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**Amazon and Lions International Partner with
Welcome.US on New Co-sponsorship Initiative to
Increase Capacity of Refugee Resettlement Programs
Nationwide**

Pilot program partners with national organizations to significantly increase the level of support for sponsors, using a group model with step-by-step training and funding

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, Amazon, Lions International, and Welcome.US announced the launch of “Engage to Change,” a pilot co-sponsorship initiative designed to support the growth and sustainability of refugee resettlement programs by pairing civic and corporate partners with local resettlement agencies to welcome refugees into their communities.

For the first time in nearly four decades, there are now three federal government programs that allow everyday Americans to sponsor people seeking refuge in the United States: [humanitarian sponsorship](#), the [Welcome Corps](#) program, and [co-sponsorship](#). What makes co-sponsorship unique is that groups of individuals interested in sponsoring a newcomer family can partner with a participating local resettlement agency to welcome newcomers and receive technical assistance and support every step of the way. Other sponsorship opportunities do not include this same direct support from resettlement agency staff.

In this pilot initiative, Welcome.US will work with Amazon and Lions International to mobilize local Lions clubs and Amazon employees to join co-sponsorship programs. The initiative aims to engage national organizations beyond Amazon and Lions International after its first year.

The Engage to Change Co-sponsorship Initiative is a project of Church World Service's [Refugee Welcome Collective](#) and is funded under an agreement with the U.S. Department of State.

Welcome.US is a consortium member of the grant and leads the partnership work with Refugee Welcome Collective.

“Over the past two years, thousands of Americans from all walks of life have proudly and consistently raised their hands when the U.S. government has provided opportunities to be a lifeline to those in need of safety and refuge. We have seen our nation’s ability to welcome grow dramatically as private citizens have joined in this important work,” **said Nazanin Ash, CEO of Welcome.US.** “Co-sponsorship is a collaborative model that leverages the strengths of our communities, civic partners, and private sector to expand the capacity of refugee resettlement programs nationwide, helping newcomers land on their feet, navigate their first few months in the United States, and find the sense of belonging and inclusion that is so important to their success.”

The goal of Engage to Change is to create a model that engages national service member organizations, private sector companies, faith, and other community organizations to mobilize their members and employees to sponsor newcomers. The groups will also receive funding from Lions International and Amazon to help them participate in co-sponsorship and serve their community through these efforts, instead of relying on their own fundraising efforts.

Lions International has been a steadfast partner and supporter of Welcome.US’s innovative approach to growing a national movement of welcome from its inception in 2021. By participating in the Engage to Change pilot program, Lions International is not only deepening its commitment to serve newcomers by mobilizing Lions clubs to participate in co-sponsorship, but is also helping Welcome.US build a roadmap that can be adopted by other organizations to engage their respective communities in co-sponsorship.

“Lions clubs nationwide have an opportunity to make a profound impact on the lives of newcomers in their communities,” **said Brian Sheehan, Lions International President.** “The Lions’ commitment to serve uniquely positions us to collectively make a tremendous impact not only on refugee families rebuilding their lives here in the U.S., but also on increasing the capacity of our nation to welcome as a whole.”

Amazon has been a leader in refugee resettlement projects like this new pilot initiative, serving as a central force on the Welcome.US CEO Council since 2022, including innovating rapid response solutions to bring essential goods and services to newcomers in the United States.

“At Amazon, we care deeply about refugee resettlement initiatives to help those facing the world’s most dire humanitarian crises,” **said David Zapolsky, senior vice president at Amazon.** “In the early days of the war in Ukraine, we opened two relief hubs to deliver aid to refugees. This partnership will enable us to increase our ability to help by harnessing the passion of our Amazon employees so refugees can find a new home and life in the United States.”

How Engage to Change Co-Sponsorship Works

[Co-sponsorship](#) is resettlement agency-led, meaning local resettlement agencies with dedicated program staff oversee co-sponsorship groups. Co-sponsorship is inclusive of all refugees and is not limited to a singular refugee population like some other forms of sponsorship. Co-sponsor groups typically include 6–10 individuals.

These co-sponsorship groups will receive comprehensive training and guidance from the local resettlement agency they are paired with, and they will work together to welcome newcomer families into their communities and provide support in key areas called “core services” — including tasks like greeting families at the airport, helping setting up a home for the newcomers they are supporting, and helping families access local resources like language classes.

Typically, co-sponsorship programs require groups to fundraise up to \$7,000 per newcomer family. In this initiative, Lions International will provide local Lions clubs with up to \$15,000 for co-sponsorship groups. Amazon will supply employees that form co-sponsorship groups with up to \$7,000.

Welcome.US is actively working with International Rescue Committee, Church World Service, Bethany Christian Services, Ethiopian Community Development Council agencies, and their affiliates to pilot the Engage to Change model in cities with Lions International and Amazon co-sponsor pilot groups.

About Welcome.US

At Welcome.US, our mission is to unleash the desire and capacity of Americans to welcome newcomers and help them thrive. We catalyze the support that improves outcomes for newcomers, in ways that build the ongoing, enduring, geographically and politically diverse constituency that will ensure support for welcoming more newcomers in the long-run. We operate on the evidence that direct participation with newcomers transforms both the welcomer and those being welcomed. By making it easier for Americans from all walks of life

to participate in the work of welcoming — and telling their stories — we are building a movement that celebrates America’s welcoming spirit by providing an opportunity to serve for all who seek to welcome.

In partnership with local and national resettlement agencies, diaspora organizations and leaders, refugees, community sponsorship groups, nonprofits, businesses, faith-based institutions, veterans, universities, four former Presidents and four former First Ladies, and the U.S. government, Welcome.US is the single point of entry for Americans who want to get involved and support those who are starting new lives in the United States. **To learn more about Welcome.US, please visit welcome.us.**

About Lions International

Lions International represents Lions Clubs International and Lions Clubs International Foundation. Lions take on some of the greatest challenges facing our communities and the world through the service of 1.4 million members in 49,000 clubs and the grant-funding support of our foundation. We improve health and well-being, strengthen communities and support those in need, locally and globally. At Lions International we are serving a world in need. **Learn more at lionsclubs.org.**

About Amazon

Amazon is guided by four principles: customer obsession rather than competitor focus, passion for invention, commitment to operational excellence, and long-term thinking. Amazon strives to be Earth’s Most Customer-Centric Company, Earth’s Best Employer, and Earth’s Safest Place to Work. Customer reviews, 1-Click shopping, personalized recommendations, Prime, Fulfillment by Amazon, AWS, Kindle Direct Publishing, Kindle, Career Choice, Fire tablets, Fire TV, Amazon Echo, Alexa, Just Walk Out technology, Amazon Studios, and The Climate Pledge are some of the things pioneered by Amazon. **For more information, visit amazon.com/about and follow [@AmazonNews](https://twitter.com/AmazonNews).**

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