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Cover Photo Courtesy of Mamadou Ndiaye
Dear Friends of The Welcoming Center,

We feel so bolstered by the continued support of those who recognize that welcoming immigrants is a powerful force for good in our city. We are deeply grateful for the commitment to The Welcoming Center of employers seeking talent, funders looking for measurable impact, community leaders looking for an effective strategy to revitalize neighborhoods, and the people who care about the well-being of others.

Recent demographic reports indicate Philadelphia’s overall population has declined slightly for the first time in over 20 years, despite the continued rise in the number of immigrants. And yet, as 2020 economic recovery efforts ramped up and public and private investments were flowing, we saw many immigrant communities and businesses left behind. For too many, accessing meaningful employment opportunities, or capital for small businesses, or basic public services remains a challenge.

Since 2003, The Welcoming Center has been demonstrating how these challenges can be overcome. We know that supporting our immigrant population has long-term tangible benefits for both new and long-term residents and that immigrant integration is a win-win for our city. We continue to fulfill our mission by investing in English and digital literacy programs designed to build workforce skills; supporting immigrant entrepreneurs in starting or growing a business; and building pathways for meaningful civil engagement. We have seen that our impact is amplified when we partner with other organizations, institutions, and individuals who share our values and vision.

If nothing else, the pandemic taught us how vital it is for immigrants to have access to The Welcoming Center. Pandemic conditions pushed us to quickly transition our programs and services to virtual platforms. In so doing, our city’s digital inequities were laid bare. TWC has since moved into new in-person spaces, in addition to our Center City location. The first in Northeast Philadelphia, and the second in South Philadelphia—neighborhoods which contain the highest concentrations of immigrants in the city.

On the eve of our 20th anniversary, we took a deep dive into our values, engaging in a strategic planning process that included almost the entire TWC community, including old and new participants. We spent months gathering data, partnering with our graduates to conduct listening sessions, working with consultants to assess the current socio-economic climate, and coming together to imagine and deliberate over our priorities and goals for the future.

In the end, we crafted a 3-year strategic plan that proudly doubles down on our founding principles of viewing immigrants as essential and valuable members of our community and prioritizes immigrant voices in driving equity and economic inclusion. We look forward to celebrating the launch of the plan with you this fall when we host an open house and officially welcome Beyond Literacy—who recently co-located with us to offer adult education classes in Center City.

Being present and accessible in communities, collaborating with our participants to design programs and services, and aligning ourselves with key partners who share our values, will allow us to empower our valued immigrants to succeed in their dreams and goals, which will only enhance our beloved city.

Peter Gonzales
President & CEO

Hao-Li Loh
Chair
The Welcoming Center is a non-profit organization based in Philadelphia and was founded in 2003 by Anne O’Callaghan, an immigrant from Ireland. The Welcoming Center works to open doors of economic opportunity for immigrants of all education and skill levels and to build immigrants’ individual and collective agency to address barriers to integration and wellbeing. We work together with our participants, a broad spectrum of organizations, and both public and private sector institutions to advance learning, shape policy, and grow the economy through immigrant integration.

**About The Welcoming Center**

The Welcoming Center promotes inclusive economic growth through immigrant integration.

**Workforce Development**

- International Professionals Program
- Our International Professionals Program is specifically tailored for immigrants with foreign university degrees living in Philadelphia with U.S. work authorization who are looking to find meaningful employment.
- The Immigrant Fellowship Program offers paid, 12-week fellowships to IPP graduates and connects employers with immigrant talent.
- Integrated ESOL and Training
- Our integrated English instruction teaches English while teaching digital literacy skills, within specialized contexts, such as Workforce Development or Entrepreneurship.
- Employer Engagement
- The Welcoming Center provides a variety of opportunities for employers to tap into a culturally and linguistically diverse talent pool and help companies increase their knowledge of the benefits of hiring foreign-born talent.
- Download the Engaging Immigrant Talent toolkit. It’s for employers who want to understand the steps they must take to recruit, retain, and promote immigrant talent. [https://welcomingcenter.org/workforcedevelopment/employers/](https://welcomingcenter.org/workforcedevelopment/employers/)

**Entrepreneurship**

- Business Training and Technical Assistance
- Our team provides small business owners training courses and technical assistance support through the process of establishing or expanding a business. Our hands-on assistance helps business owners to understand city regulations, develop a business plan, understand business operations, identify capital, create a marketing strategy, and much more.
- Global Craft Market
- Our Global Craft Market is a collective of local immigrant artists who share their hand-made, fair-traded crafts to celebrate and sustain craft making traditions and artisans from around the world.
- Global Food Market
- The Global Food Market teaches participants the city’s requirements for establishing a formalized food vending business, and then, through a partnership with Widener University’s Small Business Development Center, it provides one-on-one consultation (TA) to help vendors meet those requirements by the end of the vending season, so that they may reach formalized business status. Find them at FDR park every Sunday until September!
- Brightly Eco-cleaning Cooperative – 10 months of classes are now underway for people who want to learn how to become worker-owners of a franchised cleaning cooperative.

