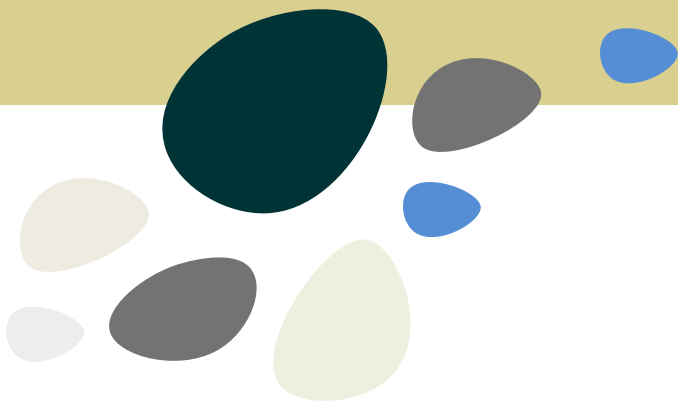


# **Welcoming Our Newest Neighbors:**

Assessing Human Services Support to People  
Seeking Asylum and Other Refuge in New York City

## **Survey and Partner Engagement Report**

January 2023



## SUMMARY

**People seeking sanctuary in New York City (NYC) should receive dignified, compassionate, and sustained services. This report draws from human services organizations striving to offer those services to people seeking asylum and other refuge in NYC.** It is based on survey submissions from 64 programs, accompanied by convenings and consultations with 80+ providers and 200+ workers from community-based, citywide, statewide, and national organizations in November 2022-January 2023. Data is anonymized and aggregated, collected by the Human Services Council of New York (NY). Thank you to Catholic Charities - Archdiocese of New York, Hispanic Federation, NY Immigration Coalition, and United Way of NYC for supporting convenings.

**Participating human services organizations expressed their commitment to serving people seeking asylum and other refuge as a natural and necessary extension of their day-to-day mission and services.** These providers met rapid needs in 2022 and 2023 but require serious funding and coordination to sustain and expand services. The issue reflects systemic inequities in resource distribution in NYC, with long-term underinvestment and delayed pay to community organizations exacerbated by COVID-19 and strains on the economy. Providers reported critical needs for immediate and long-term care coordination, legal services, employment, housing, healthcare, childcare, language learning, and more. They serve communities navigating the complex traumas of unfathomable struggles to leave home, racist forced migration within the U.S., and long roads ahead in aspiring for a new home. Of the 64 human services programs that responded to the survey:

**> Most offered services on their own initiative, using their own funds and networks. They were infrequently funded by government.**

- 96% served people seeking asylum entirely or partially out of pocket, extending existing resources without known reimbursement.
- 40% reported that a government entity asked them to provide services (predominantly City agencies and Mayoral offices) to people seeking asylum. Less than 13% reported that complete governmental funding was offered in these partnerships.
- 82% found a way to serve even though they did not have additional resources set aside. 17% reported that a lack of resources to properly scale up operations in an increased time of need was due to pre-existing unpaid contract work with government.
- 29% reported working with government-run service hubs. Some respondents mentioned working with hubs intentionally or organically formed around local nonprofits, houses of worship, shelters, and businesses, or via mutual aid efforts.

