



November 12, 2021
Symposium

OUR CITY OF NATIONS

“Walking Together: Reimagining Our Path to Community”

Executive Summary

Introduction

Our City of Nations (OCON) 4.5 was focused on being a united community with refugees and immigrants as we continue to live through the impact and effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic. We came together virtually, for a second year, to strengthen our relationships across sectors and understanding of all newcomers, especially the recent migration of Afghan guests to the United States. The 2021 symposium welcomed speakers of diverse professional and personal backgrounds to share their lived experiences providing services to and with refugees or those transitioning to life in the United States.

“We work faithfully together as one team with a heart of love, peace, and empathy.”

- Edumakono Zetho, Refugee Community Care Manager, Refugee Community Advisory Board Member,
Refugee and Immigration Services, Catholic Charities

Vision

Provide a platform for improved skills attainment, sharing, and captivation of advanced research and practices within the prism of human wellness, being interchangeably influenced by local and global factors.

Goal

Mobilize and harness the diverse knowledge, capacities, and services of various stakeholders engaged to learn from and with those who interface with refugee and immigrant communities in the United States.

Educational objectives

1. Learn about the current status of forced displacement and migration, locally and globally
2. Understand the challenges and successes with health and wellbeing through the pandemic and other formidable changes
3. Hear examples of how newcomer and host communities are walking together and building community

“As a refugee leader we encourage newcomers to reach out and provide a guide to newer refugees to find the right resource and establish trust.”

-Po Too, Refugee Social Service Coordinator, Walker’s Point Community Clinic, Advocate Aurora Health

Action

OCON 4.5 was held virtually on November 12, 2021, as a half-day symposium. There were 183 registered participants who represented over 50 different organizations, and 14 nationalities. These organizations represented six diverse sectors including business, community service, government, healthcare, higher education, and K-12 education. There were nearly 20 diverse speakers and moderators who provided distinctive insight from their professional and personal backgrounds including healthcare professionals, state and local government officials, community service leaders, and refugees.

The symposium's content covered the following areas: forced migration: issues and impacts; health and wellness in displaced populations, past and current; building community in uncertain times; and strengthening connections: an opportunity to share, learn, and network.

Symposium Evaluation

Participants' formal feedback of the symposium was documented through an online, 23 question survey, that was conducted anonymously through email, after the conclusion of the conference. The 26 evaluations collected demonstrated significant enthusiasm for the attending the meeting. The majority of participants stated that "this symposium further educated how to serve newcomers and communities" and they were able to identify two new community resources and agency connections to share with colleagues and the populations they serve. A comprehensive narrative of the full summary of responses is available upon request.

Future Steps

After its 5th meeting, OCON is continuing its momentum in creating a space for newcomers and all agencies assisting in the process of acculturation and integration. It is important to maintain connections and networking to collaborate on shared purpose and increase the range of community voices. OCON will further pursue additional and future diverse connections and networks to work towards the goal of *walking together*. The suggestions from attendees on what more to include and how to improve the next, two-day conference which will take place on November 17-18, 2022, are being noted to provide a high quality and inclusive conference where all are welcome.

Gratitude

The Medical College of Wisconsin's Office of Global Health is the fiscal and administrative home of OCON's initiatives. **We thank the following co-sponsors for their generous and long-term financial donations to sustain OCON's educational endeavors.**