**Community Engagement**

- Immigrant Leadership Institute
- Our Immigrant Leadership Institute prepares the residents of Greater Philadelphia with the skills, knowledge, and tools necessary to engage in the civic life of our city and region.
- Intercultural Wellness Program
- Our Intercultural Wellness Program is for immigrants who want to support their community in terms of wellness, stress management, and utilizing coping mechanisms to address the challenges they face in Philadelphia.
- Citizenship
- We help individuals connect to the resources they need in order to naturalize.
Immigrant Fellowship Program: Bridging the Gap Between Employers and Immigrant Talent

Kejsi Ruka
Communications Intern

The Welcoming Center’s Immigrant Fellowship Program connects employers with immigrant talent through a 12-week paid fellowship while providing participants with the opportunity to gain work experience in their field of expertise. Highly experienced immigrants often come to this country with high hopes to apply their work skills and knowledge, only to encounter endless barriers to employment. To help address this problem, TWC launched the Immigrant Fellowship Program. Originally launched in 2017 in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, this program has since led to partnerships with several organizations and companies, one of them being Stimulus.

Stimulus is a relationship intelligence SaaS platform company. In the past year, Stimulus has taken on three fellows from The Welcoming Center, offering one fellow a full-time permanent position. Tiffanie Stanard, the CEO and founder of Stimulus, commented on the many benefits of taking on fellows who come from a diverse set of backgrounds.

“Starting in the fellowship before bringing them on full time as an employee is a great way to get to know a potential employee to see how they fit into your team’s way of doing things,” said Stanard.

For the Fellow, along with a pay rate of at least $15 per hour, valuable benefits include gaining work experience, building practical skills, networking with other professionals, and cultivating references for future job opportunities.

Carla Monoy was originally a fellow at Stimulus and now works there as a Data Analyst. Monoy moved to the U.S. in 2017 from the Philippines. Her background is in ecology and plant research. The fellowship at Stimulus was Monoy’s second fellowship through The Welcoming Center, her first was with the Philadelphia Water Department. Monoy did not originally envision herself working in data analysis, but once she did an evaluation of her transferable skills, she realized that it was a viable career path.

“I think the difficulty initially was just it was more like a mental barrier of not thinking that I could apply for a data analyst job,” said Monoy.

Alejandra Lopez is currently a fellow at Stimulus working as a Digital Visual Designer after being a participant in The Welcoming Center’s International Professionals Program (IPP). Lopez moved to the U.S. from Colombia 7 years ago. Both Monoy and Lopez recognize the value of the fellowship in different ways.

“When you’re applying for something, you tend to really want to sell yourself and say, ‘I really want to work for this organization…I want to do all these things.’” commented Monoy.

“But truly you don’t know what it’s like inside and you only find that out once you’re inside. At least with this fellowship, there was that clear endpoint initially where we could say, ‘Okay, this is a three-month thing, and we can reevaluate this in three months.’ That kind of end point helped me [think] I can do this for three months at least, try something out and see if I really want it.”
For Lopez, this fellowship meant experiencing a professional work environment in the U.S. for the very first time. “There are a number of benefits for me, like being able to demonstrate my skills and what I know. To start working with a company...I feel like now I’m getting to know American culture, like working in a professional way,” said Lopez.

Working with a company like Stimulus helped the fellows gain confidence in their abilities, while also providing them the opportunity to take on new projects or contribute their own ideas.

Through the Immigrant Fellowship Program, Stimulus has witnessed the value of taking on fellows that will provide reliable talent for the company. At the same time, the fellows gain professional work experience they can add to their resumes, overcoming one of the biggest obstacles to immigrant integration into the workforce.

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with three great women, it happened to be women that came to our team, and one ended up staying and becoming full time,” said Stanard. “As I’m thinking of different employees that we need to hire and grow our team, The Welcoming Center is definitely one of the first organizations I think of.”

The Welcoming Center hopes to continue building partnerships between employers and immigrant talent. If you are interested in learning more about the Immigrant Fellowship Program or would like to learn ways for your company to become better connected to immigrant talent, please visit our website at this link: https://welcomingcenter.org/workforcedevelopment/employers.