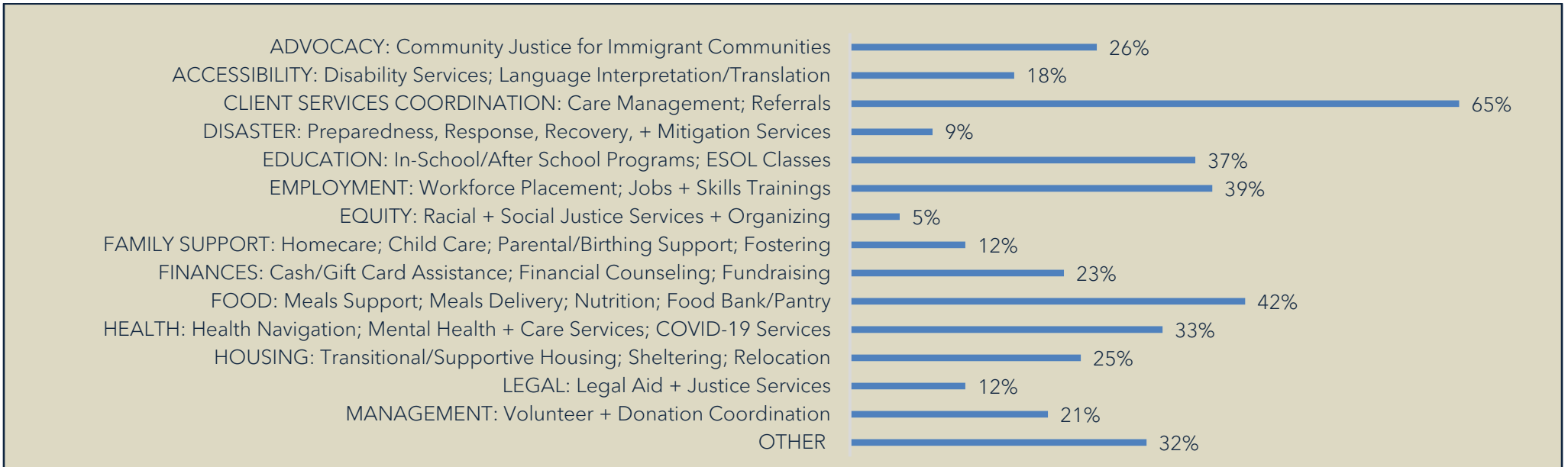
**> They offered a wide array of critical acute and long-term services to many communities within migrating communities.**

- The most offered service types were:
  - "Client Services Coordination" (65%)
  - "Food Services" (42%)
  - "Employment Support" (39%)
  - "Education Support" (37%)
  - "Health Services" (33%)
- Of the communities they reported serving:
  - 86% are non-English/ESL speakers
  - 75% are low-income; 68% are under/unemployed
  - 58% are unstably housed/un-housed people
  - >50% are older adults, youth, or parents with infants
  - 47% were seeking mental health support
- 82% ensured services were accessible through language translation/interpretation, and 13% affirmed accessibility for people with disabilities. Of these services, less than 20% reported receiving funding to support accessibility.

## SURVEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

### 1 | ASSESSING SERVICES

#### > What services are human services organizations offering to people seeking asylum and other refuge in NYC?



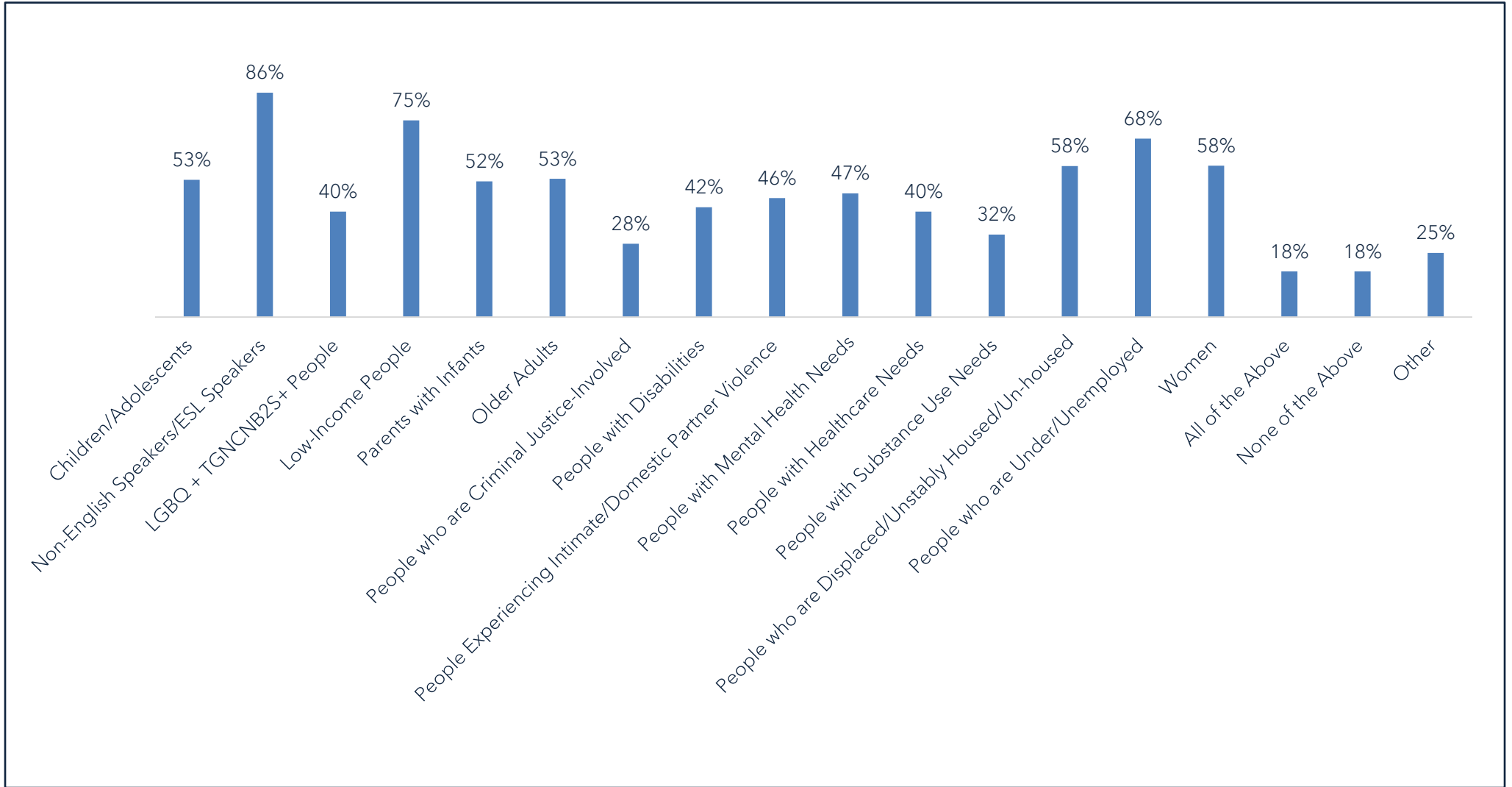
#### "Other" included:

- Specific Donations: Clothing, Toiletries, PPE, Metro Cards
- Community Support Groups + Storytelling Programming
- Digital Literacy Education
- ITIN Processing
- Covering Rental + Utility Arrears
- Street Outreach
- WIC + SNAP Applications + Recertifications
- Addressing Older Adult Abuse + Other Violence

#### > Are these services different from what these organizations normally provide?



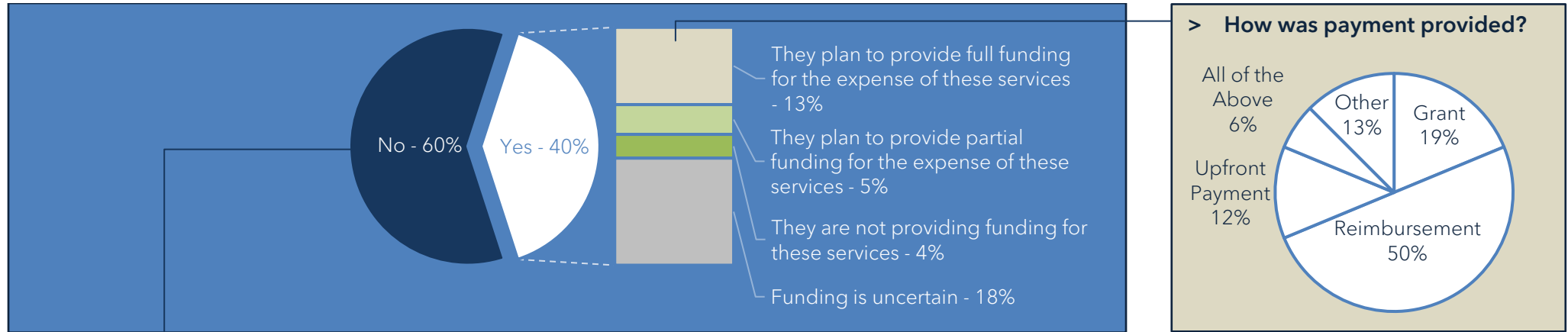
> What communities are human services organizations serving among people seeking asylum/other refuge in NYC?



