



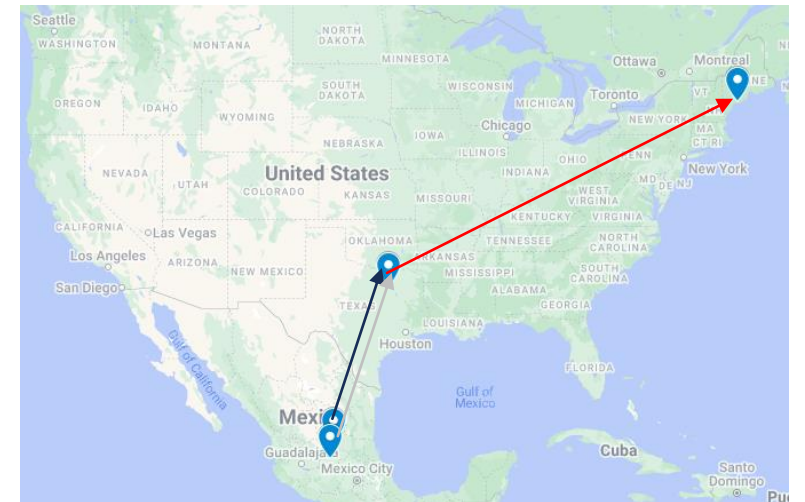
WELCOME CENTER OUTREACH PROGRAM & GRANT REQUEST

PAULINA MORALES



ABOUT ME

- Hometown: Dallas, Texas
- Education: Bowdoin College – Class of 2024
 - Majors: Government and Legal Studies (American Politics), Education
- Bowdoin Intern for the Town of Brunswick’s Economic & Community Development Department
- Interests:
 - Researching, writing, and implementing community-conscious public policy in the fields of immigration and education
- Why?





THE ARRIVAL

Immigrating from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola, over 450 asylum seekers arrived in Portland, Maine in the summer of 2019, but the families were relocated across the state, leading to over 60 families moving to Brunswick.

INTRODUCING THE WELCOME CENTER

- A taskforce was quickly created to address the needs of the asylum seekers, also known as the “New Mainers,” and within the discussions the idea for the Welcome Center was formed.
- The Town of Brunswick unveiled an upgraded and expanded Welcome Center in February 2022, and it serves as a centralized hub for immigrants to access legal aid, workforce help, English Language Learning courses, and other services. In addition to this, the Welcome Center is a space for families to socialize and access childcare.
- The Immigrant Resource Center of Maine, founded and led by Somali-born Fatuma Hussein, staffs the Welcome Center, and two full-time staff are present: Benedita Kakhuba and Douce Namwira.



DISCUSSION AND GOALS

In mid-June, the Economic & Community Development Department, General Assistance, and the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine all met, and it was collectively decided that a **community needs assessment** survey would be conducted.



- **Survey 1: External Organizations and Service Providers**
 - Collect data to understand the accessibility of services and systemic barriers faced by non-profit organizations, government agencies, the Welcome Center, and other service providers.
- **Survey 2: Community Needs Assessment**
 - Rooted in community organizing, the community needs assessment interviews members of the New Mainer community who actively use services at the Brunswick Welcome Center.
 - Services and programming offered at the Welcome Center and the rest of Brunswick will be led by New Mainer voices rather than by assumptions of community needs.

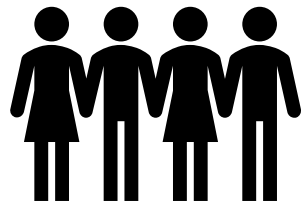
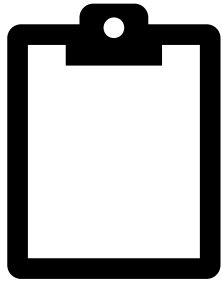
DEVELOPMENT

- **Survey I: External Organizations and Service Providers**
 - Conducted research and identified people, organizations, and agencies who provided social services and/or supported immigrant causes.
 - As a Google Form, the survey was emailed to over 60 non-profit organizations, government agencies, and other service providers, and a minimum of over 215 people received the form in the first round.

