



November 17-18, 2022

OUR CITY OF NATIONS

“Together: Honoring Struggle, Celebrating Success, and Healing Forward”

Executive Summary

Introduction

Our City of Nations (OCON) 5.0 was the first in-person meeting since 2018. The conference focused on creating a welcoming infrastructure as individuals and collectively. We came together to strengthen relationships across sectors and understanding of all newcomers. The 2022 conference 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 heard perspectives from refugee leaders in the community, enjoyed cooking demonstrations from chefs of refugee and immigrant backgrounds, and highlighted issues that deeply impact the refugee and immigrant communities.

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. Define refugee status and describe the process of refugee resettlement
2. Understand how to approach and interact with different cultural norms, values, practices, and beliefs

Quotes from participants

“This was one of the best OCON gatherings I've attended. Great sessions and so wonderful to see everyone in person again.”

“I learned the importance of organizing together and how to more effectively design refugee support programming.”

“I so enjoyed the conference. It was rich, informative, inspiring.”

Action

OCON 5.0 was a hybrid conference that was attended by participants virtually as well as in person on November 17 and 18, 2022. The virtual platform was Zoom Events and the in-person conference host was the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Joseph J. Zilber School of Public Health. There were 202 registered participants who represented 43 different organizations. These organizations represented six diverse sectors including business, community service, government, healthcare, higher education, and K-12 education. There were over 50 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 conference covered the following areas: refugee wellness and integration, the changing structure of resettlement, healing through photovoice, human trafficking awareness, students of refugee backgrounds, women who lead, providing the best care to refugees, community building, and strengthening connections with an opportunity to share, learn, and network.

Symposium Evaluation

Participants' formal feedback on the conference was documented through an online, 15 question survey that was conducted anonymously through email, after the conclusion of the conference. The 27 evaluations collected expressed that the conference improved their ability to deliver services to newcomers. The majority of respondents agreed that the conference theme was timely and relevant and that they were able to identify two new 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

In July, an in-person planning and strategy session was held to discuss the future direction of OCON. A subsequent survey was sent out to the planning committee to rank the top priorities for the next steps. The highest-ranked priority was to focus on refugee leadership development through facilitating a [Natural Helpers](#) program which recognizes the crucial role immigrant and refugee leaders fulfill as informal "helpers" in their communities by formalizing, supporting, and expanding their capacity for civic leadership. The other priorities were to facilitate a larger OCON 6 conference where refugee resettlement agency employees statewide guide content development in workshop format with time to network. The other priority was to fund the process to work towards and submit a proposal for a Welcoming America Designation for Milwaukee. OCON is committed to working together for the betterment of our neighborhoods, cities, and region.

Gratitude

The Medical College of Wisconsin's Office of Global Health is the fiscal and administrative home of OCON's initiatives. **We are grateful to the following 2022 conference co-sponsors for their generous donation to sustain this educational opportunity.**



Sebastian Family Psychology Practice, LLC