"Other" included: Single men; People with advanced degrees

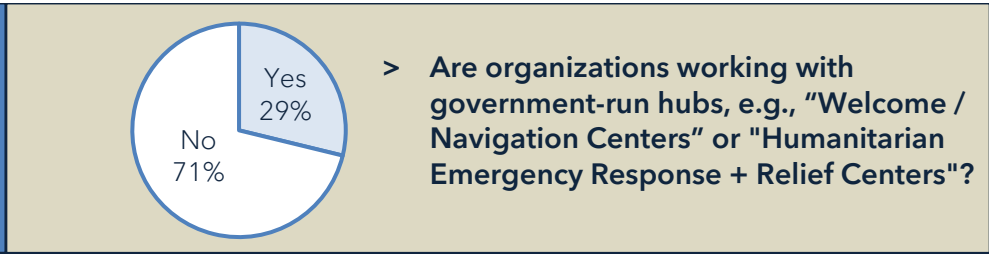
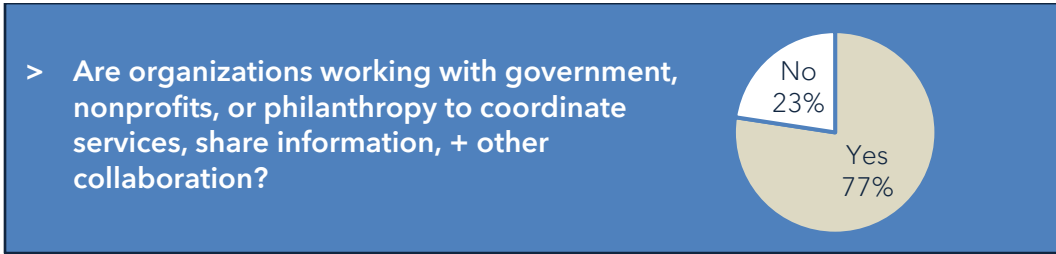
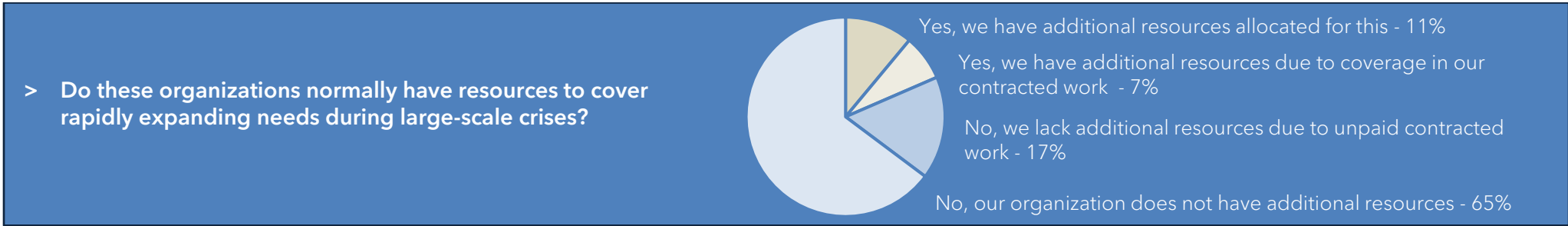
## 2 | RESOURCES + COORDINATION

> Are government entities asking organizations to provide these services, and is funding included in those asks?



> What government entities did respondents self-report as requestors of support?

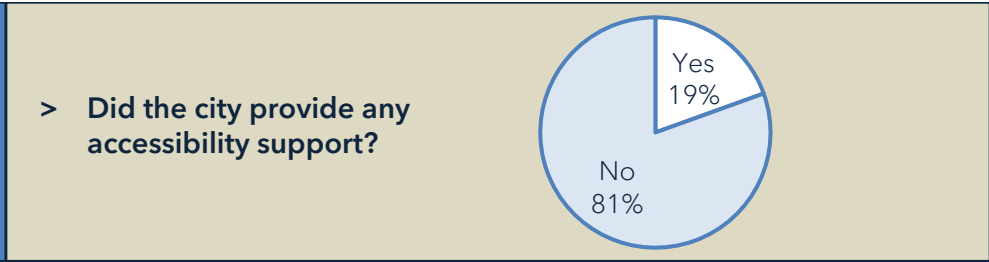
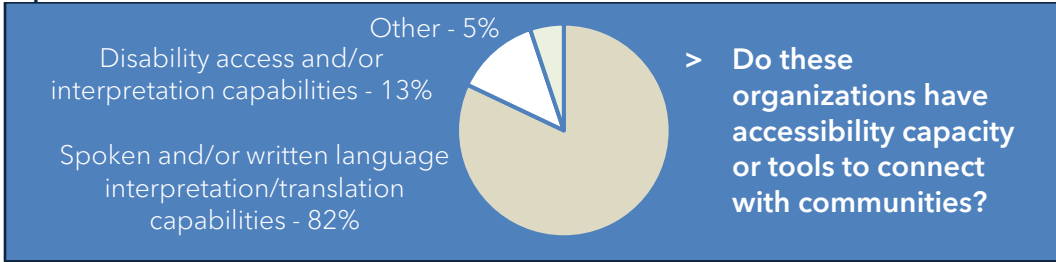
<b>NEW YORK CITY</b>	<b>NEW YORK STATE</b>
Administration for Children’s Services	Office of Mental Health
Department for the Aging	<b>FEDERAL</b>
Department of Health + Mental Hygiene	Substance Abuse + Mental Health Services Administration
Department of Homeless Services	
Department of Social Services	
Department of Youth + Community Development	
Human Resources Administration	
Mayor's Office	
Small Business Services	