Micro-lending Supports Immigrant Entrepreneurs to Grow Their Small Businesses, Create Jobs, and Build Generational Wealth for their Families

Alma Romero opened her restaurant, Alma del Mar, in the heart of the Italian Market during the summer of 2020. She experienced extensive delays due to the pandemic. In early 2022, she received a micro-loan through Greenline Access Capital, a lending partner of The Welcoming Center. This micro-loan provided much needed relief and the opportunity to receive structured support to continue to grow and expand her business.

Immigrant entrepreneurs encounter many barriers to accessing capital. These include the lack of credit and/or credit history and linguistic barriers to communicate with lenders. With many immigrant business owners, obtaining the funds to launch and/or grow a business is not typically sourced through an official lender but from friends and family. That had been Alma’s case until she received her first formal micro-loan from Greenline Access Capital.

The Welcoming Center played a critical role in connecting Alma with a lending organization that could provide culturally relevant and appropriate solutions to support her business. Greenline Access Capital’s staff is fully bilingual and has vast experience in character-based lending. An additional benefit of Alma del Mar’s first micro-loan is that Alma’s loan repayments will build her credit history and make her a stronger candidate for future larger loans to continue to grow her business, create jobs, and build generational wealth.
In the winter of 2020, I had just completed teaching the FOCUS course at The Welcoming Center with a wonderful group of participants. Three mornings a week, they traveled to and from class to learn with others from all over the world about how to navigate the new language and culture of the United States. Our classroom became a second home and community.

Just a short time later, on a sunny Friday, the thriving and dynamic world in our physical space at The Welcoming Center came to a screeching halt when my colleagues and I were told we’d be working from home for two weeks.

We all know the rest of the story.

As those weeks came and went, educators across the world recognized we’d have to quickly pivot to an entirely new way of teaching. Stunned and sometimes despairing, we scrambled to figure out how to use Zoom and other video conferencing programs, many of us totally uncertain we could or should teach in this way.

In those early weeks of the pandemic, however, beautiful moments transpired in the midst of the confusion and fear. Glimpses of students’ homes and families; the crying or cooing of babies in the background; the bark of a dog or the incessant nudging of a small child. We had new windows into each others’ lives.

The view was often messy. We forgot to press “mute” or our WIFI connection kept dropping. We blurred out unkempt backgrounds, chaotic from trying to maintain work and home. Sometimes, the intimacies and possibilities of the classroom were lost as we could not move around or read body language or bring in special dishes to share.

Yet almost overnight, everlasting challenges in adult education were reduced: Students who couldn’t attend classes because of childcare needs, lack of transportation, or disability could participate. They could balance classes more easily with work demands and illness did not preclude participation.

The benefits were not merely logistical, however. Children viewed their parents engaging in learning within the home, potentially advancing their own development and aspirations. Moreover, millions of people, within weeks, were doing something unprecedented in their lives: using smartphone functions to access Zoom; starting and performing tasks on quickly donated laptop computers; opening email accounts; typing and downloading software. For non-native English speakers, the learning curve was particularly steep as they navigated both unfamiliar technology *and* related language.

Indeed, plunged into this mass experiment in the quick shift to online learning, we unexpectedly bridged traditionally distinct spheres of education: English language and digital literacy.

While most ESOL educators have long-understood that computer skills are a critical gateway to economic advancement, systems and mindsets don’t easily keep up with need. Many of us struggled in under-resourced organizations, using paper and pencil materials in place of the necessary technology, or utilized inadequate hardware without support for maintenance and upgrading. Some of us were comfortable with the status quo and perpetuated the
assumption — debunked by growing research — that English learners must attain language proficiency before attaining technology or other career-specific skills and knowledge.

Yet when a crisis forced us to do things differently, new possibilities for integrated teaching and learning quickly emerged.

As we taught language across the screen, our students not only saw our mouths moving and heard our pronunciation — they viewed words in the chat box or in closed captioning. They not only shared questions or thoughts orally but in writing if they were introverted or not yet comfortable speaking aloud in a new language. They watched us repeatedly model a range of onscreen tasks like speaking while sharing a document or slide, in the way so many workplaces demand. We thought on our feet, creating videos or screenshots for students to try digital tasks on their own. Requiring a new level of self-reliance, they often developed skills faster than they would have within the classroom. In the online setting, we intertwined language with technical skills, using multiple tools at once to aid learning and build community. Most of us, in fact, can no longer imagine teaching language without the digital tools we’ve gained.

I certainly miss the days of in-person engagement and know that it is vital to develop the kind of community we value at The Welcoming Center. Yet we must continue to adapt to current circumstances and find even more effective ways to facilitate, educate, and integrate by balancing face-to-face and virtual learning opportunities.

