hubs and collaborated with private hotel providers to transition from crisis response to resettlement services. These efforts included matching UDPs to long-term housing with Housing Associations, Private Landlords, and Community Hosting Arrangements, as well as ensuring access to health services, education, training, and employment. Glasgow's collaborative approach addresses the challenges of housing supply while leveraging the economic and social benefits of migration. The city also pioneered the Housing First approach in the UK, supporting people with complex histories to improve their life chances.

## 10. Management and Accountability

As with any issue that involves multiple stakeholders, providing leadership, planning and coordination is essential. Particularly during periods of significant migration, putting

extraordinary demands on the sheltering system, developing a multiagency command structure to set policies, securing funding, establishing programs and monitoring activities is necessary. While coordination of service delivery is best placed in the hands of leaders with programmatic expertise, citywide management requires fiscal and legal resources, as well as coordination from non-human service supports like real estate, licensing and public safety. Multi-service public command structures typical of emergency services operations can be useful references. Whether managed by human service leaders or general management teams, accountability to the executive for outcomes is key.

### **Riga, Latvia**

As the Ukrainian refugee crisis emerged in 2022, former Mayor Stakis applied his response to the migrant influx with transformation and culture change, emphasizing technology integration by leveraging data dashboards and effective communication. The transparency established trust and accountability with the public (44). Riga's data-driven approach facilitated informed decision-making, countered misinformation, and attracted additional funding for essential services, ultimately contributing to the development of a national data system for refugees by summer 2022.

### **11. Data and Counting**

A tricky issue is the question about whether to ask and record immigration status of individuals in the shelter system. Some national policies may prohibit use of funds to support migrants, and explicit knowledge generates complicity in non-compliance. The fact of gathering the information may also impede the likelihood that people in need will ask for service for fear of detection. Also, holding the information may create circumstances where national requests to share the information for enforcement purposes places the city in a quandary of sharing and exposing versus providing safe haven.

However, without the information, effective management to reach the best outcomes is impeded. Directing individuals to the right services, placing the unsheltered into the most appropriate setting to meet their needs, and tracking overall demand and outcomes cannot occur without the information. At a macro level, having the information is also needed to bring attention to the level of demand and costs imposed on local governments, and supports advocacy at national and international levels around migration and meeting global need. In balance, cities are turning increasingly to gathering the information, ensuring for privacy and confidentiality of information gathered.

### **Athens, Greece**

As part of efforts to welcome and integrate migrants, Athens started up the **Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee issues (ACCMR)**. An important part of that work is the establishment of a digital information and referral platform. This participatory tool maps the ecosystem, of services in order to allow professionals and constituents to exchange information, get access to information and referrals in the community, to ensure that those seeking assistance get access to needed programs and services.

### **London, UK**

London deploys an advanced database about rough sleepers, called **CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network)**, which is the most comprehensive source of information of its type in the UK (45). The system allows participants from outreach teams, assessment centers, accommodation projects, and day centers to record information about work done with people sleeping rough, their needs. The city also commissioned the creation of the **Strategic Insights Tool for Rough Sleeping (SITRS)** (46), which allows key data to be combined from across multiple systems, to better understand how people might engage in services to allow a better picture of their rough sleeping population. Both of these systems can examine demographic patterns, like immigration status and nationality, to better understand migrant homelessness. This information can be used at the operational level to monitor the effectiveness of services and at a more strategic level, by policy makers, to spot trends and emerging needs among rough sleeping populations, including migrants in particular.

## 12. Advocacy to National/International Authorities

A common issue to many cities is the lack of support from their respective national governments to sufficiently deal with immigration, and mayors are often left to use their local platforms to advocate for policy reform, actions, and funding at the national level—and they can do so behind the scenes and/or publicly.

### **Lisbon, Portugal**

Mayor Carlos Moedas has been a prominent advocate for a coherent immigrant policy in Portugal. Undocumented migrants sleeping in tents on the streets cannot access government aid, including emergency shelter, without legal status. The mayor has stressed the need for concrete solutions from the national government to meet people's basic needs while demonstrating a willingness by the local government to find temporary humanitarian solutions during a time of crisis. For example, he asked for the creation of temporary reception centers for immigrants as a means of shelter and services, and when the government-funded these centers in its new immigration plan, the mayor identified potential sites, brought in civil society partners, and offered additional local government cooperation to speed up implementation (47).

