



INSTITUTE FOR
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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A Local Official's Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement



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The Changing Face of California's Communities



California's population is changing and local leaders know that this offers both challenges and opportunities. How can California's local public officials take advantage of these opportunities? What steps can these leaders take to keep their immigrant (or "newcomer") communities informed, to identify their priorities and to engage them effectively in addressing the issues facing the community?

A Local Official's Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement is designed to help local officials and staff design and implement inclusive civic participation processes that recognize, inform and engage their community's growing number of immigrant residents and their families.

How is California Changing?

As of 2004, first generation immigrants made up 27 percent of the state's population and second generation immigrants 21 percent.³ California is home to 4.2 million naturalized immigrants and another 2.3 million who are eligible to naturalize. Demographers have estimated that immigrants and their children could make up 29 percent of the California electorate by the 2012 elections. About half of the children in California between the ages of 12 and 17 have at least one immigrant parent.⁴

Online Civic Engagement Resources

-  For general information about planning and organizing public involvement processes.¹ www.ca-ilg.org/cgi
-  For CGI publications including *Planning Public Forums: Questions to Guide Local Officials*. www.ca-ilg.org/cgipubs
- 25 For resources specifically related to immigrant engagement, see the "Useful Resources" on page 25

While large metropolitan areas like Los Angeles have long been home to many newcomers, today newcomers are settling all over the state- in suburban as well as urban neighborhoods. Newcomers comprise at least 10 percent of the populace in 36 of the state's 58 counties and at least 15 percent in two-thirds of California's municipalities.⁵

California's immigrant population has increased more than five-fold over the last 35 years.⁶

Definitions

Throughout this guide we will use a number of terms for civic engagement interchangeably. Whether "civic engagement," "public involvement," "civic participation," "public forums," or other terms are used, we intend to describe efforts to engage the broader public or specific communities in dialogue and/or deliberations intended to inform and guide the decision making of local officials.

The term "immigrant integration" is used to suggest a dynamic, two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure vibrant and cohesive communities. This suggests that integration is an intentional process that engages and transforms all community stakeholders, enriching social, economic and civic life over time.²

1. Click on resources and research for additional guides and other resources related to general public engagement practices and strategies.
2. From *Investing in our Communities: Strategies for Immigrant Integration*, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees; www.gcir.org; 2006.
3. Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick and Celia Viramontes, *Civic Inequalities: Immigrant Volunteerism and Community Organizations in California*, Public Policy Institute of California, July 2006.
4. Paral, Rob, *Integration Potential of California's Immigrants and Their Children*, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, 2008, available at www.gcir.org/about/what/ciii.
5. 2000 U.S. Census.
6. Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick and Celia Viramontes, *Civic Inequalities: Immigrant Volunteerism and Community Organizations in California*, Public Policy Institute of California, July 2006.

“Newcomers want the same things in a community that long-time residents want—safe and secure neighborhoods, access to good schools, parks, libraries and streets, and profitable business opportunities.”

—Lena Tam

Council Member, City of Alameda

Over half of these newcomers are from Latin America and about a third are from Asia. The most common countries of origin for immigrants in California are Mexico, the Philippines, China and Vietnam.⁷

California is a very diverse state, and a majority of Californians are of color. However, people of color are underrepresented in civic activities such as voting and contacting elected officials.⁸ If current trends hold, in 2040 Latinos⁹ will represent 42 percent of the adult population in

the state but only 26 percent of the electorate, while whites will make up 35 percent of the population and 53 percent of voters.¹¹

This increase in resident diversity is not limited to California. Census Bureau projections now indicate that Americans who identify as minorities will outnumber non-Latino whites by 2042. “What’s happening now in terms of increasing diversity probably is unprecedented,” commented Campbell Gibson, a retired census demographer.¹²

Why Engage Immigrants?

Overall, engaging immigrants in the civic and political life of their cities and counties will create stronger and more successful communities for at least two specific reasons:

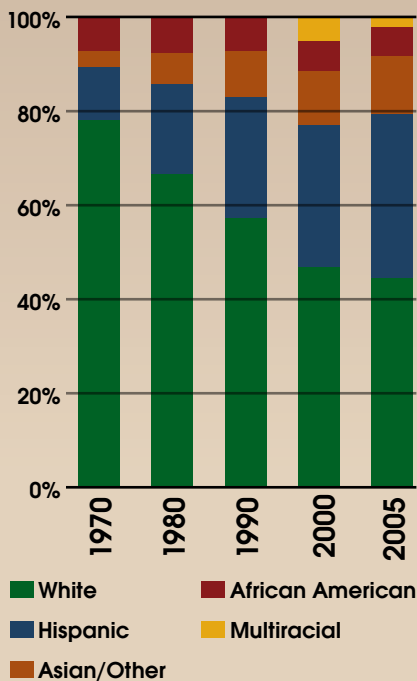
1. It will result in decisions that are more responsive to the full community’s needs and interests;
2. It will hasten the process of integrating newcomers into the broader community.

To Make Better Decisions

Local officials know that immigrants are less likely than native born residents to participate in public meetings and other engagement opportunities. In a 2003 survey, local officials with significant immigrant populations in their communities expressed concern about their ability to connect with newcomer populations. Thirty-seven percent of the officials reported that they had a hard time determining the political or policy concerns of local immigrants. Most respondents said that immigrants in their community seemed to keep primarily to themselves.¹³

Effectively reaching out and involving newcomer populations adds to the information public officials have to inform and guide their decision-making. Inclusive civic engagement allows local leaders to better understand the needs, concerns, and goals of their increasingly diverse constituency. This knowledge enables local officials to make decisions that are appropriately reflective of the public interest.

California’s Increasing Diversity¹⁰



7. Public Policy Institute of California, *Just the Facts: Immigrants in California*, June 2008.

8. Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick and Mark Baldasarre, *The Ties that Bind: Changing Demographics and Civic Engagement in California*, Public Policy Institute of California, 2004.

9. For the sake of brevity, this guide uses the term Latino to refer to both people who identify as Latino and those who identify as Hispanic. Polls show mixed results for which term is preferred, and factors such as age, political affiliation, and generation seem to play into how people identify themselves. Outreach staff may wish to ask people in the community which they prefer and use the locally preferred term.

10. Chart reflects U.S. Census Bureau data and findings from the 2005 American Community Survey.

11. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *The House We All Live In: A Report on Immigrant Civic Integration*, 2003.

12. Roberts, Sam, “In a Generation, Minorities May Be the U.S. Majority”, *The New York Times*, August 13, 2008.

13. Lewis, Paul G., S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Nikesh Patel, *Governance and Policy in High-Immigration Cities: Results from Surveys of Elected Officials, Planners, and Police*, Public Policy Institute of California, 2004, available at www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=502.

A transparent and inclusive civic engagement process is likely to increase public support for the decisions made. This, in turn, can create an atmosphere conducive to successful implementation.

To Promote Newcomer Integration

More inclusive public involvement can weave newcomers into the civic and political life of their communities. Participating in well designed and inclusive public meetings and neighborhood conversations will involve immigrants, with others, in civic activities and help them overcome the fear and mistrust that often act as barriers to full community participation.

To a significant degree, immigrants represent the future of leadership in California. The first steps in leadership development will often be taken through local civic engagement opportunities.

Civic engagement contributes to the development of three factors that are vital to a person's ability to actively participate in democratic processes: motivation, capacity, and networks of recruitment.¹⁴ Opportunities to identify and discuss issues that are important to immigrants and their communities will motivate participation. Such engagement also builds the capacity of individuals to address community issues by adding to their self-confidence, knowledge, and skills. Immigrant civic participants develop a better understanding of local government and a range of communication, analytical, problem solving and community building skills. Inclusive engagement also serves to build relationships that support collaborative efforts and

bring additional resources to bear in addressing community issues.

These networks of relationships (or "social capital") reduce the isolation of immigrant groups and offer new avenues for community problem solving. The focus may be on a particular policy decision, or broader efforts may address issues such as education, youth violence, healthcare or substance abuse.

