

Project Welcome: Libraries and Community Anchors Planning for Resettlement and  
Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (IMLS # LG-82-16-0059-16)

**ABSTRACT**

Images of Syrian war refugees streaming into Europe flashed across our screens in the summer of 2015 and continue to be the focus of media, policy and politics worldwide. Stories of struggle and tragedy are contrasted with forthright assistance as well as ambivalence. What has been less visible is the work community anchors, individuals, and non-profit organizations assisting the newly arrived refugees or asylum seekers. Libraries and other community anchors in Europe are key institutions actively engaged in providing resources and services to respond to the needs of these refugees or asylum seekers. What can librarians in the United States (U.S.), with our own experiences with migrants, learn from our European and other international colleagues with their current and distinct experiences with forced migration? Prompted by this question, this planning grant will assess information needs and gaps in library services to address the resettlement and integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the United States in order to intentionally and strategically articulate ways libraries can serve existing refugees and asylum seekers, and the anticipated influx of refugees from new regions, such as Syria.

“Project Welcome: Libraries and Community Anchors Planning for Resettlement and Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers” is a one-year planning grant, starting May 1, 2016, proposed by the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, with the American Library Association (ALA) as partner, to develop recommendations and an action agenda on information resources, services, training and research needed to support the resettlement and integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the U.S. This planning grant addresses IMLS Agency Goal 2 focused on Community in order to learn how libraries and other community anchors can better serve refugees and asylum seekers, and the IMLS “Learning in Libraries” funding priority, with an emphasis on designing participatory learning programs that demonstrate innovation and scalability. Project activities will include consultation with librarians and refugee organizations to produce a thought paper; a 2-day collaborative learning space/meeting to explore solutions; a project website with refugee-related resources and project activities, and a report with recommendations and an action agenda. Evaluation of the project will be formative to ensure that progress is being made to achieving its objectives and summative to measure achievement toward project objectives, learning outcomes, activities and impact.



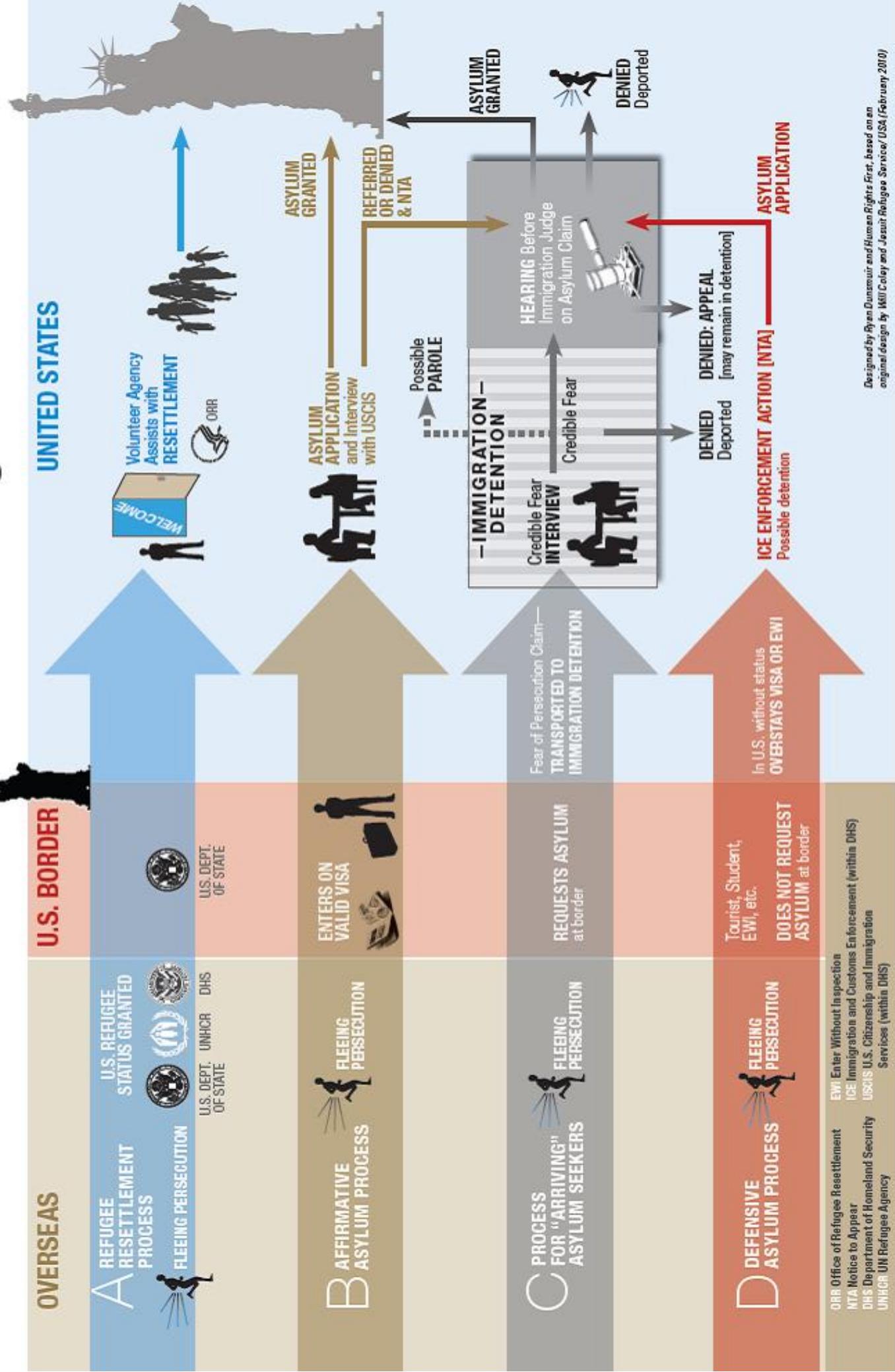
Project Welcome will be directed by Principal Investigator (PI) Clara M. Chu and co-directed by Susan Schnuer, Director and Associate Director, respectively, of the Mortenson Center of the University of Illinois Library <http://www.library.illinois.edu/mortenson/>. The Center along with ALA have extensive national and international library experience addressing the needs of diverse communities, and are well-positioned to create a collaborative learning space that uses a multi-sector, “glocal” consultative approach to plan and guide libraries to assist and empower refugees and asylum seekers. *Glocal* refers to understanding issues globally to make an impact locally. The primary target beneficiary of Project Welcome is the library field nationally, with particular impact on public libraries, and its secondary target beneficiaries are community anchors, refugee organizations, and libraries outside the U.S. The target “service community” will be refugees and asylum seekers who will be able receive library services to successfully resettle and integrate in U.S. society and their local communities. The underlying principle of the project is that they are welcomed by and in libraries. Armed with an informed and strategic action plan that includes the voices of refugees and asylum seekers, Project Welcome will strengthen the collective impact of libraries, community anchors and refugee agencies to support resettlement and integration.

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# How Refugees Get to the U.S.



Designed by Ryan Dunsmuir and Human Rights First, based on an original design by Will Colby and Jesuit Refugee Service/USA (February 2010)