### **Coalitions Of Cities in the USA**

Mayors of five cities, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, and New York joined together on a letter to advocate with U.S. President Joe Biden to obtain federal funding or policy support to help address the surge of migrants arriving in their cities with little support or guidance from this administration (48). Much of the letter's content focused on financial support as well as the expansion of temporary protective status and permission to assist asylum seekers in obtaining work authorization. Later there was a larger bipartisan coalition of forty mayors who renewed the call for reform for work authorization for immigrants. One example of partial success of that effort is when the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) extended the work authorization period for noncitizens who have an immigration application pending, including 800,000 asylum applicants, from six months to a year and a half (49).

## IX - Suggested Framework

These examples from around the globe provide valuable lessons for cities facing significant increases in homelessness during sudden increases in migration. Few cities have the luxury of providing the full array of recommended options. Achieving everything included in the summary below would be an ideal situation.

Short of that ideal, we strongly believe cities will fare better if they position themselves as welcoming cities and counter negative stereotypes with positive narratives acknowledging the strengths newcomers bring. Developing temporary surge capacity in shelter to accommodate extraordinary demand, with attendant coordinated intake and referral to support services, should humanely meet need and overcome quality of life challenges that arise with street sleeping and encampments. Quickly moving people to employment stabilizes migrant households and reduces demand on public services. Identifying the skills in demand in the local economy and matching newcomers to those jobs with training and support to address any gaps expedites permanency and builds the local economy. These acts are the core of any successful strategy. The twelve areas listed below provide guidance and tools Mayors can adopt as part their strategies.

### 1. Welcoming City

Building cooperation is required to create inclusive and welcoming cities for migrants and refugees. Local leadership is crucial. Mayors can play a critical role in advancing the well-being and social integration of migrant populations within their cities.

Adopting a welcoming city framework and orienting city services around the special considerations of new arrivals is clearly the best way cities can meet newcomers' needs and establish a strong foundation of knowledge and relationships to accommodate sudden increases in migrants. The Welcoming America [Advancing a Welcoming Infrastructure for Humanitarian Relief](#) provides valuable guidance to cities navigating this path.

### 2. Narrative

Communicating positively with the wider community and raising awareness about the benefits of migrant inclusion, diversity, and social cohesion helps to assuage public fears and meet newcomers' extraordinary circumstances. Mayors can promote positive narratives about migration and counter xenophobia and discrimination.

### 3. Reception and Intake

Creating a central point for newcomers to access information and service referrals in a culturally sensitive way streamlines access and fosters coordination. If possible, one location simplifies knowledge. If demand merits, neighborhood locations can increase engagements where there are high concentrations of populations.

Assigning a single case manager to meet the range of family circumstances including actions to prevent homelessness through reunification and transportation assistance, providing legal assistance around immigration processes and access to shelter when needed, collecting data and following-up can minimize newcomer trauma and proactively problem solve.

### 4. Rough Sleeping

Leaders should tap into the knowledge of the existing outreach teams to refresh knowledge about the changing demographics of those sleeping on the streets. Keeping outreach workers informed about resources for newcomers can support their efforts to move people off the streets to safety. Resources are best located in proximity to centers of migrant activity.

Outreach workers should be equipped to help rough sleepers know their rights and entitlements to housing and support, access to accommodation, and in getting linked to professionals who can assist when eligibility for public benefits is unclear or in pending application. Outreach workers with language proficiency like those on the street should be recruited as well as being provided access to translation services.

### **5. Sheltering**

Building capacity within the existing shelter system to accommodate the special needs of newcomers is recommended. Because this involves a knowledge specialization, designating specific shelters to assist newcomers would efficiently ensure the most accurate knowledge and effective assistance is available. Should the number of newcomers seeking services grow to merit a stand-alone shelter, this would permit support tailored to their needs.

Extraordinary demand might suggest the creation of an entirely parallel shelter system, in which case the choice must be made whether to have the sheltering department manage the two parallel systems, or whether another department should manage the migrant shelters. Where this has occurred, some cities have chosen their departments responsible for emergency services rather than homeless services, both for their capacity to respond quickly to urgent needs, and for their knowledge regarding funding streams accessible to support extraordinary efforts. In either case, close coordination with local officials and providers of homeless services is required to ensure effective service coordination.