In his 2007 article "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century,"¹⁵ Dr. Robert Putnam presented a controversial update to his ongoing research on civic engagement. His findings suggest that while in the long run immigration and ethnic diversity are likely to have significant cultural, economic, fiscal and developmental benefits; in the short run immigration and ethnic diversity tend to reduce social solidarity and social capital. Putnam presents evidence that in ethnically diverse American neighborhoods residents tend to "hunker down," becoming less trusting, less giving, and having fewer friends. "Diversity, at least in the short run," he writes, "seems to bring out the turtle in all of us."

For local officials this underscores the importance of making efforts to involve immigrant residents and the full community in civic and political life to ensure the broadest possible participation. Opportunities for leadership development, common

work and successful civic participation may reduce this "turtle" phenomenon.

A 2004 report from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) suggests that first generation immigrants are an untapped resource for civic involvement. First-generation immigrants who have not yet participated in the civic life of their communities were found to have an especially strong interest in volunteering. PPIC researchers suggest that providing opportunities and encouragement for newcomers to contribute to local civic life may help stretch limited fiscal resources to address community needs.¹⁶

The challenge is to remove obstacles to public involvement and allow more immigrants to become active members of the community. Bringing new voices and perspectives into public discussions helps people bridge cultural divides, have a richer discussion of community issues, and learn more about each other. Benefits of inclusive public dialogues can include reduced tensions in the community and broader support for community improvement initiatives.

Obstacles to Immigrant Civic Participation

As reported in Nation's Cities Weekly, "The challenges of integrating immigrants into the social and economic life of the U.S. are often debated nationally, but the consequences of immigration are

Integration Versus Assimilation

Integration is not the same as assimilation. The goal is not the loss of cultural identities or practices, but rather to give newcomers a voice and an opportunity to play a more active role in the community.

14. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, *Pursuing Democracy's Promise: Newcomer Civic Participation in America*, 2004.

15. www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/118510920/PDFSTART.

16. Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick and Mark Baldasarre, *The Ties that Bind: Changing Demographics and Civic Engagement in California*, Public Policy Institute of California, 2004.

Success Story: Developing Community Leaders in Cathedral City



For over six years, residents of the Dream Home neighborhood

in Cathedral City have engaged in a continuing dialogue with city officials. These conversations occurred with the assistance of the faith based nonprofit organization Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC).¹⁷ Cathedral City's efforts in forging this civic partnership, as well as two others, earned the city a Helen Putnam Award from the League of California Cities in 2007.

Working through various congregations and public schools in the neighborhood, ICUC community organizers encourage residents to step up and become leaders. These leaders receive training on how to reach out to their neighbors, identify their most pressing needs, and bring these needs to the attention of city officials. Conversations occur in meetings where residents and local officials can meet in a safe, respectful environment and collaborate on improving the community.

Donald Bradley, the city manager of Cathedral City, reports that these meetings have been instrumental in allowing him and other city officials such as the mayor, city council members, and the police chief to hear from and respond to the needs of residents. "ICUC created a cohesive core around which that neighborhood could organize," explained Bradley. "A majority of people in the Dream Home neighborhood are poor and don't speak English. ICUC was a group that they trusted, and I think

working with this trusted organization helped facilitate a discussion. We couldn't have reached this population without their help."

One aspect of this success story was the approval of an assessment to upgrade from septic tanks to sewers for the neighborhood. Participants report that the project was planned and completed in a very short time period and was passed by a record margin. Other efforts underway include plans for an affordable housing project, a community center, and a playground in the community.

"The fact that the neighborhood identified their needs and issues made it easier for us to serve that community," says Bradley. "Over the last several years there has been evident improvement in the neighborhood as a result. As important as the brick and mortar improvements is the development of leaders who feel like they have a voice that will be heard. Initially they felt that either they wouldn't be listened to or that they were not articulate enough to approach the city. Now people feel confident enough to approach city hall and see if we can work together to improve things."

For more information contact the Cathedral City city manager's office at (760) 770-0372 or Corey Timpson, Director of ICUC at (909) 383-1134.

17. ICUC is a part of the PICO (People Improving Communities through Organizing) national network of faith based community organizations. PICO, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and Gamaliel each have many local affiliates working to improve communities. For more information on these organizations see www.nhi.org/online/issues/115/Warren.html or visit their websites.

Targeted participant outreach is a major undertaking that is essential to any truly inclusive public engagement effort. Organizers should plan for a significant investment in terms of staff, consultant, and/or volunteer time in order to conduct the necessary outreach efforts to those communities that might otherwise not be adequately represented at public meetings.

most intensely felt at the local level, leaving many city officials looking for ways to create a smooth transition for those who have migrated from another country.”¹⁸

Local officials know that special efforts are usually necessary to attract, engage and include newcomers. For instance, according to a 2007 survey, the greatest challenge in engaging the public for California cities and counties is, “It is always the same people who participate.” Notably, the local officials surveyed perceived that white residents were more likely to be involved in public forums, hearings, and meetings than Latino, Asian, or African American residents.¹⁹

Why is it difficult for local leaders to involve newcomers in civic participation efforts? A number of reasons may explain this:

- **Language, literacy, and cultural barriers** may mean newcomers are unaware of opportunities to participate, or may find participation embarrassing or difficult, especially if they are promoted and conducted only in English.
- **Lack of knowledge about local political processes and issues** may make people feel unqualified to participate unless they understand that everyone has values and priorities to contribute and that everyone will be given understandable background information.
- **Lingering fear of an oppressive government** in their county of origin can make some immigrants wary of public meetings. They may believe that challenging government policies or speaking out will lead to trouble with the authorities or with people who have anti-immigrant sentiments.
- **Too little time and resources** to attend a meeting is a common refrain, especially for those newcomers working long hours at low paying jobs.
- **Lack of awareness of opportunities for involvement** can be a barrier to diverse participation.
- **Fear of deportation** or political repression in their countries of origin may make newcomers and their families wary of public participation, especially if it occurs in very public or official settings.

These factors may lead to significantly lower rates of public involvement among immigrants than among others. Achieving demographically representative levels of immigrant participation requires significant planning, outreach efforts, and support from individuals and organizations with strong ties to immigrants in the community. This guide presents some strategies and examples to assist you in overcoming all of these obstacles in order to tap into the potential benefits of engaging and involving California’s growing newcomer population.

18. Duvall, Cherie, “NLC Launches Initiative to Help Cities Integrate Immigrants Into Their Communities,” *Nation’s Cities Weekly*, June 23, 2008.

19. Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick, *Engaging Local Communities: Government and Public Involvement in California Cities and Counties*, Institute for Local Government, 2008.

City of Fremont Success Story: Afghan Dialogue

The City of Fremont is home to one of the largest Afghan communities

outside of Afghanistan. After 9/11 there were fears of reprisals and backlash against Afghan-American residents.

In the months following 9/11, the city partnered with the nonprofit organizations Partners for Democratic Change and the Afghan Coalition to organize a series of community dialogues that each involved 100-200 residents. According to former independent consultant to the city Steve Costa, this was an opportunity for the whole community to express their feelings about the terrorist attacks. Many people were concerned for their Afghan neighbors, although nobody suggested any real connection existed between the events of 9/11 and local residents.

Through these dialogues in the fall of 2001, it became apparent to the organizers that the political environment in Fremont's Afghan community was divisive. The same political and ideological debates that were causing division in Afghanistan were also dividing Afghan immigrants in Fremont. Many people in the Afghan community were not talking to each other because of this political disagreement.

Working with city officials, Partners for Democratic Change and the Afghan Coalition organized a new series of dialogues to bring together the divided Afghan immigrant community. The idea was to find a unifying issue that people in that community could rally around.

Facilitated by trained members of the Afghan Coalition, approximately a hundred Afghan residents of all ages met together in four community dialogues to discuss health care and education. According to Costa, "What was very powerful was to see these relatively non-demonstrative folks who were selected to serve as facilitators develop the skills and confidence to be able to manage a dialogue.



And also to be able to maneuver through the tension of having people from different factions in the Afghan community who were asked to stay on point on a relatively nonpolitical issue like health or education that was of importance to everyone."

In the dialogue process, health issues surfaced as a priority for the Fremont Afghan community. Costa says, "There were many folks who were not covered by health insurance and many people in the community were suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder related to the Russian-Afghan conflict. There were concerns that drugs and poor diet were threats to young people in the community and that diabetes and heart disease were problems among elders. So we began to rally the community around creating a strategy and a proposal that would begin to respond to these health issues."