ACLU of Maine	The ACLU of Maine is the state's guardian of liberty. We are active in the courts, the legislature and the public sphere to defend the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and to extend their promises to all Mainers. Our priority issues include criminal legal reform, reproductive freedom, racial justice, immigrants' rights, LGBTQ rights, women's rights, voting rights, freedom of expression, freedom of speech and religion, and privacy.	www.aclumaine.org
	Pablo Anaya Carol Garvan	Director of Operations & Associate Director of Development Legal Director
	Jacqueline Gomez Zachary Heiden	Development Communications Strategist Chief Counsel
	Grace Hooke Michael Kebede	Engagement Coordinator Policy Counsel
	qainat khan Tiffani Ortiz	Director of Communications Communications & Engagement Fellow
	Laura Retherford Margarita Salguero-Macklin	Director of Leadership Giving Office Manager
	Anahita Sotoohi Meagan Sway	Legal Fellow Policy Director
Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic; Maine Law School	The Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, a program of the University of Maine School of Law, is a small legal service provider, in which clients are represented by "student attorneys," law students specially licensed by the federal courts to provide legal services to low-income clients. The Clinic represents low-income individuals with legal cases in Southern Maine courts (Cumberland, York, Sagadahoc, and Androscoggin counties) for most kinds of civil, criminal, juvenile, and family law matters. The Clinic represents clients at both the trial and appellate levels. The Clinic asks clients to pay a \$30 administrative fee in some cases; clients may be asked to pay court and other significant costs. The Clinic does not otherwise receive funding for its services.	
	Courtney Beer Christopher Northrop	Associate Clinical Professor Managing Director, Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic



DEVELOPMENT



- **Survey 2: Community Needs Assessment**
 - Researched the creation of community needs assessment to understand the daily life and experience of New Mainers in Brunswick, ME
 - Who do you trust in times of need? What is your employment experience? Do you have access to basic necessities?
 - Benedita Kakhuba, Douce Namwira, and Abraoo Celestino at the IRCM translated the surveys to French and Portuguese for the families.

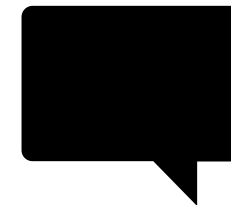
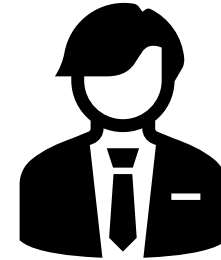
SURVEY I: EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS RESULTS

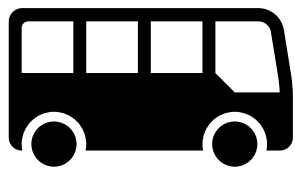
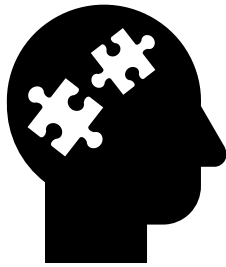


- Relevant Themes:
 - The number of people and families who are served by the non-profit organizations, government agencies, and other providers ranges from hundreds to thousands, but the main highlight expressed in survey results were that the available staff and resources cannot meet the increasing needs.
 - Organizations most expressed:
 - Hundreds of people would be turned down due to shortage of resources or staff
 - Long waiting periods lasting over weeks or even months

SURVEY I: EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS RESULTS

- Work Authorization
 - The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issues Employment Authorization Documents (EAD), also known as “work permits.” Without an EAD, New Mainers cannot be legally hired, but it is taking a minimum of 6 months for the permit to be issued, contributing to their dependency on general assistance and non-profits until they are eligible to work.
- Housing Crisis
 - The Town of Brunswick is facing a housing affordability shortage, and New Mainers living on the naval base and motels/hotels cannot find a long-term housing unit.
- Language Barriers
 - There are not enough staff or volunteers who speak French, Portuguese, or Lingala – the dominant languages spoken by the New Mainers.
 - English Language Learning courses are offered, but families struggle to consistently attend courses due to constraining work schedules or lack of affordable childcare.