### **6. Service Referrals and Connections**

Increasing knowledge in the service community about the special needs of migrants, and the resources available to help them, increases the chance that newcomers will be reached by the support available. Training programs for partners and community-based organizations might include technical assistance on cultural sensitivity, diversity and inclusion, immigration processes and human rights.

### **7. Education**

Close coordination with school systems to meet sudden enrollment needs should be offered to provide streamlined access to education for children. Language and skills training for adults can bridge gaps to employment and help with integration and inclusion.

### **8. Workforce and Training**

What is key for mayors is to help in acknowledging local labor needs, reinforcing the narratives around the values migrants bring to communities. Mayors can also facilitate labor market inclusion and offer training in developing skills in demand. Mayors can assist in establishing close coordination with local economic development, community college and trade organizations to enhance offerings and bring newcomers to these opportunities.

### **9. Permanency and Housing**

Many newcomers arrive at their destinations based on loose informal networks of knowledge but without contact locally. Homelessness prevention can be achieved by inquiring early on about friend and family connections that might be available for reunification and aiding with onward transportation.

If newcomers wind up on the streets or in shelter, modest support to assist with rapid rehousing can speed their permanency and reduce expensive shelter stays. One-time payments to support co-location with host families, assistance with housing searches, up front security deposits, or even short-term rental assistance can establish housing stability early on.

### **10. Management and Accountability**

Managing the needs of a diverse migrant population in a city is not the job of a single person or even an office. It truly requires a city-wide collaboration, which can often include more than two or three departments, and both public and private organizations. Designating a management

lead and making clear that all participating departments are accountable to the lead's direction is critical and offers guidance to partners not under their control but seeking leadership and a clear path of action.

Leads typically are the homeless serving department. Depending on the magnitude of the challenge and the nature of the actions and local resources, other candidates to lead include Emergency Services or Immigrant Affairs, or the Mayor's Office itself.

Central command structures for coordinated management with a clear strategy, routine meetings and measurable metrics can ensure clarity of objectives, document decision-making and facilitate knowledge on need and progress in achieving objectives. The inclusion of migrants in the planning and decision-making can bring practical reality to deliberations and decisions.

Estimates of costs related to these efforts should be consolidated into a budget report, expenditures should be tracked, and funding opportunities should be monitored to maximize reimbursement of eligible expenditures. Leads on funding can also coordinate with philanthropic and charitable efforts to establish special funds contributing to the efforts.

### **11. Data and Counting**

Mayors can lead efforts to collect and analyze data on migrant populations within their cities to better understand their demographics, needs and vulnerabilities. Harmonizing data collection methods underlies any effective management coordination. Partners can also build new types of surveys to inform policy making. This information can inform evidence-based policymaking and program planning and facilitate monitoring and evaluation of initiatives aimed at supporting migrants and refugees.

### **12. Advocacy To National/International Authorities**

Facilitating partnerships and collaboration between cities, national governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector is essential to leverage resources, expertise, and best practices in addressing migrant needs. This includes promoting networking opportunities, knowledge sharing platforms, and joint initiatives aimed at promoting migrant inclusion and integration.