The dialogues provided improved communication and understanding within the Afghan community and also led to a substantial grant to provide culturally and linguistically competent health care services to the community. Importantly, they also provided Afghan residents the skills and experience to more actively participate in the civic life of their adopted city.

For more information contact the City of Fremont Human Services Department at (510) 574-2050 or Rona Popal, Executive Director of the Afghan Coalition at (510) 745-1682.

Of course not all “obstacles” to participation occur within immigrant communities. Public officials often are not involved in immigrant social networks or community organizations, and immigrants often have not been drawn into civic clubs that produce local leaders.²⁰ Local officials must bring their knowledge, commitment, and resources to bear and provide leadership to address obstacles to immigrant civic participation, including bias or prejudice that may exist within local agencies.

Immigration Sweeps: An Obstacle to Immigrant Inclusive Engagement

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights published a report in 2008 detailing the upswing in U.S. immigration sweeps over 2006-7 and the effects on immigrants and their families. This report details hundreds of raids by the U.S. federal government and a 400 percent increase in detentions between 1994 and 2006.²¹ The authors suggest that these federal efforts are creating a climate of fear among immigrants.²²

Local officials should be aware of this climate when seeking to include immigrants in public meetings. Even documented immigrants may fear contact with public agencies if they are unclear on their rights or status or if they have friends and relatives without legal immigration status.

Local officials may need to differentiate local civic engagement initiatives from the efforts of federal immigration agencies. Involving trusted local leaders from immigrant serving organizations is one way to accomplish this.

10 Keys to Encourage Immigrant Participation in Public Decision Making



1 Know Your Changing Community

A good first step to maximize immigrant civic engagement is to stay current on who the most recent newcomers are in your community, where they are from, and what language(s) they speak. Since the 1990's a shift in immigrant settlement patterns has led to more newcomers living in suburbs and smaller communities rather than in traditional gateway cities like New York City and Los Angeles.²³ Because of this relatively recent shift, available census data may be of limited use. However, there are a number of creative

ways to assess local demographics and languages spoken by newcomer residents of the community.

Public schools are one of the first places where newcomers interact with institutions and more established residents. Keeping in touch with school administrators can be a good way to gauge local immigrant population levels as well as things like what languages these immigrants speak, where they are from, and how many of them are facing financial hardship sufficient to qualify for free or reduced lunch programs.²⁴

20. Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick and Paul G. Lewis, *Immigrants and Local Governance: the View from City Hall*, Public Policy Institute of California, 2005.

21. However, note that immigrants are far less likely than the average U.S. native to commit crime in California, according to a 2008 PPIC report, *Crime, Corrections, and California: What Does Immigration Have to Do with It?* For example, among men ages 18-40 – the age group most likely to commit crime – the U.S.-born are 10 times more likely than the foreign-born to be in jail or prison (4.2 percent vs. 0.42 percent).

22. Moore, Solomon, “Justice Dept. Numbers Show Prison Trends,” *The New York Times*, December 6, 2007.

23. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *The House We All Live In: A Report on Immigrant Civic Integration*, 2003.

24. Thornton, Susan M., *The Role of Municipal Leaders in Helping Immigrants Become an Integral Part of Colorado's Communities*, Colorado Trust and Colorado Municipal League, June 2006.

Another way of finding data on the newcomer population is to ask “on the ground” representatives from local agencies about the population they serve, and to learn from local community organizations and faith communities about the people they are serving.

In addition to gathering data about who the newcomers are in your community, where they are from, and what languages they speak, make a special effort to understand cultures, norms and interests of immigrant residents especially as it relates to your ability to engage these communities.

2 Build Relationships with Key Leaders and Organizations

A 2008 survey of advocates and organizers working with immigrant populations across the state showed

broad consensus about the vital importance of recruiting support from community leaders early on in any public engagement effort.²⁵ Simply announcing and advertising a public meeting often results in a low turnout and the “usual participants”. Immigrants, renters, people of color, and young people are typically underrepresented.

Your engagement efforts will be more successful if someone known and trusted by each immigrant community invites them and reassures them that the event will be safe, that their translation and other needs will be accommodated, and that their opinions will make a difference.

Effective communication and outreach with newcomer communities requires local officials and their staff to be

familiar with local organizations that work with or include significant numbers of immigrants among their members.²⁶ Early communication and partnership with these organizations will help ensure more effective approaches to engagement and greater representation from immigrant communities. Be aware that differences may exist between such organizations that could impact your ability to carry out effective collaborative efforts.

Identifying Potential Partner Organizations

One approach is to keep and update a list of organizations in your community that serve and support immigrant populations. These may include:

- Immigrant leadership, organizing, advocacy groups
- Schools
- Clergy and congregations
- Service providers
- Ethnic media
- Business groups
- Community colleges
- Unions
- Cultural and hometown organizations

Local agencies can work with these organization and their leaders by reaching out, keeping them informed, asking them for the names of other such groups, and supporting them in their efforts to develop immigrant leadership and participation.

Resources For Researching Local Demographics

One source that local agencies can use for researching local rates of foreign birth, primary languages spoken, and rates of limited English proficiency is a 2006 report by the Asian American Legal Center. *California Speaks: Language Diversity and English Proficiency Rates by Legislative District* provides a detailed language profile for every State Senate, State Assembly, and Congressional district in California.²⁷ However, this report is based on year 2000 census information and does not include municipal level data.

Starting in 2009, more current American Community Survey data on immigrants will be available for most California cities. Visit: <http://factfinder.census.gov>, type in the name of a city, and then click on “Social Characteristics.”

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) makes an online resource available for local agencies on local demographics. This report breaks down California resident data by county, voting districts, and country of origin. www.gcir.org/about/what/ciii/districts

25. Keidan, Greg and Theo Brown, *Ensuring High Levels of Latino Participation in Public Engagement*, America Speaks, 2008 (Unpublished- findings and interview transcripts available by request).
26. A 2003 survey showed that many local officials in areas of California with substantial immigrant population were not familiar with these organizations. See Lewis, Paul G., S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Nikesh Patel, *Governance and Policy in High-Immigration Cities: Results from Surveys of Elected Officials, Planners, and Police*, Public Policy Institute of California, 2004, available at www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=502.
27. Asian Pacific American Legal Center and Asian Pacific Islander Health Forum, *California Speaks: Language Diversity and English Proficiency by Legislative District* (Revised), 2006.



The Migration Policy Institute at the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy has established an online “Language Portal” with resources and articles for governments relating to translation and interpretation services. www.migrationinformation.org/integration/language%5Fportal/index.cfm.



The Institute for Local Government can provide local officials with access to meeting translation equipment in some regions of the state and, as funding allows, offer support for automatic website translation capacity. (916) 658-8208

Building partnerships with organizational and community leaders can have other mutually beneficial consequences. These leaders may be able to help find funding for a public engagement process or in-kind support (such as a place to meet), provide facilitators and moderators for an event, or help spearhead actions that emerge from the civic engagement process. Involving these leaders in the planning and design stages helps to create culturally appropriate processes as well as build credibility for your public involvement efforts.

3 Overcome Language Barriers

An essential aspect of inclusive civic engagement is to reach out to immigrant communities in their native language and to allow people to participate regardless of how well they speak English.²⁸ Public involvement processes are most successful when every participant has an adequate opportunity to speak and to comprehend what others are saying.²⁹ Newcomers will have varying degrees of English comprehension. More than 12 million Californians don’t speak English as their primary language at home- over 8 million speak Spanish, and 2.7 million speak an Asian or

Questions to Ask Immigrant Communities³⁰

- 1 How do the immigrants in your community define civic participation?
- 2 What was their experience with civic participation in their home country?
- 3 What are their experiences with and attitudes toward civic participation here?
- 4 What are vehicles for civic participation within their local ethnic community? (such as places of worship, professional associations, cultural groups, sports leagues or clubs, hometown associations, political parties, councils of elders, or clan structures)
- 5 With what “mainstream” institutions and organizations are they involved?
- 6 What are some important issues affecting immigrants that could serve as a focal point for civic participation?
- 7 What are the most significant barriers to civic participation for immigrants and how can these barriers be overcome?