SURVEY I: EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS RESULTS

- Legal Assistance
 - The supply of immigration lawyers does not meet the increasing demand for legal assistance, forcing non-profit organizations and clinics to turn away immigrants in need. Thus, individuals and families must navigate a complicated immigration legal system that can put them at a higher risk of deportation.
- Mental Health
 - Numerous New Mainers do not have health care or are uninformed on how to access mental health services. Not only is this detrimental for New Mainers as they cannot access the necessary treatments, but this also impacts the mental health of staff at organizations and agencies who serve them.
- Transportation
 - New Mainers struggle with transportation as they do not own vehicles, and they struggle with navigating public transportation in Brunswick.
 - According to the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP), immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers struggle to find transportation to Scarborough for ICE Check-Ins or to Boston for the court hearings, making transportation extremely costly.

SURVEY 2: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS



- How often do New Mainers use the Welcome Center?
 - Depending on the families or individual's needs, the Welcome Center use the space very often. Some people visit the Welcome Center 2-4 times a month while others visit +2 per week.
- What services are most in demand?
 - New Mainers identified that they visit the Welcome Center to access language interpretation services, English Language courses, and use it as an interview space for employment opportunities.
- Who do they turn to in times of help?
 - The staff at the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine and volunteers are the first people who the New Mainer's turn to when they need help.

SURVEY 2: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

■ Most Common Barriers

- Language: The language barrier makes it difficult for New Mainers to access services, and it makes them even less likely to seek aid when they need it.
- Childcare: New Mainer families cannot find accessible and affordable childcare; thus, impacting their work schedules and ability to attend various services such as English Language Learning courses, workshops, and other things.
- Racism and Discrimination: Non-profits, service providers, and New Mainers identified this as a barrier in accessing services, and it discourages them from engaging with the community and seeking services.
- Culture and Community: New Mainers feel a disconnection from their culture and do not feel as they are members of the Town of Brunswick.

SURVEY 2: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

- What are New Mainer's interested in seeing more of at the Welcome Center?
 - English Language Learning Courses
 - Job Certification Programs and Employment Opportunities
 - Legal Services Aid
 - Cultural Gatherings and Celebrations
 - Understanding of Civic Engagement



GRANT REQUEST

Elmina B. Sewall
—
FOUNDATION

- "To improve the well-being of people, animals and the environment while fostering equity and centering community voices."
- Rapid Response Fund Grant
 - Supports community-based organizations serving under-resourced populations and geographies:
 - **Emergency** refers to an unexpected and unplanned event or situation that requires an immediate and time-limited response.
 - **Time-sensitive** refers to opportunities that are short-term in duration (usually within the next few months) and purpose.

