City Resources Toolkit

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Identifying city resources

City governments have a variety of resources at their disposal that can be helpful in promoting or expanding immigrant integration initiatives. Here are some of the most common functions or attributes that agencies gain or can seek when they make appropriate requests for support.

Access to other organizations and a wider audience

Your local government interacts in some way with every organization and individual in your community. Partnering with local government can connect your agency with other groups or individuals in the community, often providing you with access that might otherwise be difficult to obtain.

Legitimacy or authority

As the highest source of authority in any community and the main provider of community services, local government can be a powerful ally. By endorsing your integration initiative, it is also providing a stamp of approval and sending a message that your organization and initiative are credible and worthwhile.

Funding

Local government often have discretionary funding to support organizations or initiatives deemed valuable to the community. Partnering with local government can provide your organization the opportunity to create a project or program for which you might not otherwise have funding.

Information/data

No one knows your community better than your local government because it collects considerable amounts of information on all neighborhoods and entities in their jurisdiction. Collaborations may help give you better access to data or more information on what data is available. This in turn can help you to better plan and carryout your integration initiative and ensure its success.

Volunteers

Many local governments have a volunteer body that regularly helps with community projects. Partnerships could give you access to their volunteers, or reinforce your credibility and help bolster your own volunteer recruitment efforts.

Space to convene

Local governments have multiple venues and buildings located in central parts of your community. Working together could grant you access to these spaces and some of the unique resources and opportunities they provide.

More clients

The access and influence that local government have can help your organization to reach out to more clients and potentially form relationships with immigrant populations that your organization does not currently serve.

Responding to concerns about partnering with city government

Agency leaderships plays an essential role in engaging city governments on agency-led initiatives, agency leadership must be on board. Below are common concerns about partnering with city government and ideas on how to alleviate these fears.

"City government and agencies won't be interested in working with our organization."

City government has an obligation to serve all members of its community, including immigrant populations. It is to their benefit to ensure that their communities are integrated, as this will contribute to the overall well-being of the community and will reflect positively on the local governance and leadership.

"Engaging with city government will take too much time."

Engaging with city officials is something your organization can do over an extended time period and in a gradual way. With small and regular commitments to engage with city officials, you can achieve big integration results and further the goals and objectives of our agency. If you engage with the city in a planned and purposeful way, you can establish a meaningful and fruitful relationship without devoting disproportionate time or resources.

Working with city government won't help us to accomplish our mission or goals."

There are multiple areas where the cities' interests converge with yours, and where you can find projects that benefit your organization and the interests of the city. Working with the city will not only help you to achieve the mission of our organization to promote the well-being of immigrant populations, but it will also raise your profile in the surrounding areas.

"Engaging with city government around integration issues could put our clients at risk."

Part of our exploratory process in engaging with city government will be to verify that nothing you do will adversely impact or threaten the immigrant community. If you are truly concerned about any potential risk, you may want to focus more on engaging and educating the receiving community with the participation of immigrants for whom security is not an issue. This may also take more work on your part to educate city officials on the benefits of integration and the contributions of immigrants to the community.

"High profile integration initiatives will result in backlash from xenophobic members of the community"

If you are in a community where you believe this is a possibility you will need to spend more time and resources on engaging and prepping the receiving community to make them more receptive to integration initiatives. While you must be careful to be reasonably certain that whatever you offer will not cause serious problems for immigrants or the wider community, you also cannot be held hostage to the threats of a few extreme members in your pursuit of an integrated community.

Data sources supporting the interests of cities

The decisions made by city governments are often influenced and supported by data. The data can show populations residing within city limits, rates of access to certain services, or lack of participation in specific initiatives. Cities also use data to compare themselves to similarly situated cities. This data can show resource allocation for certain initiatives, resource allocation and growth rates for economic initiatives, and demographic data such as homeownership rates. Use publically available data to bolster the case for your integration initiative and to convince city officials that it is worthy of their support.

City Data Sources

New American Economy

"Care about the impact of immigration on your state's economy or congressional district? We've organized our data by your location. And Find original research and reporting on topics that matter to you. These issues represent the areas of our economy most impacted by immigration policies."

Source: https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/

Welcoming America

"Welcoming America leads a movement of inclusive communities becoming more prosperous by making everyone feel like they belong. We believe that all people, including immigrants, are valued contributors who are vital to the success of our communities and shared future. Today, a growing number of places recognize that being welcoming leads to prosperity; Welcoming America provides the roadmap and support they need to become more welcoming toward immigrants and all residents. "

Source: https://www.welcomingamerica.org/

Gateways for Growth Challenge

"The Gateways for Growth Challenge (G4G) is a competitive opportunity for local governments, chambers of commerce, and non-profit organizations to jointly apply for tailored research, direct technical assistance, and matching grants to support their strategic planning processes."