Pacific Islander language.³¹ Sixty percent of all immigrants in the state have limited English proficiency.³²

Even immigrants with some English language skills may feel embarrassed to speak in front of a group in case they might make a mistake. Using simultaneous translation equipment levels the playing field and can be done efficiently.

Also, outreach and other meeting materials should be available in the languages spoken by immigrants in your community, and should include information about translation services that will be available at the event. Having staff with appropriate language skills can help make this possible.

28. A 2003 survey of local California government officials in municipalities with at least 15 percent immigrant populations found that over half of these municipalities provided no translation of city government documents such as city council agendas or minutes. Almost a third were never or almost never able to provide translation for non-English speaking residents who wished to discuss an issue with city officials. See Lewis, Paul G., S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Nikesh Patel, *Governance and Policy in High-Immigration Cities: Results from Surveys of Elected Officials, Planners, and Police*, Public Policy Institute of California, 2004, available at www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=502.

29. Gastil, John and Laura W. Black, “Public Deliberation as the Organizing Principle of Political Communication Research,” *Journal of Public Deliberation*: Vol. 4: No. 1, Article 3, 2008, available at <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol4/iss1/art3>.

30. Adapted from Mosaica Toolkit, *Increasing Refugee Civic Participation: A Guide for Getting Started*, available at www.cliniclegal.org/Refugee/Docs/MosaicaCivicParticipationToolkit_final.pdf.

31. Asian Pacific American Legal Center and Asian Pacific Islander Health Forum, *California Speaks: Language Diversity and English Proficiency by Legislative District* (Revised), 2006.

32. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees/Migration Policy Institute, *An Assessment of Adult English Language Need and Supply in California: Executive Summary* (Draft), April 2008, (to request a copy visit www.gcir.org).

Success Story: Reaching Out to Lodi's Pakistani Community

The City of Lodi, California is home to a diverse population of 65,000

people, including many Latino and Pakistani immigrants and their families. In June of 2005, the FBI announced that they had discovered a terrorist cell in Lodi. The local Pakistani community cooperated in the investigation and spoke out against terrorism, but the resulting flurry of media attention and threats spurred city officials to work on establishing lines of communication with the 5 percent of the residents who were Pakistani.

"There was no plan for outreach, other than let's try to start communicating," says Blair King, the city manager. King worked with a group of young Pakistanis to create a cricket field in 2006, and soon was invited to a homemade dinner with 100 Pakistani men. This meeting was the beginning of an ongoing dialogue between city officials and members of this formerly isolated part of their constituency.

When Lodi officials looked into designating an area of the city for redevelopment in 2007, they realized that many of their Pakistani residents lived in this area. The city decided to have a town meeting to explain redevelopment and gauge the reaction of residents. King knew that conventional

outreach approaches would not bring out Pakistani residents, so the city produced and hand delivered informational materials in Urdu as well as Spanish and English.

Approximately 200 people attended the first redevelopment plan meeting in a club near the mosque. The translated materials and simultaneous translation of the meeting enabled residents to participate in English, Spanish, or Urdu.

Lodi has continued to include their Spanish and Urdu-speaking residents in over 25 public meetings on the redevelopment plan and process. The city is cultivating civic leaders from their ethnic communities through leadership classes sponsored by the chamber of commerce, and makes efforts to hire Spanish and Urdu speaking staff in order to provide services to all segments of the community.

"I hope that there is a sense of greater comfort for immigrants to communicate with city officials now that this line of communication has been opened," says King.

For more information contact the City of Lodi city manager's office at (209) 333-6700.

4 Use Culturally Effective Outreach Strategies

An effective way to reach out to a large number of immigrants in the community is to work with members of local and regional print and electronic media that are targeted to immigrants. For instance, Spanish language radio was a key to generating large turnouts at immigrant's rights rallies in Chicago and Los Angeles in 2006.³³ A survey of people who were invited to participate in the 2008 CaliforniaSpeaks health reform dialogues found that monolingual Spanish speakers were 3.5 times more likely to hear about this public engagement on local television news than were English-speaking people.³⁴

New America Media is the first and largest national organization of ethnic media. They offer a print and searchable online directory of ethnic print, radio, and television outlets that is a resource for local agencies looking for ways to reach out and communicate with local immigrant communities.³⁵ For more information visit www.newamericamedia.org and click on Directory, or call (415) 503-4170.

As with other organizations serving newcomers, local agencies must develop long-term relationships and mutual trust with ethnic media. One way to do this is to send hiring notices and general news about your city or county to local ethnic media on a

regular basis and to invite them to press conferences and media events. Ask local immigrant community leaders about popular local ethnic media outlets, and make sure these are included in your communication planning.

Reaching Out to Latino Newcomers

In a recent survey of 15 community and union organizers working in Latino communities, most organizers identified building a relationship with people as the single most important strategy to ensure high levels of participation in public meetings. One organizer explained, "I'd say that trust is more important and personal connections are more important with Latinos-especially those who are newly arrived here and/or don't speak English."

Trying to recruit participants without first building a relationship with them can be disappointing. People who happily agreed to attend don't show up. As one organizer lamented, "It can be really hard- it seems like Latino people don't want to say no a lot of times, but they don't end up showing up." This agreeable tendency may be a cultural trend worth keeping in mind. One Latino organizer explained, "One problem is that sometimes people may be trying

to be polite and are saying yes when they don't mean it, or when they may not exactly understand what has been asked."

The 15 surveyed organizers unanimously agreed on the importance of calling people (as opposed to sending impersonal e-mail or mailed reminders) at least once and preferably more times before the event. One organizer commented, "...lots of attention needs to be given to follow up calls. The calls are not just to remind people, but also to keep the relationships going. It's very important ... that it not feel remote from them or apart from them. You need a relationship to make it real."

Ideally the person who invited and signed up the potential participant should be the person to make these follow up calls (or even personal visits). This can also be an opportunity to inquire about any transportation, food, or childcare needs.



Collaborating with Latino cultural, professional, advocacy, faith, or charitable organizations is a good way to collect ideas and resources for successfully engaging Latino residents. For a list of Latino professional associations see: www.lared-latina.com/pros.html.



An extensive list of national and community Latino organizations can be found at: clnet.ucla.edu/community/commorg.html.



The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) promotes Latino participation in the



American political process. See their website at www.NALEO.org or contact Efrain Escobedo, Senior Director of Civic Engagement at (213) 747-7606, or eescobedo@naleo.org.



33. Sarkar, Saurav, "Immigrants are Changing American Cities," *The Next American City*, No. 13, p. 23, 2006.

34. NSON Research, *CaliforniaSpeaks Health Care Reform Town Hall Meeting Participant and Non-Participant Follow-up Surveys Summary Report*, February 2008 (unpublished).

35. The Institute for Local Government's Collaborative Governance Initiative is exploring a group subscription to make New America Media's online resource directory available free to all local officials in California. For more information see www.ca-ilg.org/CGI or call (916) 658-8208.

5 Make Public Engagement Accessible, Enjoyable, and Rewarding

Location, Location, Location...

Where a civic engagement activity is held can have a significant effect on who shows up. Find sites where newcomers will feel safe and welcome. Public agency office buildings may not always be optimal sites, given that newcomers may mistrust the police and have fears relating to federal immigration raids. Public schools, community centers, church or union halls, and the fairgrounds may be examples of safe and welcoming places. Community colleges can be a good venue; however universities may be intimidating. One Los Angeles area Latino organizer commented, “My mother has never been to a university, and she would not be comfortable going to a meeting there.”³⁶

Transportation issues should also be considered. Immigrants may not have driver’s licenses, especially in urban areas. A survey by America Speaks found that monolingual Spanish speaking Californians were more than twice as likely as English speakers to report that they did not attend a public engagement meeting due to transportation issues.³⁷

Involving Asian Pacific Islander (API) Communities

API immigrants are collectively the second largest newcomer population in California after Latino immigrants. According to Lena Tam, Vice Mayor of the City of Alameda, “The API community is quite diverse, and successful outreach strategies must recognize this fact.”

In order to successfully involve API immigrants, local officials must first identify and learn about the prevalent API communities in the area (see “Questions to Ask Immigrant Communities” on page 10). People from different countries and different generations of immigrants will have different outlooks, capacities for civic engagement, and needs. There is no one strategy that will be successful at reaching the myriad API communities represented in California.