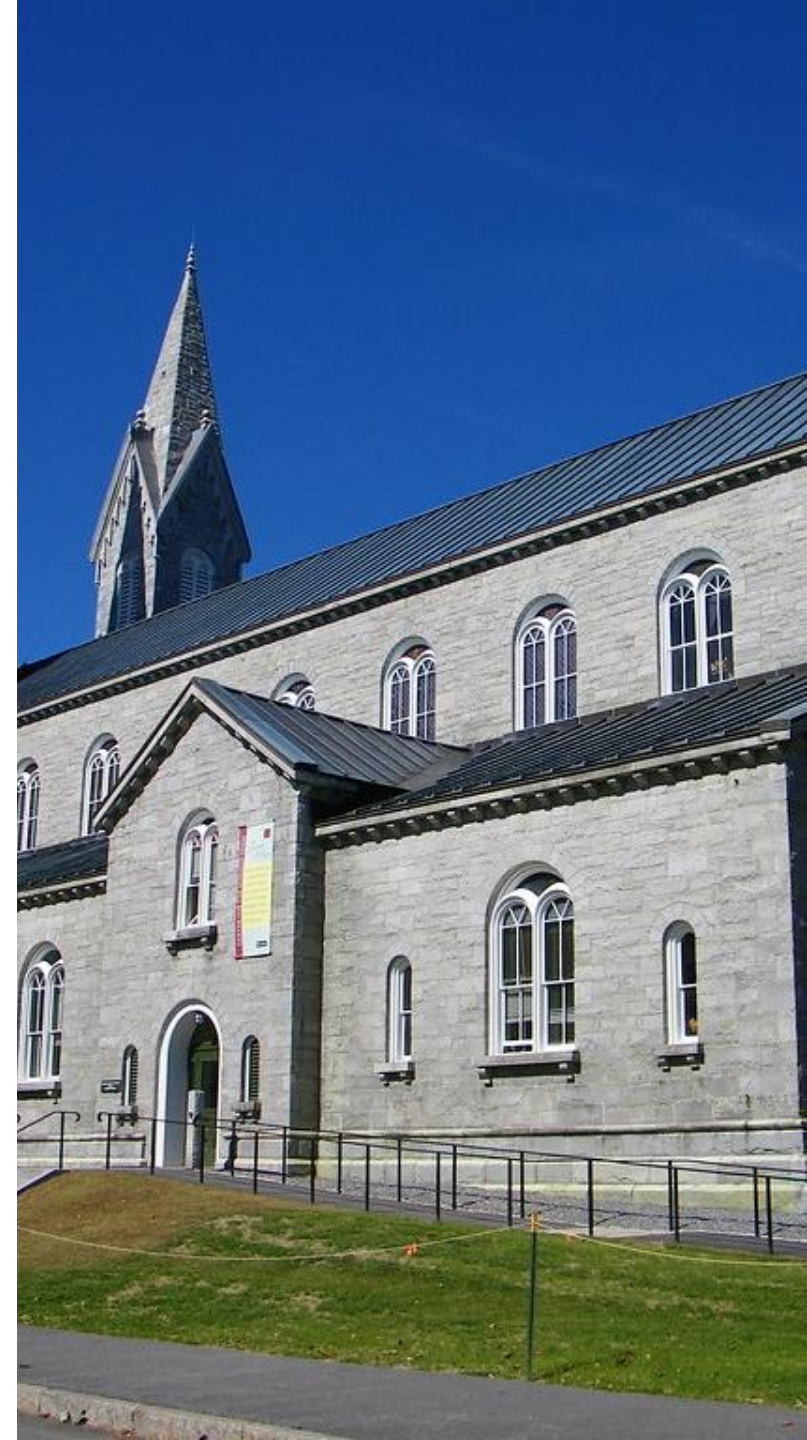
GRANT REQUEST

- We will request funding for the development of a **centralized database website** that will contain the information of government agencies, non-profit organizations, other service providers. The website will be accessible to the public.
- The website will be modeled after the City of Dallas's Community Resources Welcoming Hub, and it will also be paired with **ReciteMe**, an accessibility software that will reduce the need for translators and in-person disability services.



BOWDOIN VOLUNTEER CORPS

- To continue supporting the New Mainer community, a weekly afterschool mentorship program will be provided at the Welcome Center under the Joseph McKeen Center's Bowdoin Volunteer Corps.
 - Bowdoin Volunteer Corps (BVC): An umbrella organization for student-led community service programs, and the McKeen Center support student leaders and volunteers by providing trainings, fundings, advice, leadership development, and so much more.



BOWDOIN VOLUNTEER CORPS



- The mentorship program pairs children from the New Mainers community with Bowdoin College students who will serve as mentors. The mentors will serve as a friend, role model, and confidant who will work to support the positive youth development of the children.
- Key to Curriculum Development
 - Equity-Minded Mentorship: The term refers to the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes. These practitioners critically reassess their own practices. It also requires the are mentors to be race-conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in America.
- Example of Topics:
 - Celebrating Culture, Mental Health and Managing Stress, Adult Role Models, Public Service and the Common Good., and Journaling

