



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

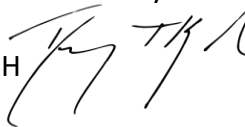
Danny TK Avula MD, MPH
Commissioner

May 25, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia

Members, Virginia General Assembly

FROM: Danny TK Avula MD, MPH 

SUBJECT: Annual Report on Office of New Americans

The Office of New Americans was created under § 63.2-209.1 as a new office specifically to assist immigrant integration within the Commonwealth on an economic, social, and cultural level. This report is submitted in compliance with Item 340.F. of the 2022 Appropriation Act, which states:

F. The Department of Social Services shall provide an annual report on the activities of the Office of New Americans by December 1 of each year.

Please contact me should you have questions at (804) 726-7011.

DA:kc
Attachment

cc: The Honorable John Littel, Secretary of Health and Human Resources

Virginia Department of Social Services

Annual Report on the Activities of the Office of New Americans

Executive Summary

The Office of New Americans was created under §63.2-209.1 in 2020 as an office within the Department of Social Services. The Office of New Americans (ONA) incorporated the existing Office of Newcomer Services into a new office specifically to assist immigrant integration within the Commonwealth on an economic, social, and cultural level.

Statutory Responsibilities of ONA and Report Mandate

- Implement a statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth.
- Work with localities to coordinate and support local efforts that align with the statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth
- Provide advice and assistance to New Americans regarding (i) the citizenship application process and (ii) securing employment, housing, and services for which such persons may be eligible
- Provide advice and assistance to state agencies regarding (i) the coordination of relevant policies across state agencies responsible for education, workforce, and training programs, and (ii) the dissemination of information to localities and immigration service organizations regarding state programs that help New Americans find and secure employment, housing, and services for which they may be eligible.
- Educate localities and immigration service organizations on health epidemics and unlawful predatory actions, such as human trafficking, gang recruitment, and fraudulent financial and other schemes, to which communities of such persons may be especially vulnerable
- Serve as the primary liaison with external stakeholders, particularly immigrant-serving and refugee serving organizations and businesses, on immigrant integration priorities and policies.
- Partner with state agencies and immigrant-serving and refugee-serving organizations and businesses to identify and disseminate beneficial immigrant integration policies and practices throughout the Commonwealth
- Manage competitive grant programs that replicate beneficial practices or test new innovations that improve the effectiveness and efficacy of immigrant integration strategies; and
- Advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

Additionally, Item 340.F. of the 2022 Appropriation Act directs the Department of Social Services to provide an annual report on the activities of the Office of New Americans by December 1.

Major Activities & Outcomes for Report Period

- As part of a statewide strategy to promote economic, linguistic and civic integration of New Americans, the ONA developed a strategic plan, and as part of this, commissioned extensive research to assess the needs and barriers to integration experienced by the New American population. This research has rendered visible gaps in services and areas of Virginia without service providers, and formed a foundation that ONA can build on to create a statewide directory of service providers and continue to connect people with organizations and promote integration across the Commonwealth.