Keep in mind general cultural considerations when seeking to involve API communities in public meetings. According to Tam, “API newcomers and second generation residents may be hesitant to gather in official municipal settings to criticize the practices of police or other officials, to identify instances of discrimination or violence, or to talk about public issues in general. Sometimes, the only way to reach a segment of the API community is to go to gathering places where they feel secure in a group setting.”

Tam goes on to explain, “Most API residents immigrated to the United States because of some economic or political oppression in their country of origin. This has led to an innate need to be self-sufficient and not very trusting of government.”

Tam also feels that U.S. policies like the Chinese Exclusion Act and the internment of Japanese-Americans

have contributed to a perception among some people that API residents are perpetual foreigners.

Tam and Fremont council member Steve Cho recommend additional strategies that local officials can use to overcome obstacles to participation:

- As education is an important issue to many API families, include schools and parents’ groups in your outreach. Participating in school-related discussions and dialogue may be an initial point of entry into the civic and political life of the community.
- Appoint API residents to local agency committees and commissions.
- Develop good relationships with print and electronic media where API communities get their information.

For more ideas and resources to engage API residents, contact:

 Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, website: www.leap.org. Linda Akutagawa, Vice President of Resource & Business Development lakugagawa@leap.org.

 The Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (Southern California). Visit www.a3pcon.org, call (213) 239-0300, or  e-mail info@ap3con.org.

 Asian and Pacific Islanders California Action Network, <http://apiscan.org>. See their resources page for state commission on API affairs reports and useful links. Diana Ujjiya, Director. (310) 532-6111.

36. Keidan, Greg and Theo Brown, *Ensuring High Levels of Latino Participation in Public Engagement*, America Speaks, 2008 (Unpublished- findings and interview transcripts available by request).
37. NSON Research, *CaliforniaSpeaks Health Care Reform Town Hall Meeting Participant and Non-Participant Follow-up Surveys Summary Report*, February 2008 (unpublished).

Choosing a location that is within walking distance of neighborhoods where immigrants live, or that is easily accessible by public transportation is a good strategy. Another is to arrange van or bus transport for all attendees who need it.

The timing of public forums is another key variable to consider. What time and date will enable the most inclusive cross section of residents to participate? How long will people be willing to commit in order to participate? Organizers hoping to attract diverse residents typically hold events on weekends or after business hours on weekdays. Summer vacations can make it hard to recruit participants, especially students. Ask some immigrant community leaders about possible meeting dates to check for potential conflicts with ethnic or religious holidays or celebrations.

Make It Enjoyable and Rewarding...

While limited budgets are often a reality, providing food and childcare can make it easier and more enjoyable for newcomers to participate. “Breaking bread” together can be an important way to solidify trust in some cultures.³⁸ Providing food from one or more immigrant cultures represented in the community is a great way to make newcomers feel welcome.

For instance, if holding a meeting in a community where most newcomers are from Mexico, serve some Mexican dishes. One participant in a day long meeting commented, “Instead of bagels they could have had pan dulce- Mexican sweet breads from a Mexican bakery. For lunch, do a small buffet with rice, beans, tortillas, a little meat and some chili- this is comfort food. Or even have sandwiches with

Bollitos instead of white bread and a jar of jalapeno peppers. That makes it a Mexican sandwich and makes it more ethnically friendly. These are small things but they make people feel welcome, appreciated and at home.”

Onsite childcare ensures that people with families won’t stay home due to lack of a babysitter. This also makes an event more appealing to people from cultures where all family members participate in community activities together. One Latino community organizer explained, “In our culture we bring our children to meetings, so you need childcare.”³⁹

Entertainment that highlights the ethnic traditions of local residents can help create a welcoming atmosphere for a public engagement event and can help to draw participants. For instance, at a public meeting in Southwest Chula Vista, organizers asked a local Mexican dance troupe to perform in traditional costumes during the event, much to the delight of all in attendance. Other events have used drummers and dancers to welcome participants and call them to the meeting room. Music or other art with which immigrants can identify may make newcomers feel appreciated and comfortable.

A volunteer serves Mexican beverages at a public engagement event in Chula Vista.



38. Hernandez, Julie C.T., John C. Brown, and Christine C. Tien, “Serving Diverse Communities- Best Practices,” *Public Management*, June 2007.

39. Keidan, Greg and Theo Brown, *Ensuring High Levels of Latino Participation in Public Engagement*, America Speaks, 2008 (Unpublished- findings and interview transcripts available by request).

Make It Rewarding

Many newcomers work at relatively low wage jobs and put in long hours to get by. Recognizing that people may be taking time away from work to participate in a civic engagement process by providing some tangible incentive is a good way to boost attendance. It shows that you value their busy time.

For example, organizers of a public engagement across California on health care reform reported that offering \$20 gift cards to participants who stayed for a seven hour meeting made a significant impact on their ability to recruit attendees.⁴⁰ Such incentives may be provided as in-kind donations from supportive members of the local business community.

Even very low cost incentives can help people feel good about participating in a civic engagement process. The Sacramento Police Department and District Attorney's Office jointly conduct citizen academy meetings where they provide graduates with certificates in addition to providing food and translation at meetings. Graduates of the City of Chula Vista's Citizen Leadership Academy proudly wear their "CLA" pins to community events. Some public engagement initiatives raise the funds necessary to pay participants for their time. Randomly selected San Mateo County residents participating in a weekend "Countywide Assembly on Housing Choices" were paid \$200 for their time.



One Size Doesn't Fit All

No single outreach or engagement strategy will effectively serve all newcomer populations or even all members of a particular immigrant community. Successful civic participation will have to account for the unique situations and perspectives of members of different generations and between those who immigrated as children and those who arrived here more recently. Different countries of origin and distinctions between people living in ethnic enclaves and those who are more dispersed in the broader community may also be a factor in ensuring more inclusive public involvement. Immigrants of different socio-economic strata will also frequently require distinct outreach and engagement approaches. Consider your audiences as you design your public engagement strategies.

6 Make Civic Engagement Meetings and Materials More Appropriate for Immigrant Participants

Appropriate and Effective Meetings

Designing specific meeting processes that enable members of immigrant communities to participate involves a number of considerations. The following ideas are generalities worth keeping in mind when determining the approach best suited to your specific community and circumstances.

As described above in key point #2, solicit input from leaders and organizations trusted by immigrants in developing recruitment approaches and determining the best models of engagement. This may result in opportunities to meet with members of particular immigrant communities separately and in spaces known and comfortable to them.

Where such meetings occur, local officials should ensure there is a common understanding beforehand, among city and community leaders, about the goals and process of the meeting. Showing respect for community leaders and their role in the meeting is important, and it may be useful to clarify upfront how further communication between the city or county and participants will occur. Also, certain formalities or rituals may need to be observed out of respect, and agency participants may want to inquire about this ahead of time. It may also be helpful for local officials in the meeting to clearly identify and "place themselves" within the overall public agency structure and decision-making processes.

40. Keidan, Greg and Theo Brown, *Ensuring High Levels of Latino Participation in Public Engagement*, America Speaks, 2008 (Unpublished- findings and interview transcripts available by request).

Success Story: Boulder County Dialogues on Immigrant Integration



Boulder County Colorado's Dialogues on Immigrant Integration

have included more than 900 residents in 20 plus conversations since June of 2006. The goal is to collaboratively develop better cross-cultural understanding and action plans to improve the community.

Program coordinator Leslie Irwin says that the city and county officials, and nonprofit, school and community leaders behind this effort have learned important lessons. For instance, they found that while e-mails and fliers worked well to recruit native born participants, a personal face to face or telephone invitation from a friend or acquaintance made a world of difference when inviting newcomers to participate in the dialogues. "Immigrants largely rely on personal relationships to connect them to the community," explains Irwin. Organizers are also realizing the importance of holding events at locations that feel safe and welcoming to foreign

born residents, such as public schools or libraries. Working in schools also has helped participants and organizers focus on ways to address ethnic and cultural disparities in academic achievement.

According to Karen Roney, Community Services Director for City of Longmont, "These dialogues have been a way to dig deeper into issues that challenge our community, such as housing, education, and healthcare. The city now has an increased capacity to communicate with newcomers and deal with challenges in neighborhoods where there was a lack of understanding about immigrant integration issues. We are trying to use dialogue to bring people together in ways that help neighborhoods become more inclusive and welcoming."