Source: http://gatewaysforgrowth.org/challenge/

Cincinnati Compass

"This resource is an example of an effective way to compare metrics between several similarly sized cities in the United States. "

Source: http://www.cincinnaticompass.org/docs/librariesprovider3/default-document-library/datadocuments/2015_hccusa_fun_facts.pdf?sfvrsn=2631c2c0_2

Demographic Data Sources

United States Census Bureau: American Community Survey

"The American Community Survey helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation."

Source: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/

Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII), University of Southern California: Eligible to Naturalize Adults by Probability of Naturalization

"This interactive map presents CSII's most recent estimates of eligible-to-naturalize adults in the United States. The tool provides a table of each population's demographic information, including age, race, education attainment, poverty status, English speaking ability, top five places of origin, and top five languages spoken at home (other than or in addition to English). The maps are additionally available for State levels and Congressional district levels."

Soutce: https://dornsife.usc.edu/csii/map-eligible-to-naturalize-puma

Department of Homeland: Security Yearbook of Immigration Statistics

"The Yearbook of Immigration Statistics is a compendium of tables that provides data on foreign nationals who, during a fiscal year, were granted lawful permanent residence (i.e., admitted as immigrants or became legal permanent residents), were admitted into the United States on a temporary basis (e.g., tourists, students, or workers), applied for asylum or refugee status, or were naturalized. The Yearbook also presents data on immigration enforcement actions, including alien apprehensions, removals, and returns. The Yearbook tables are released as they become available. A final PDF is released in September of the following fiscal year."

Source: https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook

Migration Policy Institute: State Immigration Data Profiles

"Review U.S. Census data on U.S. immigrants and the native born based on: demographics, language and education, workforce, and income."

Source: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/state-immigration-data-profiles

Migration Policy Institute: Immigration Data Matters

"This useful online guide links users directly to the most credible, high-quality data on immigrants and immigration in the United States and internationally. The easy-to-use publication includes more than 220 data resources compiled by governmental and authoritative nongovernmental sources. The guide covers a wide range of topics, among them foreign-born population stocks and flows, humanitarian and labor migration, naturalization, education and language attainment, labor force participation, income and poverty rates, remittance size and flow, immigration enforcement actions, public opinion, religious affiliation, and development indicators."

Source: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigration-data-matters

Syracuse University: Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse

"TRAC's Immigration Project offers a variety of tools and applications to make the data we gather available in an understandable way to the American people, Congress, immigration groups and others."

Source: http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/reports/reports.php?layer=immigration&report_type=tool

Sample 'asks'

There are myriad possibilities for city engagement and support in an agency's integration initiatives. Below are several ideas for 'asks' that an agency could make of a city – for support, resources, marketing, or volunteers. Several of these are already in place within the CLINIC network. The programs are detailed in the corresponding link.

Community ID program

In many states undocumented immigrants are not eligible for drivers licenses or other forms of government issued identification document. Some community-based organizations have worked with government agencies and law enforcement partners to create an identification card or document that residents can use in their interactions with police and local services. With the right support from city officials and other relevant agencies, a community ID can go a long way toward making everyone in the neighborhood feel more confident accessing emergency services and engaging with the police.

Expansion of language services at government facilities

Lack of appropriate language services can be a significant hindrance to community members in need. Helping government officials to better understand the need for these services and the barriers created without them is the first step to addressing the problem. The result is a community that is more integrated and more equitable.

Cultural awareness training for government agencies and workers

Making sure government officials and employees have an understanding of the diverse cultures that make up their jurisdiction is an important part of delivering effective and appropriate services. Encouraging city officials to provide basic trainings can help stimulate integration in your community and promote culture awareness and sensitivity.

Festivals, celebrations or other cultural events celebrating the diversity of the community

One of the best ways to promote integration is to have residents from different cultural backgrounds learn about each other's cultures. Local government can be a crucial ally in helping to promote and carryout cultural celebration events, and may even be able to provide funding. This sort of cross-cultural sharing and appreciation will bring neighbors together and work to show that all cultures and traditions are recognized and valued.

Support for ESL, citizenship, and tax preparation assistance

English as a Second Language classes, citizenship preparation classes and tax preparation assistance are basic services that can help immigrants better integrate with the host society. Local leadership should be interested in helping to support these services either through funding, in-kind donations, or by providing other support or public approval for your program.

Courses/orientation for newcomers to city government, services, and community

Receiving societies and the role of government in the in American communities may differ greatly from what may many Receiving societies and the role of government in Unities Statues communities may differ greatly from what many immigrants may have known in their home countries. Encourage your city officials to develop orientation programs for new arrivals so they can get to know their new home, and what is available and expected of them. By providing

immigrants with the tools and information they should be able to navigate their new home community more easily and government employees should be better able to serve them.

Opportunities for newcomers to meet and understand the role of emergency service personnel

Specific courses on the role of emergency services in the community can also be helpful for newly arrived immigrants. This can allow newcomers to feel more comfortable and confident contacting the authorities in the case of an emergency.