- The ONA conducted extensive outreach into New American communities, in the form of health and resource fairs, educational trainings, cultural events, as well as administration of programs specifically serving youth and older refugees. This has entailed working with localities across the state and creating networks of stakeholders that come together to solve problems and develop solutions.
- The ONA's refugee programs funded citizenship classes, vocational training, job placement services, and other civics training to thousands of New Americans through grants to resettlement agencies. The immigrant services office works with a coalition of nationwide groups to create career pathways guides and employment tools to help immigrants get training and certification, especially in needed fields such as education, mental health, and healthcare fields.
- The ONA worked with various state agencies, including the Departments of Education, Behavioral Health & Developmental Services, Health Professions, and Health to assess needs in the immigrant and refugee communities, ensure that refugee youth's needs are met, collect and disseminate information among immigrant communities, and devise ways to help pave pathways for licensing and employment training.
- ONA coordinated dozens of Covid vaccine clinics, health screening clinics, resource fairs, and other events around the Commonwealth attended by local organizations and individuals. The purpose of these events is to educate immigrants on health-related issues and connect them with trustworthy organizations providing legitimate services, which in turn minimizes the risk of fraud and other unlawful actions. The office also plans to develop a series of educational webinars to educate service providers and the public about unlawful and fraudulent activities to which New American communities are especially vulnerable.
- Positioning itself as the primary liaison with stakeholders in immigrant and refugee policy in Virginia, ONA created a clearinghouse in which all service providers will have the ability to keep their own listings current, find other providers, and in which individuals will be able to look for providers in their area. Additionally, the ONA has created networks of stakeholders, including the regionally-held Virginia Community Capacity Initiative as well as other informal networks who come together to discuss topics, raise issues, and solve problems that affect their work and the integration of immigrants in Virginia.
- Partnerships ONA developed with state agencies, as well as immigrant and refugee serving organizations have strengthened the Office's role as subject-matter experts on policy and practice in Virginia. The statewide needs assessment study completed in 2022 has provided needed data on unmet needs, and the office has begun designing programs to meet those needs. An example, the office partnered with the Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services in a federal grant application to provide needed mental health services to Afghan veterans. ONA also works to educate and liaise with local social services offices to ensure that refugees receive benefits they are eligible for, and shares policy guidance resources with other agencies to ensure the even flow of information about eligibility for New Americans.
- ONA continues to administer competitive grants for federal funds to agencies who provide innovative and effective refugee services. With more capacity, ONA will look forward to managing further competitive grants for non-refugee immigrant serving organizations.

The accomplishments and activities of the ONA have promoted the linguistic, civic, and economic integration of immigrant and refugee populations in the Commonwealth. This was done in the last year

against a backdrop of unprecedented arrivals of Afghan and Ukrainian newcomers, as well as in the context of a newly expanded office with minimal capacity on the Immigrant Services side. In partnership with stakeholders statewide, including resettlement agencies, service providers, organizations large and small, university researchers, and immigrant communities themselves, the ONA built capacity, conducted outreach, education and research, provided direct services, administered federal funds, and promoted integration for New Americans across Virginia.

Virginia Department of Social Services
Annual Report on the Activities of the Office of New Americans
2021-2022

Statutory Responsibilities & Report Mandate

Article 1 (§ 63.2-209.1) of Chapter 2 of Title 63.2 establishes the Office of New Americans (ONA) within the Department of Social Services and directs the Office to carry out the following responsibilities:

- Implement a statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth.
- Work with localities to coordinate and support local efforts that align with the statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth
- Provide advice and assistance to New Americans regarding (i) the citizenship application process and (ii) securing employment, housing, and services for which such persons may be eligible
- Provide advice and assistance to state agencies regarding (i) the coordination of relevant policies across state agencies responsible for education, workforce, and training programs, and (ii) the dissemination of information to localities and immigration service organizations regarding state programs that help New Americans find and secure employment, housing, and services for which they may be eligible.
- Educate localities and immigration service organizations on health epidemics and unlawful predatory actions, such as human trafficking, gang recruitment, and fraudulent financial and other schemes, to which communities of such persons may be especially vulnerable
- Serve as the primary liaison with external stakeholders, particularly immigrant-serving and refugee serving organizations and businesses, on immigrant integration priorities and policies.
- Partner with state agencies and immigrant-serving and refugee-serving organizations and businesses to identify and disseminate beneficial immigrant integration policies and practices throughout the Commonwealth
- Manage competitive grant programs that replicate beneficial practices or test new innovations that improve the effectiveness and efficacy of immigrant integration strategies; and
- Advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

Item 340.F. of the 2022 Appropriation Act provides the following:

F. The Department of Social Services shall provide an annual report on the activities of the Office of New Americans by December 1 of each year.

The OBA is comprised of [Refugee Services](#) unit and [Immigrant Services](#) unit. The Refugee Services program supports for refugees with social integration and economic empowerment through collaboration with 6 local resettlement agencies across the Virginia State. The Immigrant Services program supports

immigrants by providing access to statewide, comprehensive resources and information related to employment, housing, healthcare, education, and citizenship.

Activities and Outcomes

The following details the activities and outcomes for each of the mandates of the ONA:

Implement a statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth.