For more information visit www.immigrant-integration.org, contact project coordinator Leslie Irwin at (303) 443-0419 x117, or call the City of Longmont Community Services Office at (303) 651-8633.

The City of Fremont's Community Ambassadors



Fremont's Community Ambassadors Program Reaches Out to Immigrant Seniors

Beginning in 2000, the City of Fremont partnered with local ethnic community organizations to engage their diverse residents in focus groups. These focus groups were held in eight languages in order to include the entire community. One goal that surfaced from these conversations was to improve the capacity of the community to serve older adults and to make services accessible to older adults. Residents felt this was especially important for older adults who were not native English speakers and who often had trouble understanding complex government systems like how to apply for citizenship or Social Security.

The City of Fremont's Community Ambassador Program was developed by the city and ethnic community leaders to address this goal. The city received a two year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to train

members from seven local faith and cultural organizations to be volunteer Community Ambassadors. The City worked with Stanford and San Jose State University professors to develop a 40 hour curriculum for Ambassadors. A variety of trainers teach classes of 25 Ambassadors from a variety of cultures how to access services such as medical care, how to get Paratransit, how to find affordable housing, and where to go with immigration questions. Participants go on field trips and have discussions about cultural differences such as different attitudes towards depression.

According to Suzanne Shenfil, the city's Human Services Director, the service providers learn a lot from these discussions and the multi-cultural seniors learn a lot from each other.

Ambassadors meet each month and receive ongoing supervision and training based on their interests. Social workers work in

tandem with Ambassadors and train them to refer difficult cases to service providers.

Ambassadors hold events within their cultural communities. So far 50 volunteers have graduated from the training program and hundreds have participated in events they have organized. These events feature speakers chosen specifically to address each community's needs and interests. According to Shenfil, "People don't feel comfortable coming to the doorstep of local government when they have a problem or issue. They would rather go someplace they feel comfortable, which for ethnic communities is often a place of worship where they can talk to someone in their own language."

 For more information visit www.capseniors.org or call the City of Fremont Human Services Department at (510) 574-2050.



Success Story: Institutionalizing Public Dialogue in the Cupertino Community



The City of Cupertino is an ethnically mixed community of 55,000. The many high tech jobs in the area attract a steady stream of residents from all over the world. According to Dave Knapp, the city manager, children in the city's schools speak 60 different languages.

Beginning in 1996, the city partnered with the nonprofit Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) on organizing a long term public engagement process involving over 2,000 diverse residents. This process was designed to sustain and institutionalize dialogue as a mechanism for community improvement. The PDC first planned and conducted public engagement events in Cupertino that demonstrated the value of this practice. Then residents were trained to organize and facilitate their own public engagements independently.

Participants in these dialogues identified suppressed cultural tension in the community as a priority for action. In order to address this issue, city leaders and community members formed a volunteer resident action group called the 5Cs (Citizens of Cupertino Cross Cultural Consortium). The 5Cs identified priorities and developed plans of action to make the community more like they wanted it to be. They developed a successful neighborhood block party program and a reference guide for newcomers to the city.

In 2004, Dave Knapp, the new city manager, asked PDC staff to return to Cupertino to run a community forum addressing ethnic and racial tensions in the community. Part of the impetus for this forum was a well publicized conflict between two city council members over naming the new library.

Participants in the 2004 forum suggested that something should be done to facilitate intercultural communication among residents at the neighborhood level. As a result, the City

initiated a Neighborhood Block Leaders program. Leaders in each of the City's neighborhoods were identified and invited to attend an ongoing series of information and communication training sessions so that they could sponsor and facilitate neighborhood events.

Dozens of such community events were held in the City from 2004 to 2006, with more planned to begin in September of 2008. Block leaders can apply for grants from the city for any project that relates to community development. The city has so far trained 300 neighborhood block leaders and Knapp hopes to have 1,000 by the end of 2008.

In addition to the successful neighborhood block leaders program, the city is taking other steps to reach out and provide services to immigrant residents. Translators are provided at public meetings, and block leaders can request translation assistance from the city to allow effective communication between all residents of their neighborhood. The city conducts citizenship classes in several languages and makes a special effort to hire staff with foreign language skills. The city leadership also reflects the diversity of the population- current city leaders include a Hispanic mayor and two Chinese city council members.

For more information contact the City of Cupertino city manager's office at (408) 777-3212 or Shawn Spano of the Public Dialogue Consortium at (408) 924-5379.

Local officials or staff must clearly explain and reinforce for immigrants the role that public input will play in a decision making process in order to manage expectations and to cultivate newcomers' understanding of how the public decision making process works.

Local officials should be aware that, in some cases, meetings arranged through specific organizations may turn out only a segment of an immigrant community (by gender, income level, family ties, politics or religion), and this may suggest a need for additional outreach and meetings in association with other intermediary groups.

Frequently, there will be public involvement processes where immigrant residents will be participating with other members of the community. Where this is the case, consider the following points (in addition to ensuring basic language access):

- Introductory comments that welcome and express the importance of all participants to the meeting, and that include remarks by immigrant community leaders may help set a comfortable and productive tone.
- Good facilitation may be particularly important to ensure participation by those with less English speaking capacity or confidence to participate.
- It may be helpful to ensure opportunities for members of the same immigrant communities to speak together in their native languages at the beginning and at times during the meeting to ensure understanding and full participation.
- Provide opportunities for small group as well as large group participation.

- Be aware that in more stratified communities, some group members may be less willing to speak until others have already done so. Forcing the issue may create discomfort.
- Immediately address dynamics that create a less than safe place for participation (such as apparently prejudicial comments made about a particular group).
- Consider forms of recognition and appreciation for those who participate.

Appropriate and Effective Materials

As well as being translated, background materials prepared in conjunction with public involvement activities should present information in a way that is straightforward and understandable to the average reader. Both materials and presentations should be in clear and non-technical language with helpful visual aids.

Also, remember that some members of immigrant communities will not be able to read and that indigenous peoples from Latin American countries may speak languages other than Spanish. In order to assure materials are appropriate and understandable to the intended users, one strategy is to pre-test them with small and diverse local focus groups. Members of local or regional ethnic media may be also able to offer help and advice.

Your recruitment and informational materials should let immigrant communities and meeting participants know that they have values, experiences and ideas to share regardless of their education, background, or familiarity with the details of the issues at hand. Don't overwhelm participants with too much technical information. Help them

understand the information needed to make an informed decision. This is empowering and will encourage further participation.

Flexibility can be a virtue here. The obstacles to more representative public engagement are not static. Your community will probably continue to change demographically, and age, income level, language capacity, gender and other factors may each influence optimal approaches to achieving broad participation from your immigrant communities.

7 Ask Them. Identify Issues That Immigrants Care About

One strategy to inspire immigrant involvement in local decision-making is to begin with their priorities and concerns. What local issues are important enough to them and their families to encourage higher levels of participation? Such issues may include education, public safety, jobs, public transportation, and police-community relations. Initial surveys, interviews, or exploratory meetings are ways to identify the issues that are the highest priority to newcomers.

This doesn't mean members of immigrant communities shouldn't or won't attend other citywide or neighborhood discussions or dialogues. However, attention to the issues of greatest concern to those typically less involved will more likely bring them into the civic and political arena. Demonstrate how participating can help newcomers achieve their dreams, rather than just asking them to help the local agency achieve its goal.

Idea: Create a small focus group of leaders and residents from local immigrant communities. Have a facilitated discussion to identify community concerns, interests and engagement processes that would bring community residents together to discuss these issues.

Be prepared to make investments, human and financial, to local issues that surface in order to establish trust and build relationships. One strategy for designing participation that will be of interest to immigrants is to integrate citizenship and language education into the program.⁴¹ Newcomers in three cities who took part in the 2004 Building New American Community initiative identified English language training, job skills training, and youth development opportunities as the issues most fundamental to their successful integration into the community.⁴² By focusing on these fundamental challenges, local agencies can help newcomers build their capacity to participate in the civic life of the community.

