



Maximizing Federal Immigrant Integration Efforts: Strategies for Greater Impact

Every day, communities around the country and across the globe are recognizing that being welcoming makes them more economically competitive and vibrant places for all residents. The federal government has and can continue to play a unique role in ensuring that communities leverage the competitive advantage that comes from creating a welcoming climate in which immigrants are economically, civically, and linguistically integrated. Ensuring a coordinated response that maximizes resources; leverages interagency and intergovernmental collaboration; and engages both immigrants and receiving communities is vital not only to creating the long-term conditions for successful integration, but to securing a positive future for all Americans. Every community in the country should have an immigrant integration plan; to be a global model and avoid backlash, the U.S. should encourage the proliferation of local efforts that are intentional and comprehensive. The federal government has an important role to play in incentivizing and supporting such plans, and ensuring that integration is inclusive of the receiving community. Each of these approaches builds off of early investments and the civic, linguistic and economic integration pillars, all of which can be amplified by a comprehensive plan and efforts to engage receiving communities.

To this end, Welcoming America offers the following ideas around maximizing immigrant integration efforts, in accordance with the PM on *Creating Welcoming Communities and Fully Integrating Immigrants and Refugees*:

1. Spur Local Place-Based Innovation and Increase Agency Performance through Collaboration

WHAT: Establish an interagency initiative¹ that collaboratively promotes, strengthens and leverages local immigrant integration initiatives and establishes a gold standard for the work.² The federal government should also encourage and support communities to develop a comprehensive immigrant integration plan that incorporates the receiving community.

WHY: The Administration has created a strong foundation of initiatives that recognize the benefits of partnering with localities and leveraging public private partnerships in order to spur innovation and achieve greater impact. Bringing this approach to immigrant integration would address concerns raised by the GAO³ about the need for a more strategic approach; yield better outcomes for immigrant integration; and help individual agencies by streamlining collaboration with vetted local partners and expand access to mainstream programs among underserved communities.

¹ Modeled on the [Sustainable Communities Initiative](#) and [Promise Zones Initiative](#)

² In addition to establish US government practice, such efforts have shown promise in managing integration efforts in Canada through [Local Immigration Partnerships](#)

³ <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/587090.pdf>

HOW:

- **Expand the current USCIS cooperative agreements** to involve multiple federal agencies in providing targeted support to existing and new cities that meet established benchmarks and interagency guidelines, and work to create a comprehensive plan.⁴ Could include, e.g., support from new agencies like US Census around issues like data collection; SBA on entrepreneurship, and dedicated Americorps staff support, such as through the Promise Zone model.

- **Create a place-based award to provide select localities with pooled agency funding and technical assistance.** Selected localities (city or county) would be supported in their efforts to create and implement a multi-sector plan around civic, linguistic, economic integration and the long term engagement of receiving communities. The award would build upon the existing NINA project, would deepen the role of local government and businesses, and could be established with a model that leverages both local and national philanthropic dollars.

- **Utilize federal incentives to further innovation and exchange of best practices**, such as by
 - Hosting ongoing **convenings** that encourage the spread of local innovations and learning, such as a New Gateways convening to explore the unique role of receiving communities and integration efforts in non-traditional gateways.

 - Establishing a consistent **line of communication with localities** and sharing examples of new ways agencies are working with localities now and through the implementation of the PM.

 - **Promoting selected communities** in agency and White House communications and through existing channels. [see attached list of examples]

2. White House and Agency Communications and Engagement Campaign

WHAT: We suggest **launching a communications and engagement campaign** around the outcomes of the taskforce's efforts, as well as ongoing throughout its implementation.

WHY: This is an ideal moment to communicate with the American public not only about the enduring contributions of immigrants, but also about the active role of receiving communities in shaping and benefiting from a more welcoming nation.⁵

⁴ Benchmarks could draw upon standards set for Welcoming City certification, and signing a cooperative agreement could be further incentivized through certification.

⁵ Consistent with the mission and function of the Task Force to "(vii) *share information with and communicate to the American public regarding the benefits that result from integrating new Americans into communities.*"

HOW:

- **Host a Presidential and star-studded event announcing major initiatives** and calling upon the American public to participate, hosted at a symbolic location, such as Ellis Island.
- Conduct a high-level (e.g., agency head or presidential) **Welcoming Communities Tour** to highlight innovative projects and initiatives that are driving economic growth in communities large and small, rural and urban.
- **Engage and support federal agencies in developing a communications plan** as part of their integration efforts, with a special focus on messaging for receiving communities.

3. Ensuring a Lasting Legacy by Promoting Federal Infrastructure for Integration

WHAT: Create an Office of New Americans along with a Council or Commission to ensure a coordinated strategy that incorporates the role of localities and receiving communities. Additionally, **help agencies meet the requirement⁶** to ensure that programs are responsive to both New Americans and receiving communities and will foster engagement between New Americans and receiving communities.