ONA developed and implemented a strategic plan with targeted outcomes to promote integration of New Americans including

- Partnering with Secretariats, state agencies, and state policy leaders to identify beneficial integration policies and practices
- Providing advice and assistance regarding the coordination of relevant policies across state agencies responsible for education, workforce, and training programs, including professional licensure guidance, small business development, worker protection, refugee resettlement, citizenship and voter education or engagement programs, housing programs, and other related programs for which new Americans may be eligible.
- Assessing barriers to integration and assessing needs of immigrant communities, as well as gaps in services, through a large-scale statewide Needs Assessment study, carried out by Virginia Commonwealth University researchers contracted by ONA.
- Production of a written report as well as a web-based mapping tool that provides information on Virginia's immigrant population as well as services available. This tool will serve as the prototype for a larger more expansive tool that will allow service providers and New Americans across Virginia to find the services needed to promote integration.
- Working with Virginia's 2-1-1 information system to develop ways of making that service more accessible for speakers of other languages, and of taking account of what providers within the 2-1-1 system offer services in languages other than English.

Work with localities to coordinate and support local efforts that align with the statewide strategy to promote the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth

- ONA – Immigrant Services conducted outreach in localities and with service providers large and small to build bridges between community leaders and organizations serving immigrants and refugees. ONA Immigrant Services was an organizer of several community health fairs and resource fairs, which allowed immigrants and service providers to meet and support one another, as well as receive vital services such as Covid vaccines, health and dental screenings, legal support, and other services.
- ONA also supported cultural activities in immigrant and refugee communities in order to celebrate the diversity of Virginia's New Americans.

- The Immigrant Services office acted as an advisor for several organizations and community groups which work with immigrants to support inclusive practices and embedded approaches. The Office has also developed spaces to educate service providers and community members about cultural diversity and competency, in order to promote a welcoming environment.
- Through the Virginia Refugee Student Achievement Project (VRSAP), twenty-one (21) School Liaisons across the Commonwealth provided essential support to 1,432 newly arrived, refugee-eligible children and their families as they navigated the United States education system. New school enrollments in FY22 included 760 elementary aged youth (K-5), 285 middle school youth (285), 342 high school youth (9-12) and 17 youth pursuing a GED. Twenty-eight youth had not yet been assigned to a grade by the end of the Fiscal Year. School Liaisons worked closely with local school districts to encourage collaboration and capacity development for school staff and systems, including training, language access support and resource provision. School Liaisons also facilitated partnerships between community stakeholders to ensure that youth had access to the necessary supplies, technology access and tutoring and mentoring support needed to succeed in school. School Liaisons connected families to early childhood education opportunities such as Head Start and Virginia Preschool Initiative to ensure that young refugee children had access to education programs in their communities.
- Through the Mentoring Youth in Virginia (MYVA) program, 100 youth between the ages of 15-24 were matched with trained mentors for 6 months to one year in order to work toward educational, vocational and social goals. The MYVA program promotes positive civic and social engagement for eligible youth, ensuring that youth are both valued members of and contributors to their communities. In FY22, MYVA enrollees performed community service in their local communities, including volunteering to conduct environmental clean ups at local parks, assisting at social events and gatherings for the resettled community, packing food at local foodbanks and more.
- In Federal Fiscal Year 2022, Virginia's Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program provided culturally sensitive, therapeutic foster care and placement services to 76 unaccompanied refugee minors and other eligible populations of unaccompanied youth in the United States. The URM program operated in two locations in Virginia: Richmond through Commonwealth Catholic Charities and Fairfax through Lutheran Social Services. Youth receiving support through the program ranged in age from eight to 26 years old and included five Afghan Humanitarian Parolee youth who arrived in the US because of the federal Operation Allies Welcome initiative. Operating in Fairfax, Virginia through Lutheran Social Services and Richmond, Virginia through Commonwealth Catholic Charities, the URM program operated in parity with the state foster care program and was subject to state licensing requirements.
- Through the Refugee Health Education and Outreach Program (RHEO) 5,979 refugees received services which included Health Orientations, Medical Case Management Services, Mental Health Orientation referrals and Refugee Health Screenings (RHS-15).