At the end of each class, I ask my students to express how they’re feeling. They pair their words and facial expressions with an emoticon — a smiley face, a woman dancing, hands clapping, a man raising the roof. We are even more animated than we would be in person, knowing that it’s harder to convey feelings on a computer screen. Through this small moment, we recreate and perhaps even enhance the human connections of the physical classroom. When we celebrate the culmination of our time together, we bring our special dishes to the “party”; sharing recipes and cultural knowledge in both newly attained English vocabulary and images on the screen — often with the backdrop of kitchen décor that communicates identity and heritage. The new windows we have can allow us to see and bring our full selves.

Though we have little power to choose the future of the pandemic, we can choose to hold onto and build upon the new ways of teaching and learning we’ve developed. We can choose to weave together language with other indispensable skills necessary to thrive socially and economically. I invite fellow educators to maintain the creativity and innovation this unexpected moment in time has produced, making it the norm for the adult learners so deserving of more and greater opportunity.

The Welcoming Center partners with the Brightly® Cooperative to build stable, equitable jobs for immigrants

The Welcoming Center is proud to announce a new partnership with Brightly, the first cooperative franchise in the United States. It began in NYC in 2018 and it was so popular, there are now five across the city. The Welcoming Center will be helping worker-owners establish the first one in Philly, with plans to launch in Spring 2023. Brightly is a worker owned eco-friendly cleaning cooperative franchise that provides worker-owners with training, marketing and business operation resources. Cooperative worker-owners set their own hours, rates and cleaning products, ensuring fair, safe, and equitable work. Stay tuned for more updates on this partnership in the near future.
Immigrant Leadership Institute Seminar Series: Building Social Capital

This year, the Welcoming Center’s Immigrant Leadership Institute (ILI) began offering shorter seminars that were each five weeks long with up to 30 participants in each. The shift in programming was a deliberate decision to meet the needs of participants during shifting changes caused by the pandemic to help better connect and overcome social isolation, build “social capital,” and learn new knowledge and skills. Social capital, or increasing social networks, helps people become more connected to others outside of their native language communities, increases a sense of belonging and supports the integration process.

The seminars’ topics explore different strategies of building social capital in a new city and new country, how connections can support goals, the importance of networking in building social capital, different strategies for developing social connections, what “immigrant inclusion” means, citizen and immigrant rights and responsibilities, reframing dominant narratives of acculturation and integration, and storytelling.

Storytelling

In the session of reframing dominant narratives, some participants were able to write and share their stories in the hopes of inspiring other immigrants into building their own voices through storytelling. Storytelling is a skill that enables immigrants to have a voice of sharing their truth, experiences, abilities, goals and achievements. This in turn helps with presentation skills as well as building empathy and learning from the experiences of others.

Connecting through Cultural Foods

Some of the participants who have been part of the seminar series were able to organize an in-person meeting at The Welcoming Center on Saturday, May 21, to connect with each other, share some of their cultural foods, reflect further on the seminar series experiences and share ideas and suggestions for future seminars.

Participants shared their feedback about their experiences in the seminar. Here is what some of them said:

“The seminar supported me in achieving my goals in this new country, first by feeling that I am not alone in this new country and second, by connecting to others and being part of a community.”

“I know that I can be useful for my community even if my English level is not fluent. I know my rights in my community.”

“The seminar inspired me to take action - to acknowledge our shared story as immigrants and feel confident that any effort to build community and engage is highly valued.”
To support food vendors at FDR Park The Welcoming Center partnered with Philadelphia Parks and Rec (PPR) to secure the privilege of implementing a business incubator market, which we’ve named The Global Food Market (GFM).

The Global Food Market teaches participants the city’s requirements for establishing a formalized food vending business, and then, through a partnership with Widener University’s Small Business Development Center, it provides one-on-one consultation (TA) to help vendors meet those requirements by the end of the vending season (Apr – Sept), so that they may reach formalized business status.

Participants also receive one-on-one and group instruction from a TWC staff member every Sunday on topics related to sales, and operations of a vending stall.

We are excited – not only for the ways this endeavor is already supporting our participants - but even more so for the potential we see for supporting entrepreneurs and the immigrant community in the vending industry in Philadelphia!

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One of the benefits of participating in this program for me is a good opportunity to get to know many people and make my product known and be able to expand my business and have a good income for my home.

– Milagro del Carmen
Thank you to the many individuals and institutions who financially supported The Welcoming Center!

Donors make a difference at The Welcoming Center, and we are grateful for your unwavering support.

Donations listed below were received between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022.