WHY: A lasting infrastructure is foundational in order to leverage cross-agency and intergovernmental collaboration and resources, and ensure more effective and efficient service delivery.

- **Provide agencies with support**, including a one page tool on receiving communities to assist in the education and assessment process; Welcoming America can provide drafts, and also meet with targeted agencies to assist in the design process, providing examples to inform this area of work.
- **Establish within key agencies an internal integration working group** to provide an internal accountability mechanism that will assess on an ongoing basis the extent to which programs and policies are responsive to immigrants and receiving communities, and are increasing meaningful engagement. For example, such committees could review RFPs to ensure that existing funding streams are being maximized for this purpose.⁷
- Utilize **Presidential Management fellows** to support and provide connectivity across agencies in this process, possibly establishing as special corps.
- Establish a **commission or council** and incorporate representation from both New Americans and receiving communities, as well as from civil society, the private sector, and local government, as well as from differently situated communities (e.g, newer gateways, rural communities, etc).

⁶ Per the PM, “agencies will review the policies and programs of all relevant executive departments and agencies to ensure they are responsive to the needs of new Americans and the receiving communities in which they reside, and identify ways in which such programs can be used to increase meaningful engagement between new Americans and the receiving community.”

⁷ For example, building on efforts already undertaken by USCIS and ORR in their contracting.

- Expand the [For Receiving Communities](#) section of the welcometousa.gov website

Examples of How Agencies Can Maximize Integration and Engage Receiving Communities

This is not intended as a comprehensive list, but rather intended as some illustrative examples to spur further thinking and dialogue with agencies.

USCIS

- Build on citizenship promotion campaign to develop ads targeting newer gateways and the receiving community

Office of Refugee Resettlement

- Build an emphasis on community and employer engagement activities into Targeted Refugee Assistance funding

Corporation for National and Community Service

- Target CNCS support to communities with cooperative agreements in place to support multi-sector immigrant integration initiatives, modeled on Promise Zone targeted support.
- Launch a specific corps, or revise current objectives, to focus explicitly on engagement and collaboration of receiving communities and new Americans.
- Create a [toolkit](#) focused on immigrant integration and receiving community engagement efforts

Department of Education

- OCTAE could revise RFPs to incentivize receiving community engagement within adult education programming.
- Provide direct resources and technical assistance for schools to develop a plan for community and family outreach and implementation that goes beyond minimum requirements in Title I and III to include more comprehensive outreach, orientation, intercultural exchange, direct service programming, and parental engagement programming.

SBA

- Encourage participation of SBA in a local-federal cooperative agreement program to increase access to SBA programs by capitalizing on high rates of immigrant entrepreneurship⁸, while also expanding immigrant entrepreneurship in strategic communities
- Work with localities on their procurement policies to establish more inclusive policy and increase access for immigrant entrepreneurs
- Leverage the #madeinamerica campaign by highlighting more examples of immigrant and receiving community collaboration in business and share these stories on broader platform during National Welcoming Week

⁸ <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/rs396tot.pdf>

- Use [business tour exchanges](#) to build relationships between immigrant and U.S. born entrepreneurs, suppliers and consumers
- Adapt the Business Smart toolkit for faith-based and community organizations to serve immigrant communities, and expand beyond the My Brother's Keeper's national grassroots network to include those working on immigrant integration.
- Recognize and/or certify businesses that promote a welcoming environment

Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS)

- Utilize this existing resource to provide proactive, rather than reactive, consultation in communities to address issues of conflict. For example, consultations with communities around Human Rights Commission functions could include using HRCs to support community welcome planning, where HRCs are now playing a key role in places like Dayton and High Point, NC.

Office of Personnel Management

- Recognize outstanding agency efforts focused on inclusion. Ensure the US government is a leader in welcoming workplaces, developing this through incentives and recognition of good practice.

Office of the US Trade Representative

- Encourage foreign direct investment in welcoming communities

Economic Development Administration

- Given existing investment priorities such as global competitiveness, a local immigrant economic development strategy and welcoming efforts should be incorporated into priority technical assistance and regional support efforts.
- Provide incentives for communities that are also incorporating immigrant integration into their economic development planning

US Census

- Welcoming America has already partnered with US Census staff to provide tailored support to cities on utilizing demographic data; this could be expanded to additional technical assistance and more targeted support as part of local cooperative agreements or awards.
- Census could also work with localities to begin to document local networks being established as part of welcoming initiatives that could be drawn on and serve as a strong basis for future Complete Count-type campaigns.

HUD

- Promote and allow CDBG and other funding for use by communities in developing comprehensive integration planning and implementation.
- Promote and allow Neighborhood Networks funding for use in providing technical assistance and training on immigrant integration and receiving community engagement, as well as direct on site services such as English language instruction.
- Create standard literature for resettlement and integration providers to use in landlord education