- Clients attended various workshops which assisting them in learning about the United States Health Care system and were enrolled into Medicaid.
- The Office of New Americans continues to work with various Resettlement Agencies within the Commonwealth of Virginia in partnership with the Local Department of Social Services to ensure that the clients receive the necessary resources and coverage including Medicaid and Dental Coverage to maintain health and wellness.
- Through the Services to Older Refugees Program (SOR), the Office of New Americans ensures that refugees aged 60 and older have access to applicable services for the aging and to provide qualifying refugees with appropriate services not currently available in the community. Refugees aged 60 and above who have been in the United States for up to 5 years are eligible for all program services. Referral services, interpreter services, citizenship and naturalization preparation services for these refugees are available beyond the five-year mark. Services to Older Refugees provides agency funding to establish and expand relationships with state and local agencies to ensure that older refugees have access to aging services and provide older refugees appropriate services not currently available in the community. Clients enrolled into the SOR Program are referred to the Commonwealth of Virginia’s No Wrong Door Program which is a statewide network of partners that serve older adults, caregivers, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and families in need of long-term services and supports, often working with community groups which help individuals who seek support in their community by recognizing and achieving their individual needs.
- In the FY2022, 25 clients were enrolled into the SOR Program. Workshops and services include but are not limited to:
 - Ensuring access to senior community centers, supportive services and intergenerational activities.
 - Nutritious services and meals delivered to homebound clients.
 - Transpiration, Interpretation, and translation services.
 - Citizenship and Naturalization services and workshops.
 - Assistance with applying for SSI.
- ONA coordinates relevant policy and cultural awareness trainings for local DSS offices through programs such as “Lunch and Learn”

Provide advice and assistance to New Americans regarding (i) the citizenship application process and (ii) securing employment, housing, and services for which such persons may be eligible

- The ONA collaborates with successful refugee resettlement agencies providing citizenship resources to determine best practices and share resources. Agencies use ONA funding to provide access to citizenship and naturalization preparation services, including

language training, civics instruction in preparation for citizenship exams, application assistance for adjustment to citizenship status. Agencies may also provide assistance to elderly and disabled refugees in obtaining waivers from English and civics requirements for naturalization, as well as the provision of interpreter services for citizenship interviews.

- The ONA refugee employment program (RSSEP) is the cornerstone of the refugee resettlement program and assists all adults to gain training and employment in order to become self-sufficient. We fund vocational training, job placement services, job retention support, and career advancement assistance for up to 5 years from the date of eligibility.
- Currently, refugee resettlement agencies in Virginia are serving 5,499 individuals with employment services.
- During FFY2022, agencies reported 2,274 total job placements, with 1,693 being full time and 591 being part time.
- The average hourly wage for all full-time jobs entered by ONA clients was \$17.14.
- In addition to direct job placement and support services, ONA's employment program sub-recipients are constantly developing relationships with new employers and working through their community partners to develop trainings for clients to assist them in understanding the workforce norms and culture in the USA. The result has been substantial overall job retention and positive feedback from employers, helping to strengthen the reputation of our program, partners and clients.
- The ONA set about to change both the number of female refugees who entered the workforce and increase the hourly wage of those female refugees. The ONA started this effort in 2018, with negotiated workforce development goals for each resettlement agency's contracts that tied their future awards to meeting their goals. Each year there has been an increase in full and part-time job placements with an overall increase of 31.6%. Concerning hourly wages, female wages increased from \$10.74 per hour in 2017 to \$12.47 in 2020.
- ONA Immigrant Services works with a coalition of other immigrant-serving state agencies to share resources and best practices in creating career pathway navigation guides for immigrants.
- ONA Immigrant Services is working to create career navigation guides for immigrants, which provides useful information about how to obtain education, prerequisites, testing and certification for high-demand career areas such as healthcare, mental health, and education.