8 Build the Leadership Capacity of Newcomers

One effective way to address obstacles to immigrant participation is to provide training and leadership opportunities for immigrant groups in your community. Such opportunities include: citizen academies, leadership training, English language classes,

Children's activities area at a public engagement event.



or appointments to local boards or commissions. Local governments or chambers of commerce may consider sponsoring scholarships for immigrants to attend existing leadership and skill building programs. These educational opportunities provide immigrants with the skills and confidence to be more active participants in civic life. Of course, participating in local public involvement processes will also build skills and inspire people to take a more active role in their community.


A city or county may develop an intentional plan to develop capacity for immigrant public involvement. Often the best way to do this is in

partnership with immigrant leaders and organizations that can help provide legitimacy to the effort and access to potential participants. For example, the City of Stockton partnered with a local community organization to hire Cambodian and Hmong “Community Liaisons” to enhance the job skills and knowledge of local agencies among residents with refugee status.⁴³ In Portland, the city Office of Neighborhood Involvement created the Diversity and Civic Leadership Advisory Committee which consists of residents from under-represented community and neighborhood organizations. This committee created a request for proposals to develop civic leadership and engagement initiatives for immigrants and other constituencies that have traditionally been under-represented in civic life. The city then funded several community based organizations who responded to create and implement these trainings and engagement initiatives.⁴⁴

Another strategy is to attend meetings of immigrant-related organizations to let them know how their members can get involved. Establishing this sort of mutually beneficial relationship helps immigrant organizations build their capacity for leadership in the community while local governments establish new line of communication to reach out and encourage broader participation in their public engagement activities.

 **The New England Literacy Resource Center's Integrating Civic Participation and Adult ESOL is a handbook for building students capacity for engaged and active citizenship in English as a second language and civics courses for newcomers. Available online at: www.nelrc.org/publications/cpandesol.html.**

 **The National League of Cities (NLC) has launched an Immigrant Integration Program to help municipal governments promote naturalization and immigrant civic participation. This program aims to recognize immigrants as key participants in communities. For more information contact Ricardo Gambetta at (202) 626-3153 or email him at Gambetta@nlc.org.**

 **Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP) provides civic leadership training programs by and for Asians and Pacific Islanders. See www.leap.org.**

41. The availability of ESL and Civics classes in California currently falls far below the need. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees/Migration Policy Institute, *An Assessment of Adult English Language Need and Supply in California: Executive Summary* (Draft), April 2008, (to request a copy visit www.gcir.org).

42. Office of Refugee Resettlement, *Building the New American Community: Newcomer Integration and Inclusion Experiences in Non-Traditional Gateway Cities*, 2004.

43. Hernandez, Julie C.T., John C. Brown, and Christine C. Tien, *Serving Diverse Communities - Best Practices*, Public Management, June 2007.

44. For more information on Portland's Diversity and Civic Leadership program see their website at: www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=45147& or contact Jeri Williams, Neighborhood Program Coordinator at jeri.williams@ci.portland.or.us.

Citizens Academies: A Pathway to Engagement

For the past ten years the City of Oakland has operated a citizen academy, presently managed by Silvia San Miguel of the city's Equal Access Office. As this office provides translation services to all city departments and residents, San Miguel has attempted to organize a Cantonese and Spanish language version of the academy over the past few years.

To date the English and Cantonese language academies have been quite successful. "The Chinese academy has an active alumni organization that meets regularly and participates in a lot of civic engagements," reports San Miguel. "The whole point of the citizens academies is to let people know how the city works and where to go in case they have a problem. Once they have that information it gives them the knowledge and confidence to get what they need. If a resident doesn't speak English they can call us and we will get them an interpreter to help them communicate with whatever city department can help them." The city encourages graduates to stay civically involved by inviting them to events, asking them to volunteer, and by e-mailing them about what is going on in the city.

So far, Oakland has been less successful at enrolling monolingual Latino residents. "We have a problem with people not trusting the city government," observes San Miguel. She is trying new strategies like reaching out to stay-at-home moms through elementary schools and partnering with the city library to seek funding for a larger program that would include ESL classes in order to attract more Spanish speaking participants.

Some citizen academies are developed by police or district attorneys' offices in order to improve residents' understanding of and communication with local law



Oakland Cantonese Language Citizen Academy Graduates

enforcement. The Santa Maria and Long Beach police departments have made their Community Police Academy programs available in Spanish. According to training coordinator Chrissy Alvarez, Santa Maria's program aims to combat misconceptions about police and police practices and to develop community liaisons for the department. The Long Beach police department also offers a Khmer language course for their 40,000 Cambodian residents (the largest Cambodian population outside of Cambodia). According to a Long Beach community relations officer, many Cambodian residents don't trust the police, so this program focuses on trying to increase residents' confidence and trust in their peace officers.

The Sacramento City Police Department and the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office jointly offer a citizen academy that focuses on the criminal justice system and related racial issues. Input from diverse communities determines the course curriculum, which emphasizes improved understanding and communication between minority residents and law enforcement.

This curriculum was adapted for "Cultural Community Academies" that have been specifically developed for Hmong, Slavic, and Mien immigrant communities. Focus groups from each community were

used to help design the curriculum, and simultaneous translation and culturally appropriate foods were provided.

The goal is to build a relationship between members of these communities and the police. The course familiarizes newcomers with American culture and law enforcement, and also gives officers a chance to learn about newcomers in the community. For instance, when someone is pulled over in Russia the normal procedure is for the driver to exit their vehicle and approach the officer, who stays in the patrol car. This could lead to an unpleasant confrontation between a Russian immigrant unfamiliar with American norms and a police officer unfamiliar with Russian norms.

In addition to improving cross-cultural understanding, academies that focus on immigrant participants generate knowledge, trust and relationships that allow police to better serve these communities. These relationships also benefit immigrants who may feel more comfortable turning to local law enforcement for help.



For more information contact the City of Oakland Equal Access Office at (510) 238-6448 or the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office at (916) 874-6218.

9 Enhance Local Agency Staff Capacity for Successful Immigrant Engagement

Most immigrant engagement strategies will be easier to implement if local agency staff are representative of all segments of the community. When reaching out to involve immigrants in local civic participation processes, it helps to have staff members who look like, can communicate with, and who relate to the people they are trying to involve. These similarities help create trusting relationships and allow the local agency to identify and implement culturally relevant outreach and engagement strategies.

Skilled staff members who have the time and ability to develop relationships with appropriate

immigrant organizations are valuable assets to a local agency. Staff can help create and manage successful long-term immigrant engagement and integration efforts. They will also have insights on how local agency actions can contribute to positive relationships among different immigrant communities rather than unintentionally creating competition or perceptions of favoritism through poorly designed engagement efforts.

Some agencies are adjusting hiring practices in response to rapidly changing local demographics. For instance, Suzanne Shenfil, City of Fremont Human Services Director says her city is working to better serve their immigrant population, which she says has increased substantially in the

last 15 years. Fifty seven percent of Fremont residents speak a language other than English at home, 49 percent of the population is Asian and 14 percent is Latino. Shenfil says the city looks for cultural diversity and language abilities when recruiting interns, and some interns end up staying on as long term employees.

Woodburn, Oregon city leaders realized they needed to better serve the needs of Latino residents when the 2000 census data showed a majority of the population was Latino, a third of residents were foreign born and two thirds of students were English learners or monolingual Spanish speakers. They changed their incentive structures and recruitment strategies in order to increase the number of culturally competent, bilingual, bicultural city employees. They also hired a naturalized citizen who was bicultural and bilingual for a newly created Community Relations Officer position. This office was strategically situated just inside the front door of city hall to make it easy to find.⁴⁵

Christine Tien, the City of Stockton's deputy city manager, offers this advice to local officials and staff, "Outreach to our immigrant populations is crucial. Work with your local community groups to get ideas on the best ways to disseminate information and engage our increasingly diverse communities - and really listen to their concerns. What you think is good for a community may not be what they need. Learn about other cultures in your community. Build trust with community members by following through and fulfilling promises. Be honest. Be open to different ways of doing things."

Improving Staff and Community Understanding of Immigrant Cultures

The Knowledge of Immigrant Nationalities (KIN) program developed by Immigrant Relations and Integration Services of the Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations increases local agency staff capacity for immigrant engagement. County staff developed a training manual and program designed to enhance the cultural proficiency of local officials, human service providers, educators, policy makers, and other community leaders. This program describes the lives of immigrants from 16 countries who live in the county, and recognizes the remarkable contributions and harsh realities of immigrants. Immigrants from each country of origin discuss their history, immigration experience, cultural issues, and the obstacles and opportunities they face in Santa Clara County with participants.



