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**FACT SHEET: STRENGTHING COMMUNITIES BY WELCOMING ALL RESIDENTS
AND PROMOTING IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE INTEGRATION**

“For more than 200 years, our tradition of welcoming immigrants from around the world has given us a tremendous advantage over other nations. It’s kept us youthful, dynamic, and entrepreneurial. It has shaped our character as a people with limitless possibilities — people not trapped by our past, but able to remake ourselves as we choose.”

— President Barack Obama, November 21, 2014

Today, the White House Task Force on New Americans is taking an important step by outlining the federal government’s goals to strengthen its integration efforts nationwide and build welcoming communities in a new report released today. In the coming months, the Task Force will be guided by key goals identified in this plan. This December, it will also submit a progress report to the President.

Currently, 41.3 million foreign-born residents live in the United States and are contributing to the vitality of our country and their communities. This includes the over 3 million refugees who have resettled here since 1975 from countries that span the globe. These immigrants and refugees are adding much to our country’s social and cultural fabric, and are also critical to our country’s continued economic prosperity.

While 13 percent of the overall population is foreign-born, foreign-born workers represent close to 17 percent of the current U.S. labor force. Over the next 20 years, immigrants and their children will account for 85 percent of the net growth in the U.S. labor force. Immigrants are entrepreneurial, starting 28 percent of all new businesses. Moreover, a study by the Partnership for a New American Economy found that immigrants or their children have founded more than 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies, which collectively employ over 10 million people worldwide and generate annual revenues of \$4.2 trillion.

Our success as a nation of immigrants is rooted in our historic success in integrating newcomers into the fabric of our country. Integration is a dynamic two-way process that brings together newcomers and the long-time residents of communities into which they settle to foster greater understanding, promote inclusiveness, speed economic success, and build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities. We achieve a great deal for very little effort. Though we have had no official strategy for integration, the family members, employers, and communities where immigrants settle — combined with the efforts of immigrants themselves — result in a rapid pace of immigrants becoming productive members of society. At the same time, communities, business leaders, state and local governments, and policymakers are recognizing the value of undertaking deliberate integration efforts.

The Obama Administration has studied immigrant and refugee integration efforts, maintained dialogue with stakeholders, and applied best practices and key principles, particularly those inspired by the “welcoming communities” movement. Welcoming communities are cities, counties, or towns that strive to bring immigrants and refugees and native-born residents together to create a positive environment for all. Early on, the Administration also identified three integration pillars — civic, economic, and linguistic integration — that have been its focus close to six years. Numerous agencies have worked to enhance opportunities across each of these pillars through programs that engage local communities and provide immigrants and refugees with access to training around language needs, career development, and support services.

To further these efforts, in November 2014, President Obama created a formal interagency body, the White House Task Force on New Americans (“Task Force”). Sixteen federal departments, agencies, and White House offices are represented on the Task Force. Its efforts are led by Cecilia Muñoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, and León Rodríguez, Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The Task Force aims to further strengthen the federal government’s integration efforts by making them more strategic and deliberate. Key goals and actions include:

- **Building Welcoming Communities:** Recognizing that integration is a two-way process that occurs primarily at the local level, the Task Force will support initiatives that build bridges among immigrant and receiving communities. Key actions include:
 - *Building Welcoming Communities Challenge:* This spring, the Task Force will launch a challenge to support existing efforts and encourage additional local governments to develop and implement integration strategies tailored to their communities’ needs.
 - *Toolkit for Local Communities:* Many communities have the will to build welcoming communities, but do not have models and resources to develop plans and implement reforms. The Task Force will develop a toolkit to guide these communities in their efforts and to share information on federal funding and other initiatives.
 - *New Americans Corps to Build Local Capacity:* Local communities, and states, are on the front lines of building welcoming communities, but their capacity is often limited. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) will inject energetic AmeriCorps VISTA members into communities to help them increase capacity, expand multisector networks, and develop and implement local integration plans.
- **Strengthening Existing Pathways to Naturalization and Promoting Civic Engagement:** Every day, immigrants and refugees living in our country are seeking out opportunities to serve and, in the process, are reenergizing communities. Millions are also eligible to become citizens. The Task Force will take actions to encourage new Americans to volunteer, give back, and consider the benefits of naturalizing. Key actions include:

- *Citizenship Public Awareness Campaign:* DHS will launch a national, multilingual media campaign to raise awareness about the rights, responsibilities, and importance of U.S. citizenship, and available citizenship preparation tools.
 - *Citizenship and Integration Grants Program:* In April, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced up to \$10 million in competitive grant funding for citizenship preparation programs in communities across the country.
 - *Presidential Ambassadors to Promote Citizenship and Naturalization:* The Task Force will harness inspirational stories of new Americans and others to promote naturalization, bolster integration initiatives, and increase awareness of the contributions of new Americans to our country.
 - *Identify Opportunities to Inform Individuals Eligible for Naturalization:* USCIS will notify permanent residents about their potential eligibility for naturalization. This will include leveraging its existing case status and e-filing tools to notify permanent residents seeking to renew or replace a permanent resident card about potential eligibility for naturalization.
 - *Expand Citizenship Outreach Partnerships.* Over the past five years, USCIS has increased efforts to coordinate with cities and public libraries to provide information about citizenship in local communities. In 2015, USCIS will double the number of formal [letters of agreement](#) with local governments and seek out additional opportunities to expand these local partnerships.
 - *Increasing Mobile Immigration Services:* USCIS, will assess the feasibility of providing mobile services where underserved populations are located and will partner with federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), that have footprints in rural and other underserved communities.
 - *Encourage New Americans to Serve:* CNCS will promote volunteer opportunities among immigrants and refugees. In September 2015, Task Force members will promote opportunities for new Americans and others to volunteer and serve, and highlight successful stories of new Americans who are volunteering or serving, during annual Citizenship Week activities.
 - *Refugee AmeriCorps Program:* The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and CNCS will work toward implementing a Refugee AmeriCorps program to assist local communities with integration of refugee populations.
- **Supporting Skill Development, Fostering Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth, and Protecting New American Workers:** New Americans are contributing significantly to our economy, as workers and entrepreneurs. Task Force members will continue promoting the economic integration of immigrants and refugees. Key actions include:

- *Small Business Training Courses and Toolkit for New Americans:* Small Business Administration (SBA) will pilot new “101” classes in targeted cities with concentrations of immigrants and refugees, in collaboration with local partners. SBA will also create a new toolkit to help new American entrepreneurs understand business and financial fundamentals so they can become lender-ready.
 - *Made It in America Campaign:* To promote success stories and motivate individuals to take advantage of SBA tools and resources, SBA will launch a new campaign, “Made It in America,” to highlight notable new American entrepreneurs who have used SBA as a small business resource. The Department of Commerce will also promote immigrant entrepreneurship through the President’s Ambassadors for Global Entrepreneurship program and Business Sunday initiative.
 - *Implement New Workforce Programs in Partnership with New Americans:* As the federal government implements its new workforce training and education law — the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 — the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Education (ED) will promote funding opportunities and best practices so that new Americans are provided the tools to succeed.
 - *Career Pathways and Credentialing Toolkit for New Americans:* DOL, ED, and HHS will collaborate to release a career pathways and credentialing toolkit. This toolkit will provide information for states, localities, and will include examples of immigrant-focused career-pathways programs.
 - *Bolster Outreach to Immigrants and Refugees to Promote Awareness of Labor Protections and Rights:* DOL, in partnership with Department of Justice (DOJ), USCIS, and others, will provide information regarding worker rights and protections to new Americans.
 - *Meaningful Access to Housing Programs:* HUD will launch “HUD Speaks,” a two-year pilot to improve communication with and enhance efforts to serve ELs and LEP individuals. As a part of these efforts, HUD will develop interactive tools that provide information on HUD programs in multiple languages, redesign “I Speak” cards for staff, and distribute posters to spread awareness about HUD programs and services.
- **Expanding Opportunities for Linguistic Integration and Education:** English language acquisition is vitally important for new Americans’ success. The Task Force will implement cradle-to-career strategies to enhance access to high-quality language acquisition and increase opportunities for postsecondary education and training. Key actions include:
- *Early Learning Toolkit for Parents:* ED and HHS will create a parent toolkit to provide families, including new American families, with information about the importance of early learning for their children and resources on how to find high-quality early learning programs.

- *Highlight Promising Practices and Resources for Serving English Learners (ELs):* ED will highlight effective, evidence-based interventions for ELs and new Americans, for use in federal programs such as the existing program for immigrant children under Title III. These interventions should include professional development for educators to meet the unique needs of new Americans and ELs as a whole.
- *Encourage Employers, Educational Systems, State and Local Governments, and Other Career-Building Institutions to Increase Access to ESL Courses:* Federal agencies, such as Commerce and SBA, will provide information and tools to employers about increasing access to ESL courses, education services, and other training programs for frontline immigrant and refugee workers. ED, in partnership with other Task Force members, will also explore opportunities to pilot and support innovative models of providing ESL instruction.
- *Highlight Effective Institutional Programs, Community Models, and State Policies that Enhance Opportunities for New Americans:* ED will highlight effective institutional programs, community models, and state policies that serve young people who are new Americans. For example, Café College, in San Antonio, Texas, offers community-based college and career advising opportunities to new Americans and their children.
- *Identify Education Grant Programs with Untapped Potential to Support New Americans, Including Programs that Employ Place-Based Strategies:* ED, as well as other Task Force members, will take issues confronting new Americans into consideration when developing education grant programs, or when awarding grants for programs under which new Americans are eligible to receive services.

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