Provide advice and assistance to state agencies regarding (i) the coordination of relevant policies across state agencies responsible for education, workforce, and training programs, including professional licensure guidance, small business development, worker protection,

refugee resettlement, citizenship and voter education or engagement programs, housing programs, and other related programs, and (ii) the dissemination of information to localities and immigration service organizations regarding state programs that help New Americans find and secure employment, housing, and services for which they may be eligible

- The Emerson Collective launched the Governors Opportunity and Inclusion Fellowship in 2019 to partner with Governors committed to advancing immigrant integration and inclusion policies by supporting full-time, executive-level senior advisors focused exclusively on this issue. VDSS is the recipient of a Policy Specialist who works in tandem with the ONA team to promote immigrant integration.
- The ONA developed and submitted a proposal to the Department of Education regarding the licensure of internationally trained teachers and the creation of an ombudsperson position who would help New Americans navigate the process of becoming a licensed educator.
- The ONA worked closely with the Virginia Department of Education to ensure that the needs of refugee youth were being met across the Commonwealth, hosting a series of Refugee Roundtables that brought together Title III Coordinators at the state and local levels, school counselors, school principals and other key stakeholders in the education field.
- The ONA consulted with the Department of Health Professions to better understand needs and licensure processes for healthcare professionals, and to provide research and background for the development of new legislation designed to support New Americans entering healthcare careers.
- The Office has conducted outreach to localities and immigration service organizations across the Commonwealth in order to disseminate information about training programs, housing information, healthcare information, etc. offered through state programs, and continues to work towards coordination and information-sharing about programs for New Americans between state agencies.
- The Immigrant Services office conducted a survey and series of interviews with Virginia Health Districts and Health Departments to better understand the challenges and barriers encountered in serving immigrant populations.
- The Immigrant Services office has distributed information at various community events about the DMV programs under which immigrants can access Driver Privilege Cards.
- The Immigrant Services office has provided community education about new criteria for Medicaid eligibility that affect immigrants of various statuses.

Educate localities and immigration service organizations on health epidemics and unlawful predatory actions, such as human trafficking, gang recruitment, and fraudulent financial and other schemes, to which communities of such persons may be especially vulnerable

- The Immigrant Services side of ONA has coordinated dozens of Covid vaccine clinics, health screening clinics, resource fairs, and other events around the Commonwealth attended by local organizations and individuals. The purpose of these events is to educate immigrants on health-related issues and connect them with trustworthy organizations providing legitimate services, which in turn minimizes the risk of fraud and other unlawful actions.
- The Office has plans to conduct webinars aimed at educating service providers on unlawful predatory actions.

Serve as the primary liaison with external stakeholders, particularly immigrant-serving and refugee serving organizations and businesses, on immigrant integration priorities and policies.

- The ONA Outreach coordinator collects information on service providers and connects them to one another, both informally and more formally by hosting events. Additionally, ONA plans to implement a Communications Strategy in late 2022, which will include regular newsletters and other updates to all interested stakeholders.
- The Virginia Community Capacity Initiative (VCCI) is a forum established in each region of our service area, where we provide a venue for dialogue between the resettlement agencies and community stakeholders. These meetings are conducted at least quarterly, but sometimes more frequently if there is a need. Community members and stakeholders use this opportunity to engage the resettlement agencies to discuss gaps in services, opportunities for refugees, and challenges they may be facing in supporting refugee integration. Resettlement agencies also use these meetings to lay out their resettlement projections and upcoming initiatives. When challenges are identified in these meetings, resettlement agencies will often conduct breakout sessions where working groups will try to solve the issues raised.
- The ONA also forms part of a nation-wide coalition of other states with similar offices, and well as a cohort of localities dedicated to Skilled Immigrant Integration. Through these partnerships, ONA is able to share best practices with other states and localities on issues in immigrant integration.

Partner with state agencies and immigrant-serving and refugee-serving organizations and businesses to identify and disseminate beneficial immigrant integration policies and practices throughout the Commonwealth

- The ONA commissioned a statewide study identifying barriers to integration for refugees and immigrants in Virginia. This study has been presented numerous times to state agencies and immigrant and refugee-serving organizations, and the study has been made publicly available, with the Executive Summary available in seven languages.