Materials and information are available at <http://immigrantinfo.org/kin/>

Santa Clara County's 2007-2008 Human Relations Commission work plan highlights the county's ongoing commitment to enhancing the capacity of their staff to successfully engage the one in three residents who are immigrants. One goal of the plan is to, "Promote the cultural proficiency of the public and of County departments."



For more information contact the Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations at (408) 297-0883.

45. Hernandez, Julie C.T., John C. Brown, and Christine C. Tien, "Serving Diverse Communities-Best Practices," *Public Management*, June 2007.

10 Plan Collaboratively, Think Long Term, and Learn as You Go

To be successful, create a long term plan that incorporates multiple strategies for building and utilizing a capacity for immigrant civic engagement. This is more likely to result in significant outcomes than would more limited one-time efforts. Review the ideas above, and others suggested in the resource materials, in light of the needs and interests of your own city or county and your immigrant communities.

Civic engagement offers immigrants a pathway toward greater integration into the communities they live in. For this goal to be achieved, however, immigrants have to be prepared and have the capacity to participate. This may suggest a broad set of initiatives including leadership development, access to English language classes, naturalization support, voter education and registration, and learning how local civic and political institutions work. Don't get tunnel vision- think broadly about immigrant civic engagement.

To begin on a solid foundation, build your plan with the input and support of your immigrant communities. A summit on immigrant needs and contributions in Santa Clara County in 2001 suggested key areas for county focus, and helped launch a number of immigrant engagement and integration initiatives. (See sidebar on p. 24). This summit resulted in a detailed report with recommendations for state and local officials related to promoting immigrant civic involvement, *Bridging Borders In Silicon Valley*. See the full report at: www.immigrantinfo.org/borders/index.html.

Colorado Supports Immigrant Integration

The Colorado Trust and The Colorado Municipal League have prepared a booklet entitled *The Role of Municipal Leaders in Helping Immigrants Become an Integral Part of Colorado's Communities*. In a section on increasing municipal cultural competency they offer the following suggestions:

- Hold Spanish (or other language) classes for employees, provide incentives for those who become proficient.
- Give priority to multilingual employees when hiring.
- Conduct "Lunch and Learn" sessions for employees; and bring in speakers from the ethnic groups in your community to talk about the issues and answer employees' questions.
- Develop phrase books for first responders ("Where does it hurt?" "Stay calm." "I'm here to help you.")
- Provide interpreters or establish a translation phone line in municipal court at least one or two days a week; schedule court appearances on those days for people who are not proficient in English.
- Put up informational signs in several languages in city hall, libraries and other public buildings.
- Make inclusiveness a priority in appointments to boards, commissions, task forces, advisory committees and other municipal bodies.
- Establish a Human Relations Commission to study and report on immigrant issues in your community.



To view the document outline, visit the Colorado Trust website at www.coloradotrust.org.

Santa Clara County residents participate in an intercultural dialogue.



Santa Clara County Supports Coordinated Immigrant Integration and Engagement

A countywide summit on immigrant needs and contributions led Santa Clara County to develop Immigrant Relations and Integration Services program, or IRIS. Housed in the County Office of Human Relations, IRIS staff members work on projects that promote positive immigrant relations and integration.

To date more than 100,000 county residents have been assisted with the citizenship process. Courses and resources for immigrant leadership and community education are offered regularly with help from other institutional partners. IRIS staff members also provide trainings to raise the cultural proficiency of local leaders and service providers, and they are helping to develop a county policy for immigrant cultural proficiency. One element of this effort has been the development of an online community database on the history, culture, and conditions faced by the 16 most prevalent immigrant populations in the area.⁴⁶

In 2008, the county added to this effort by hosting a series of “Bold Dialogues.” (“Bold” stands for Building Opportunities for Lasting Dialogue) to cut through divisive prejudice and misunderstanding among people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The first dialogue focused on the experiences of Vietnamese immigrants in the community. A dozen residents, half with roots in Vietnam, gathered for three hours after work to share a meal and learn about each other. Another dialogue brought together 25 high school students to address the needs of Latino and Asian youth in the community. A final dialogue focused on relations between Muslims, Arabs and the general community and included more than forty participants, nineteen of whom were Muslim. One participant reflected, “This was a wonderful growth opportunity; it allowed us to find commonalities within our diversity.”

According to an IRIS staff member these small dialogues, “have a big effect in terms of improved community relations and helping people feel a part of their own city and county government. We are trying to help people realize that they have the access and ability to participate actively in government.”

 For more information, see www.sccgov.org/portal/site/ohr and click on the “Immigrant Relations and Immigration Services” link on the left side of the page. Also see www.immigrantinfo.org or call the Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations at (408) 792-2300. You can also contact volunteer Samina Faheem via email at: samina_faheem@yahoo.com.



For a summary of recommendations and lessons learned from the summit see: www.lhc.ca.gov/lhcdir/immigrant/HobbsAug01.pdf.

Engaging newcomer communities will typically take concerted efforts over time to be successful. Be prepared to learn and adapt as you go. Ask those who participate in civic engagement activities what “worked” in terms of the recruitment strategy, method of communication, the meeting format or the issue itself that brought people out. Ask these participants or other community leaders what they think would have been more effective to generate understanding and engagement. Including immigrants and members of a variety of ethnic groups from the community in this evaluation process will ensure that it accurately reflects the perspectives of all stakeholders. This demonstrates a commitment to inclusive civic engagement and a desire by local officials to listen to and serve all residents.

Your first efforts to encourage greater engagement may not be fully successful. It may take more time, and/or require changes in strategy. Assess this honestly and adapt your approach based on what you have learned from your own experiences, from this guide, and from other sources.



Useful Resources



📌 The Association for the Study and Development of Community published *Lessons Learned about Civic Participation among Immigrants*, which offers lessons learned from the Civic Participation Initiative sponsored by the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants. This handbook identifies barriers to immigrant civic participation, strategies to overcome them, and gives recommendations for supporting sustained immigrant civic participation. www.capablecommunity.com/pubs/Civic%20Participation.pdf.

📌 The Barr Foundation published *Immigrant Engagement in Public Open Space: Strategies for a New Boston*. This guide offers strategies for parks and recreation agencies to better connect with and serve the needs of immigrants. www.barrfoundation.org/resources/resources_show.htm?doc_id=271256.

📌 The Carnegie Corporation of New York published *The House We All Live In: A Report on Immigrant Civic Integration*. www.carnegie.org/pdf/housewelive.pdf.

📌 The Colorado Trust and the Colorado Municipal League published a guide called *The Role of Municipal Leaders in Helping Immigrants Become an Integral Part of Colorado's Communities*. www.coloradotrust.org/repository/initiatives/pdfs/SIRFI/SIRFI-CML_CVR-GUTS_vF.r2.pdf.

📌 Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) has published *Investing in Our Communities: Strategies for Immigrant Integration (A Toolkit for Grantmakers)* as well as *Pursuing Democracy's Promise: Newcomer Civic Participation in America* (with the Funders Committee of Civic Participation). A number of new immigrant-related reports are also available including *Keeping Safe: A Guide to Engaging Limited-English Proficient Residents in Emergency Preparedness*. Visit www.gcir.org/publications or call GCIR at (707) 544-4171.


📌 Mosaica: The Center for Nonprofit Development and Pluralism and CLINIC have made available *Promoting Refugee Civic Participation: A Guide for Getting Started* which offers strategies, case stories, and rationale for any organization or agency wishing to engage refugees and the broader immigrant community. www.cliniclegal.org/Refugee/Docs/MosaicaCivicParticipationToolKit_final.pdf.

📌 The Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington has an online compendium of resources for local officials interested in immigrant engagement and integration: <http://mrsc.org/Subjects/Governance/Diversity/ImmOutreach.aspx#About>.

📌 The Public Policy Institute of California has an extensive roster of reports on immigration related issues in the state. www.ppic.org/main/policyarea.asp?i=8.

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Participants at a Refugee and Immigrant Forum in Santa Clara County



Collaborative Governance Initiative

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