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William Penn Foundation - Special Grant
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## Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inez Bruce</td>
<td>Student Support Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nina Chen</td>
<td>Special Projects Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jill Jacobs Cohen</td>
<td>Director of ELL Support and Training</td>
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<td>Rochelle T. Cooks</td>
<td>Director of Employer Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alvaro Drake-Cortes</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lina Duffy</td>
<td>Director of Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aliyah Gardner</td>
<td>Administrative Support Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Goebel</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Gonzales</td>
<td>President &amp; CEO</td>
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<td>Shanira Javier</td>
<td>Career Coach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Megan “MJ” Johnson</td>
<td>Executive Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyla Kaplan</td>
<td>Grant Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Jones</td>
<td>Director of Strategic Initiatives</td>
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<td>Janek Kubik</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
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<td>Jessica A. Levy</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
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<td>Nicole Marcote</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
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<td>Magda Martinez</td>
<td>Chief Operating Officer</td>
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<td>Manuel Portillo</td>
<td>Director of Community Engagement</td>
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<td>Rebecca Rathje</td>
<td>Director of Development</td>
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<td>Rebecca Siegel</td>
<td>Career Coach</td>
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<td>Maureen Smith</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
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<td>Stephanie Sun</td>
<td>Office of Pennsylvania Governor</td>
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<td>John Touey</td>
<td>Board Vice Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick M. Mahanger</td>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erick Martinez-Cruz</td>
<td>The Welcoming Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>William A. Stock, Esq.</td>
<td>Klasko Immigration Law Partners</td>
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## Board

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## Participant Advisory Council

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Financials

The Welcoming Center’s total revenue in FY 2021 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021) was $2,381,619.

We are supported by multiple revenue streams including generous donations from individuals, corporate sponsors, foundations, and government contracts. The 2021 Solas Awards, our annual premier fundraising event, raised over $417,000 accounting for 17.5% of The Welcoming Center’s annual operating budget. Together, our supporters are helping to build a more equitable society.

Expenses

| Programs and Services: | $1,098,797 |
| Management/General:    | $176,380  |
| Fundraising:           | $310,845  |
| Facilities/Space:      | $235,052  |

Annual: $1,821,074
Revenue

Government Grants and Contracts: $747,152
Foundation Grants and Contributions: $497,050
Restricted Revenue: $497,237
Paycheck Protection Program (PPP): $256,900
Direct Fundraising: $369,420
Contributed Goods and Services: $13,000
Other Revenue: $860

Annual: $2,381,619
The 2022 Solas Awards were a huge success, and we are so grateful to all of you who attended, sponsored, donated, and supported the event. Collectively, we raised more than $473,000 that will directly fund programs and services for immigrants in our region.

On April 27, 2022, despite the chilly weather, more than 500 people came out to Cherry Street Pier to celebrate with us and our three honorees: iBelong Philly, Let’s Talk Philly, and the Association of Mexican Business Owners. The West Philly Orchestra and DJ Rashaan brought music to the celebration, vendors from the Global Craft Market sold their crafts, and a wide array of global cuisine was enjoyed by all.

2023 marks The Welcoming Center’s 20th anniversary and we look forward to seeing everyone at next year’s Solas Awards to celebrate this milestone. Stay tuned for more information!
Association of Mexican Business Owners of Philadelphia

The Association of Mexican Business Owners of Philadelphia is a group of immigrant merchants whose mission is to support Mexican businesses to acquire tools, skills, and representation and promote continued economic development within the community and the city of Philadelphia.

Let’s Talk Philly

Let’s Talk Philly is an organization made up of immigrants and refugees from diverse countries and cultures working together to improve community wellness and overcome barriers to social and economic integration by building language and leadership skills.

I Belong Philly

I Belong Philly is a volunteer group dedicated to immigrant communities in the Greater Philadelphia area. They believe that raising the voices of immigrants and facilitating integration for a better and welcoming city. Their mission is to foster a space that creates opportunities, builds dialog and relationships, and appreciates culture.
WAYS TO GIVE

Together we can do more. Please join us in supporting immigrants in the Philadelphia region by making a contribution.

Donate online at: welcomingcenter.org/donate

Write a check addressed to: The Welcoming Center

We accept stock and mutual fund donations: For more information, contact Rebecca Rathje at 215-557-2858 or rebecca@welcomingcenter.org

The Welcoming Center is a 501(c)3 charitable nonprofit organization. Federal Tax ID# 23-3001411. Your contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

CONNECT WITH US

Visit Us Online: welcomingcenter.org

Visit Our Office: 211 N 13th St, 4th Floor Philadelphia, PA 19107

Email Us: info@welcomingcenter.org

Call Us: 215-557-2626

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