# Endnotes

- (2) **Migration Policy Institute, the United Nations Population Division.** “International Migrant Stock 2020: Destination” Table 1: International Migrant Stock at Mid-Year by Sex and by Region, Country, or Area of Destination, 1990-2020. United Nations Population Division. [www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock](http://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock).
- (3) **Batalova, Jeanne.** “Top Statistics on Global Migration and Migrants.” The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute. [www.migrationpolicy.org/print/17530](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/print/17530).
- (1) (4) (5) (6) (16) **The World Bank.** “World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies.” P.46-53, 178. The World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2023>.
- (7) **City of Paris.** “La Nuit de La Solidarite 2024 Report” City of Paris. <https://www.paris.fr/pages/nuit-de-la-solidarite-2024-25549>
- (8) **National Government of England.** “Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2023” National Government of England. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2023/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2023#demographics>
- (9) **Meda, Jordi Bosch.** “Homelessness Among Migrants in Spain.” European Journal of Homelessness 4 (2010): p. 139-154.
- (10) **Pleace, Nicholas.** “Immigration and Homelessness.” Homelessness Research in Europe 2010 (2010): p. 143-162.
- (11) (13) **The International Organization for Migration.** “The World Migration Report 2024.” The International Organization for Migration. <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024>
- (12) **UNHCR.** “UNHCR Costa Rica Factsheet - June 2024.” UNHCR. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/110941>
- (14) **O’Sullivan, Eoin.** “Key Elements in Strategies to End Homelessness in the European Union by 2030: A Discussion Paper.” European Journal of Homelessness, Volume 16, no. 2 (2022).
- (15) **OECD.** Population Experiencing Homelessness 2024. “OECD Affordable Housing Database.” OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/HC3-1-Population-experiencing-homelessness.pdf>
- (17) **Welcoming International.** <https://welcominginternational.org>.
- (18) **Cities for Action.** <https://www.citiesforaction.us/>.
- (19) **City of Bogotá, Colombia.** “Bogotá Introduces New Public Policy for Inclusion and Development of Migrants.” City of Bogotá, Colombia. <https://bogota.gov.co/en/international/bogota-has-new-public-policy-development-inclusion-migrants>
- (20) **Cities Network for Integration.** “Municipality of Athens: A Few Words About the Municipality.” Cities Network for Integration. <https://www.cnigreece.gr/en/municipalities/athens/>.
- (21) **TVI Noticias.** “Carlos Moedas Embarrassed by Country's ‘Lack of Immigration Policy’” TVI Noticias. <https://tvi.iol.pt/noticias/carlos-moedas/presidente-da-camara-de-lisboa/carlos-moedas-envergonhado-por-pais-nao-ter-politica-de-imigracao/20240507/663a1a8dd34e049892208b54>.

(22) **CNN Portugal.** “Racist group invades home and attacks immigrants for half an hour in Porto. One of the victims chose to jump from the 1st floor.” CNN Portugal.

<https://cnnportugal.iol.pt/racismo/imigrantes/grupo-racista-invade-casa-e-agride-imigrantes-durante-meia-hora-no-porto-uma-da-vitimas-optou-por-saltar-do-1-andar/20240504/66360d79d34e049892206f40>

(23) **Luis Ferré-Sadurní and Olivia Bensimon.** “A Growing Number of Homeless Migrants Are Sleeping on N.Y.C. Streets.” New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/09/nyregion/migrants-homeless-encampment-nyc.html>

(24) (45) **City of London/Greater London Authority.** “Rough Sleeping in London (CHAIN reports).

City of London/Greater London Authority. <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports#:~:text=CHAIN%2C%20which%20is%20commissioned%20and,the%20UK's%20most%20detailed%20and>

(25) **City of New York.** “Mayor Adams, NYCEM, MOIA Open Resource Navigation Center to Support Newly Arrived Individuals and Families Seeking Asylum.” City of New York.

<https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/667-22/mayor-adams-nycem-moia-open-resource-navigation-center-support-newly-arrived-individuals-and#/0>

(26) **International Organization for Migration.** “Reception Facility for Ukrainians Established at Dublin Airport.” International Organization for Migration. <https://ireland.iom.int/news/reception-facility-ukrainians-established-dublin-airport>.

(27) **Whyte, Barry.** “Eighty-five Percent Of People Who Applied For International Protection At Dublin Airport In 2023 Arrived Without A Correct Identity Document.” NewsTalk.

<https://www.newstalk.com/news/85-of-asylum-seekers-arrive-at-dublin-airport-without-identity-documents-1646914>.

(28) **Irish Immigration/Department of Justice.** “Information on Temporary Protection for People fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.” Irish Immigration/Department of

Justice. <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/information-on-temporary-protection-for-people-fleeing-the-conflict-in-ukraine/>.

(29) **Irish Immigration/Department of Justice.** “Travel Confirmation Notice.” Irish

Immigration/Department of Justice. <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/travel-confirmation-notice/>.

(30) **Reuters.** “Irish Welfare Cuts Will Hit One in Three Ukrainian Refugees – Minister.” US News.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2024-05-15/irish-welfare-cuts-will-hit-one-in-three-ukrainian-refugees-minister#:~:text=The%20government%20decided%20on%20Tuesday,Ukrainians%20seeking%20refuge%20in%20Ireland>.

(31) **Wabano.** “Bernard Grandmaitre Respite Centre.” Wabano. <https://wabano.com/bernard-grandmaitre-respice-centre/>.