> What other welcome, navigation, and/or relief centers did organizations report?

- Nonprofits, houses of worship, shelters, hotels, schools, + businesses have become de facto hubs in some neighborhoods.
- Local initiatives + mutual aid groups have set up sites in some neighborhoods to provide direct community support.

3 | ACCESSIBILITY



Spoken and/or written language interpretation/translation capabilities	Disability access and/or interpretation capabilities
<p><b>Languages Reported:</b> Spanish, Mixteco, Mixe, Nahuatl, K'iche', Quechua, Haitian Creole, French, Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic, + Mandarin</p> <p><b>Services Reported:</b> Bi-lingual + multi-lingual staff/volunteers; Contracted in-person interpreter services; Paid written translation services; Language Line services</p>	<p>ADA compliant rooms, ramps, + elevators; partnerships with ASL interpreters</p>

## 1 | CROSS-CUTTING

- **Create a dedicated, expedited funding stream for comprehensive human services, with funding amount and focus determined in partnership with human services organizations.**
  - Leverage dedicated emergency procurement models from past crises (e.g., COVID-19), ensuring that the first round of funding is accompanied by a multi-year plan for fund renewals accessible to community-based organizations.
  - Improve transparency by disclosing all coordination and spending in the City’s response to date, including all funded and unfunded coordination with organizations (recipients, amounts, durations of funding) across Mayoral offices/City agencies.
  - Ensure that the full costs of services are paid to organizations (not only salaries), including just compensation, mental health support, coverage for accessibility tools, and other resources.
  
- **Design and resource a public education campaign for New Yorkers to better understand the situation faced by their newest neighbors, mitigate stigma/discrimination, and galvanize resources for families.**
  - Compassionately and respectfully humanize this effort, sharing the stories that underline the deep risk that families took to get here, and the stigma now being experienced (especially by children).
  - Partner with community and faith-based organizations to thoughtfully implement this campaign to avoid tokenizing clients.

## 2 | SERVICE-SPECIFIC

<b>CLIENT SERVICES COORDINATION</b>	
ISSUES + NEEDS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of case managers/funding for client services to achieve continuity of support over time for families</li> <li>▪ Need for expanded language services</li> <li>▪ Limited navigation centers geographically in NYC</li> <li>▪ Changing donation needs (towards more long-term items); need for more organized donations infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Lack of sustained, culturally, and nutritionally appropriate food; confusion around access to WIC/SNAP benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a more comprehensive service directory for people seeking asylum in different languages (especially in indigenous languages)</li> <li>▪ Fund more care coordination programs to: hire more navigators; extend their employment; provide comprehensive training across navigators/sites; set up satellite sites in more neighborhoods</li> <li>▪ Maintain centralized warehouses for donations to be used specifically for community-based organizations and their clients</li> <li>▪ Advocate to the State for a sustained food assistance program, assessing what has been done in other jurisdictions</li> </ul>