- The ONA, in conjunction with Department of Behavioral Health Development Services and other community partners, designed a program and applied for federal funding to provide vital mental health support services to allied Afghan veterans for 3 years.
- The ONA serves as a liaison between local departments of social services and resettlement agencies to ensure refugees receive and are enrolled in Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), or Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) Programs for financial, medical, and nutritional assistance.
- Through the U. S. Repatriation Program, the ONA works with the Department of State, International Social Services, and local departments of social services. This program provides temporary assistance to U.S. citizens and their dependents who have been identified by the U.S. Department of State as having returned or been brought from a foreign country to the United States because of destitution, illness, war, threat of war, or a similar crisis, and because they are without resources immediately accessible to meet their needs under Section 1113 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 1313).
- ONA Immigrant Services works with other DSS administered programs to address barriers obtaining benefits and services for which they qualify. For example, ONA partnered with the Office of Economic Opportunity's Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit outreach campaign to offer best practices in reaching immigrant populations and providing language accessible tax preparation services for those who qualify. ONA also shares policy guidance resources with OEO and Virginia's community action agencies regarding what funding and programming individuals qualify for based on immigration status, and best practices for capturing Virginia's immigrant populations in their needs assessments, outreach and CSBG programs and interventions.

Manage competitive grant programs that replicate beneficial practices or test new innovations that improve the effectiveness and efficacy of immigrant integration strategies

- ONA administers competitive grants for innovative and effective refugee services across the Commonwealth. These grants are 100% federally funded. These are broadcast via RFP every three years and will be advertised again in 2024.
 - As an oversight body for competitive grants, ONA ensures the performance of our sub recipients is up to the standards set by the federal government and our contracts with them. The office measures their performance on key outcome goals throughout the year and based on risk assessments, also conducts more intensive monitoring for higher risk agencies. All agencies are subject to a mid-year review and an annual review where their performance is scrutinized and recommendations are made in order to ensure compliance with all requirements and that outcome goals are on track to be met by the end of each fiscal year. In addition, we conduct financial reviews monthly and work with local departments of social services to ensure they are up to date with all new federal and state guidelines and policies.

Advise the Governor, cabinet members, and the General Assembly on strategies to improve state programs to support the economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans throughout the Commonwealth.

- The ONA staffs the Office of New Americans Advisory Board, made up of 18 citizen-members who are tasked with promoting integration and providing recommendations on doing so to the Governor and the General Assembly. The ONA works alongside the Advisory Board to provide updates to both Board and office, and to discuss and promote strategies to support integration of New Americans, which both parties provide as recommendations in their respective annual reports. Attendance and engagement in the Advisory Board on the part of members is robust and enthusiastic.
- See below section on Challenges, Best Practices, and Recommendations.

Challenges, Best Practices, and Recommendations

- The ONA has two divisions: Refugee Services and Immigrant Services. All refugee services for ONA are 100% federally funded, and there is adequate funding to provide the mandated refugee resettlement services. However, the Immigrant Services side of ONA operates at minimal capacity, with a staff of two people, and no funding to provide direct services or expand capacity.
- An additional challenge for New Americans in Virginia is that eligibility for various benefits depends largely on the type of visa or status one holds, and that information about eligibility is not readily accessible and is often opaque. This, coupled with the various federal classifications given to various groups (Venezuelan, Afghan, Ukrainian, etc.), often renders it very difficult at the local level to assess eligibility for services.
- In 2021 and 2022, unprecedented numbers of arrivals of Afghans and Ukrainians to Virginia have greatly increased the workload on the Refugee Services side of the ONA, as well as on the programs administered by this office, and for all involved in refugee resettlement in Virginia.
- ONA has implemented best practices in the form of weekly meetings with all refugee service providers (referred to as Virginia Community Capacity Initiative –VCCI meetings) to discuss challenges and best practices as they relate to the unprecedented refugee arrivals over the last year. Additionally, the Mentoring Youth in Virginia (MyVA) program promotes positive civic and social engagement for refugee youth and is growing in reach each year.
- The needs assessment study carried out by VCU researchers highlighted the unmet needs of Virginia’s immigrants and provided sophisticated mapping of newcomers and service providers. If the General Assembly provides new funding, ONA could begin to address the barriers and recommendations outlined in the study.

Conclusion

The accomplishments and activities of the ONA supported the linguistic, civic, cultural and economic integration of New Americans in the Commonwealth. The Office promotes integration among refugees and immigrants across the state and works closely with agencies and organizations who serve these populations to further enhance our efforts. The Office engages in outreach in all areas of the Commonwealth, offering information and training, connecting people to services, and building bridges between people and organizations. Working hand in hand with partners devoted to serving the same populations, the Office recognizes the barriers encountered, and contributions made to the Commonwealth's success and diversity, by communities of New Americans across Virginia.