(32) **Yu, Helen Elizabeth.** “Medellín’s Holistic Housing for Refugees.” Mayors Migration Council.

<https://mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/news/medellns-holistic-housing-for-refugees/>.

(33) **Koumpilova, Mila.** “Chicago Opens School Enrollment Center For Migrant Children And Families.” Chalkbeat Chicago.

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/chicago/2023/7/17/23797844/chicago-public-schools-migrant-families-welcome-center/>.

(34) **Chicago Public Schools.** “Chicago Public Schools Continues Support of New Students with

Welcome Center Pilot.” Chicago Public Schools. <https://www.cps.edu/press-releases/chicago-public-schools-welcome-center-pilot/>.



(35) **Smylie, Samantha.** “Chicago Public Schools Estimates Between 9,000 And 17,000 Migrant Students Are Enrolled, Depending On Who Is Counted.” Chalkbeat Chicago. <https://www.chalkbeat.org/chicago/2024/04/18/chicago-and-illinois-count-migrant-students-differently/>.

(36) **City of Hamburg.** “Education for Refugees.” City of Hamburg. <https://www.hamburg.com/residents/refugees/11790586/education/#:~:text=HAW%20Hambu rg%20offers%20preparatory%20courses,for%20a%20successful%20university%20career.>

(37) **Mayors Migration Council.** “Milan, Italy: First Steps in Milan.” Mayors Migration Council. <https://mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/news/milan-project/>.

(38) **City of Stuttgart.** “Department of Migration Welcome Center Start in Stuttgart Information for people moving to Stuttgart” City of Stuttgart. <https://www.stuttgart.de/medien/ibs/pdf-fachstelle-migration-start-in-stuttgart-en-2022-07.pdf>.

(39) **European Commission.** “Community Changemakers Help Pakistan’s Migrant Workers Avoid Exploitation.” European Commission. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/stories/community-changemakers-help-pakistans-migrant-workers-avoid-exploitation\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/stories/community-changemakers-help-pakistans-migrant-workers-avoid-exploitation_en).

(40) **Bedayn, Jesse.** “Denver Launches Ambitious Migrant Program, Breaking From The Short-term Shelter Approach.” AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/denver-migrant-work-program-shelters-0408fe3095be61415e939dc84c711891>.

(41) **Beaty, Kevin J.** “Migrant Arrivals Stretched Denver's Budget. Now, The City Is Scaling Back Aid.” NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2024/05/08/1249823648/immigration-denver-migrants-spending>.

(42) **Sundaram, Arya.** “NYC Set to Launch New Migrant Program ... in Buffalo. Will more follow?” Gothamist. <https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-set-to-launch-new-migrant-program-in-buffalo-will-more-follow>.

(43) **Fox 5 NY.** “NYC Offers Migrants Money to Find a Home.” Fox 5 NY. <https://www.fox5ny.com/news/nyc-offers-migrants-money-to-find-a-home>

(44) **Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative.** “Addressing Crises and Everyday Concerns.” Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. <https://cities.harvard.edu/stories/using-data-to-lead-the-region-in-refugee-management/>

(46) **London Office of Technology & Innovation (LOTI).** “Rough Sleeping Insights Project.” London Office of Technology & Innovation (LOTI). <https://loti.london/projects/rough-sleeping-insights-project/>

(47) **Portugal Resident.** “Lisbon Mayor Wants Temporary Reception Centre for Immigrants ASAP.” Portugalresident.com. <https://www.portugalresident.com/lisbon-mayor-wants-temporary-reception-centre-for-immigrants-asap/>

(48) **PBS Newshour.** “Mayors of 5 Big Cities Press for Meeting With Biden to Address Surge of Migrants.” PBS Newshour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/mayors-of-5-big-cities-press-for-meeting-with-biden-to-address-surge-of-migrants>.

(49) **US Citizenship and Immigration Services.** “USCIS Increases Automatic Extension of Certain Employment Authorization Documents to Improve Access to Work Permits.” US Citizenship and Immigration Services. <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/uscis-increases-automatic-extension-of-certain-employment-authorization-documents-to-improve-access>

# **Bloomberg Associates**

Bloomberg Associates

[associates.bloomberg.org](https://associates.bloomberg.org)

© 2024 | Bloomberg Associates