<b>EMPLOYMENT, TRAININGS, + FINANCIAL SUPPORT</b>	
ISSUES + NEEDS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employment verification authorization, licensing, and other employment processes are extremely slow and difficult</li> <li>▪ Lack of a holistic workforce support at state/federal levels</li> <li>▪ Lack of funds for sustained workforce development (e.g., OSHA trainings), and technology to complete processes</li> <li>▪ Costly childcare programs affect parents' employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demand Federal expediting of the Employment Authorization Document processes, and NY State expansion of Licensing Act</li> <li>▪ Secure resources for sustained and accessible workforce development trainings, including interpretation and technology</li> <li>▪ Ensure access to childcare for all newly arrived families, funding community and faith-based organizations to do tailored outreach</li> </ul>
<b>HEALTH</b>	
ISSUES + NEEDS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Severe acute and ongoing trauma without enough culturally/linguistically appropriate mental health services</li> <li>▪ Lack of pathways for vaccinations/related resources</li> <li>▪ Difficulty accessing/understanding eligibility for insurance and healthcare (low understanding of U.S. health systems)</li> <li>▪ Lack of capacity/funding for healthcare to meet extensive health issues (dental/vision needs often not covered)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elevate existing advocacy efforts for Medicaid for all regardless of immigration status, and design healthcare educational campaigns</li> <li>▪ Fund and coordinate with community organizations to distribute accurate information about eligibility and access to health resources (e.g., expand funds for Access Health NYC CBOs)</li> <li>▪ Expand human services organizations' access to trauma-informed professionals offering appropriate mental health care</li> <li>▪ Organize mobile vaccine clinics with free immunizations at all sites</li> <li>▪ Coordinate with community clinics, pharmacies, traditional/holistic providers, doulas, and more on holistic mental health guides</li> </ul>
<b>HOUSING</b>	
ISSUES + NEEDS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extremely slow shelter, public housing, and rent assistance processes due to procedural and bureaucratic issues</li> <li>▪ Issues moving to transitional/permanent pathways out of temporary shelters (e.g., landlords won't accept vouchers)</li> <li>▪ Complex holistic needs in housing; lack of social workers</li> <li>▪ Severe staffing and funding cuts for housing providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expedite shelter, public housing, and rental assistance processes in agencies, providing them with adequate resources</li> <li>▪ Make CityFHEPS accessible regardless of status; fill vacancies in CHIP apartments; address Sources of Income discrimination</li> <li>▪ Secure resources for staffing to human services organizations offering housing, ideally hiring staff from communities</li> </ul>



<b>LEGAL</b>	
ISSUES + NEEDS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demand for legal services has significantly risen, but there is a serious lack of legal aid resources and services</li> <li>▪ Lawyers are stretched thin also doing case management</li> <li>▪ Lack of long-term representation for asylum cases</li> <li>▪ Inconsistent education of asylees and their support (lawyers, DOJ representatives, shelter employees, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Expanding misinformation/fraudulent actors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build on existing advocacy platforms, such as New York Immigration Coalition’s Welcoming New York Campaign</li> <li>▪ Create training campaigns and legal packets for all clients and their advocates on rights, processes, and benefits</li> <li>▪ Secure long-term, multi-year funding for legal representation and related costs (e.g., application fees, administrative needs)</li> <li>▪ Pass executive orders to extend timeframes for asylum applications</li> </ul>
<b>YOUTH</b>	
ISSUES + NEEDS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children of migrating families need school environments that are inclusive and celebrate them</li> <li>▪ Children may be eligible for SIJS but don’t have a guardian</li> <li>▪ Children struggling with lack of culturally accessible food</li> <li>▪ Need for educational supports tailored for ESL students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with more mentor/youth service programs to identify guardians</li> <li>▪ Facilitate learning and support group spaces for parents and children</li> <li>▪ Create programs that foster understanding among students</li> <li>▪ Ensure DOE supports students of migrating communities through dedicated teachers for ESL students and other academic supports</li> </ul>

**CONCLUSION**

NYC has long expressed pride in its identity as a sanctuary city—a welcoming refuge for all migrants. The city has the infrastructure within the human services sector to fully address the needs of its residents. This can only happen when human services organizations and community networks are seen as equal partners, and funded as ones by City, State, and Federal governments. We can show that the concept of a sanctuary city is more than a tagline on a fading billboard: we must meaningfully invest in human services and community infrastructure in NYC for a compassionate and comprehensive welcome to our newest neighbors. And these changes must be swift, as gaps in information and services have already left thousands in the dark in their first winter in NYC.