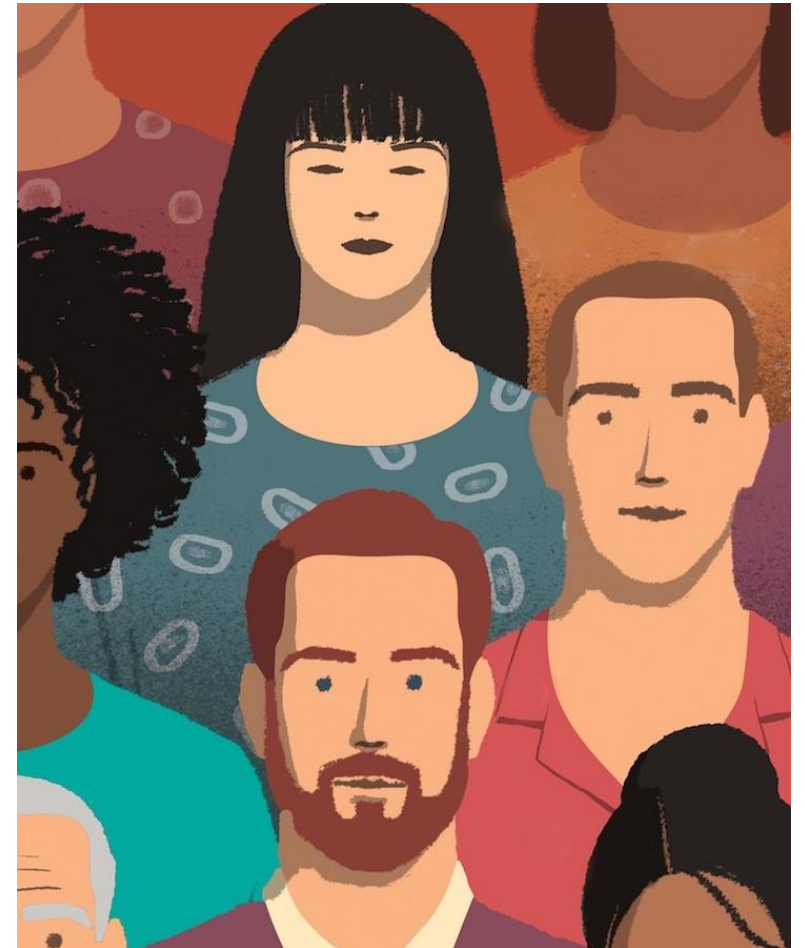
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TOWN OF BRUNSWICK

Leadership and Communication

- Annually hold listening sessions and/or community needs assessment with New Mainers to understand their integration and day-to-day experience in Brunswick
- Build and strengthen relationships with other towns in Maine, nonprofit organization, agencies that will continually update each other on evolving immigration issues

Equitable Access

- Use equity-minded practices to ensure the creation and implementation of inclusive and representative policies by auditing all Town of Brunswick Departments
- Remove linguistic barriers that prevent New Mainers from accessing information on events and services, and emphasize diversity and inclusiveness and town publicity



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TOWN OF BRUNSWICK



Civic Engagement

- Educate New Mainers on the structures of the Town of Brunswick's Departments and Town Council
- Inform New Mainers on who they can contact for civic representation and how to become involved in Town affairs

Economic Opportunity and Education

- Host job fairs at the Welcome Center that connect New Mainers with Brunswick's businesses
- Work with the Brunswick School Department and Parent Teacher Associations to encourage and invite immigrant families to participate in their children's education journey

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TOWN OF BRUNSWICK

-
- Create the position Immigration and Diversity Affairs Coordinator who will oversee the programming and services of the Welcome Center in conjunction with the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine
 - Increase access to the Town's programs, benefits, and services by conducting outreach and programming with external organizations and service providers that are reflective of community needs
 - Prepares and finalizes annual reports reviewing the strength and opportunities to guide further action by the Town of Brunswick

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

01

Hire an immigration attorney for the Town of Brunswick to oversee and sponsor the Welcome Center to become accredited by the Department of Justice to provide legal services to New Mainers

02

Consider becoming a member of Welcoming America, a "non-profit organization that leads a movement of inclusive communities" by helping local governments and other entities create inclusive spaces for immigrants.

03

Continue to create inclusive, affordable housing units for all income-levels that include the integration of New Mainers into the Brunswick community

04

Partner with clinics and health-based non-profit organizations to provide workshops at the Welcome Center on mental health and navigating the health care system

05

Ease the accessibility of public transportation throughout Brunswick and beyond by seeking a reduction of fare prices or including more drop off spots

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Sally Costello, Director, Economic & Community Development
- Chrissy Adamowicz, Economic Development Project Manager
- Planning & Development Department
 - Taylor Burdin, Matt Panfil, Julie Erdman, Mike Pindell, Bina Skordas, Frank Maloney, and Violet Apodaca
- Sabrina Best, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation Department
- Samantha Cogswell, Associate Director at Bowdoin College's Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good
 - Bowdoin Public Service Initiative