Source: https://cliniclegal.org/news/immigrant-integration-building-one-community-stamford-connecticut-police-department-coffee-cop

Welcome event for newcomers with city participation

A welcome event by city and local government can go a long way to making newcomers feel safe and included in their new community. City officials can designate specific government employees to meet new arrivals at ports of entry or arrange a time to introduce themselves and provide newcomers with information on their city.

Source: https://cliniclegal.org/news/integration-catholic-charities-oregon-police/catholic-charities-and-portland-police-department

Community education events with government sponsorship that focus on engaging or educating the receiving community

To promote a welcoming and integrated community, effort must be made to involve and educate not only newcomers, but also longstanding members of the community. Particular emphasis must be made to educate the receiving community about who the newcomers are in their community, where they come from, and what they can contribute to the community.

Sample strategic plans

Several cities and states have created multi-year strategic plans around improving immigrant integration. Here are a few examples:

San Jose, CA

https://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/62236

North Forks, ND

http://www.grandforksgov.com/government/city-leadership/committees/gf-immigrant-integration/-sortn-EDate/-sortd-asc/-npage-5

Vision2015 – Kentucky

https://www.vision2015.org/

Other interest areas that enhance integration

When thinking about creating an integrated community that is welcoming and inclusive of immigrants, you might typically focus around issues of immigration legal services, English language instruction or naturalization assistance. While these are important issues to address, the perspective can be broadened to include other community issues and the unique circumstances that immigrants face. When thinking about integration at the local level, all relevant issues should be considered through the lens of how immigrants may be uniquely impacted.

For example, while public safety is a concern for all, immigrant communities may not be comfortable contacting police or emergency personnel, or they may be unaware of the services they provide or their role in the community. To help promote integration, consider creating an initiative to foster positive interactions between immigrants and emergency personnel or design and distribute educational materials to orient newcomers to emergency services.

Similarly, the education systems of many immigrants' home countries may differ significantly from those of the United States or they may not have a public education system. A local organization, in partnership with the local school board, could offer informational sessions and materials to newcomers that explains the U.S. education system and the opportunities available from pre-k through higher education. An agency could facilitate parental interaction with teachers and school officials by advocating for increased language services for back to school nights and providing opportunities for teachers to learn more about the cultural backgrounds of their students.

Below is a broad list of items of interest to the community to consider when developing your integration initiatives.

- Poverty reduction strategies
- Child welfare
- Public education
- Healthcare
- Job readiness/ training
- Public safety
- Small business support/ entrepreneurship
- Financial literacy
- Civic participation
- Volunteerism
- Access to public parks and other public spaces
- Public safety announcements and other community-wide communications
- Public transportation access

Readiness to engage with city government self-assessment

Several action items should be completed before an agency reaches out to a city government for support. This self-assessment will help determine if your agency has completed these necessary steps so that a future engagement with the city is productive and successful.

1. Is your executive leadership on board with pursuing a city partnership?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

2. Have you identified appropriate staff people to engage with the city?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

3. Do you have an organization chart for your city government?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

4. Have you asked your colleagues for contacts within city government?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

5. Have you asked your networks for contacts within city government?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

6. Have you identified an appropriate person or department with whom to build a relationship?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

7. Have you identified what you want from the city?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

8. Have you identified what is possible for the city to offer?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

9. Have you determined what the city will get out of granting your request?

   YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

10. Is your 'ask' something that advances a city priority or goal?

    YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

11. Is the timing of your 'ask' appropriate?

    YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

12. Have you identified answers to questions you believe the city will ask?

    YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

13. Have you established any partnerships that would help in achieving your goal?

    YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

14. Have you established how and who will continue to nurture the relationship with the city?

    YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

15. Have you established who will be responsible for sending thank you notes, reports and any other correspondence to the city?

    YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

16. Have you determined how to measure the outcomes you are trying to achieve?

    YES   NO   I DON'T KNOW

Talking points template

It is vitally important to plan out talking points before engaging in conversations with the city on topics surrounding immigrants and integration. Take the time to think through the below questions so that your agency is prepared for conversations with city officials and are able to answer any questions that they city might have of you and your agency staff.

1. What benefits does integration bring to your city?

2. Where are the opportunities your city has for integration work?

3. What is your organization doing to support integration and promote it?

4. What are the limitations to your organization's work?

5. What resources do you need from the city?

6. Why should the city contribute those resources?

7. What resources will your agency contribute to this work?

8. What will your organization do with the resources?

9. How will the partnership with your organization help the city?

10. How are other cities similar to yours working on integration?

11. Why is now a good and appropriate time to work with the city on integration?

12. Where does immigrant integration fit into other issues important to the city?

13. How does this partnership help with immigrant integration efforts in the future?