

# CHAMPAIGN COUNTY WELCOMING PLAN

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
SEPTEMBER 2021



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A group of New American Welcome Center (NAWC) Advisory Board members gather outside the University YMCA to celebrate the Center’s launch, March 27, 2017.

Statistical information contained in the *Champaign County Welcoming Plan* was collected from the following sources: 1. US Census Bureau: *ACS 5-Year Estimates (2015–2019, 2011–2015); ACS Single-Year Estimates (2019)*; 2. New American Economy: *New Americans in Champaign County (2018)*; and 3. Champaign County Regional Planning Commission: *Champaign County ACS Report (2021)*. Graph data was collected by the New American Welcome Center at the University YMCA. For additional information, visit [www.welcomingchampaigncounty.org](http://www.welcomingchampaigncounty.org)

**Cover photo:** Dancers from Ballet Folklórico Mitotiani perform at the 5th Annual Immigrant Welcome Awards, September 22, 2018.

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# WELCOME

Dear Champaign County,

At this critical moment in our nation's history, with communities split across deep economic, ideological, and social divides, we want to invite you to be part of an exciting initiative that promises to set our community on a different path forward.

Champaign County is becoming a more diverse and international community with each passing year. We one of the few communities south of I-80 that has experienced population growth since the last decennial census. **Our foreign-born population of 25,552 plays a key role in our growth — past, present, and future.** Regardless of status, immigrants throughout Champaign County have established homes, found pathways to economic opportunity, and strengthened the social fabric of our community. According to US Census data, immigrants in Champaign County make significant contributions to the area's GDP (\$1.4 billion in 2016), and also help to fund federal social programs like Social Security (\$61.5 million in 2016) and Medicare (\$16.6 million in 2016).

**Our future is brighter when everyone has an opportunity and pathway to contribute to our shared prosperity.** Across the United States, cities of all sizes are implementing strategic initiatives to welcome immigrants and better integrate foreign-born residents into our social, cultural, and economic fabric. Catalyzed by the Gateways for Growth (G4G) award in May 2018, the New American Welcome Center (NAWC) at the University YMCA, together with the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation and University of Illinois Research Park released a report on the economic and demographic contributions of immigrants in Champaign County. Shortly thereafter, we began engaging with members of the community to create an actionable framework to promote equitable access, civic engagement, economic opportunity, education, and safe and connected communities for immigrants.

Over the past three years, we've worked closely with members of our immigrant communities, service providers, government, businesses, public sector institutions and faith communities, convening working groups and collecting input from interviews, listening sessions, and surveys to establish baseline markers of immigrant integration and to chart a path toward equitable COVID-19 recovery and beyond. We are excited to present our recommendations and we invite you to join us in making our community a place where each of us, including all immigrants, can thrive and flourish.

Sincerely,  
Welcoming Plan Steering Committee

## WELCOMING PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

**Co-chair:** Rachel Joy,\*City of Champaign

**Co-chair:** Charlie Smyth,\*± City of Urbana

Evan Alvarez, Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District

Ricardo Diaz, Xpenn Consultants

Mike Doyle±, University YMCA

Koeli Goel±, Hindu Temple and Cultural Society of Central Illinois

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Julie Pryde, CU Public Health District

Ahmed Taha, Muslim American Society

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\* Working group lead

± Former member



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**WELCOME** BIENVENIDOS  
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NEW AMERICAN WELCOME CENTER the 

# IMMIGRANTS IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

From long-term residents to college students, over 25,000 immigrants from around the world have made Champaign County home. Between 2010 and 2019, Champaign County was one of only nine counties in Illinois (out of 102) with a growing population. Immigrants join our community to pursue better living conditions, jobs, or education; to escape persecution, violence, or war; or to unite with or create families. As parents, consumers, taxpayers, and entrepreneurs, immigrants play a vital role in our community's economic, social, and cultural development.

## DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY

Newcomers drive tremendous economic growth in Champaign County, spurred by a passion to succeed, to live in security and freedom, to contribute to the community and society, and to advance their children's futures. **In 2016 alone, local immigrants contributed 57 million dollars in state and local taxes, and injected hundreds of millions into our local economy.** This number continues to grow as immigrants fill needs at all levels of the county's workforce, including in highly skilled sectors. Our local immigrant population has a high level of education attainment; over 19% of local immigrants have a bachelor's degree and 48% have a graduate or professional degree.

Although the changing demographics of our community in recent years have created new complexities for social service providers, health and education institutions as well as government agencies and local businesses, they have also come with tremendous opportunities to make our community stronger — more vibrant, productive and resilient. We celebrate the diverse values, talents, and traditions of immigrant changemakers throughout our community that deserve greater visibility and platforms for leadership.

## KEY CHALLENGES

Recent rapid growth of the local immigrant population has revealed systemic weaknesses in meeting the needs of our diverse community. Public and private sector organizations that support, engage, or employ immigrants currently have limited capacity to meaningfully serve these members of our community.

**We recognize that immigrant communities with the least economic and social capital are also the most vulnerable to exploitation and isolation as they face very real barriers and challenges that impact their daily lives and futures.**

In Champaign County, 33% of foreign-born residents live below 100% of the poverty level compared to 18% of native-born residents. Among foreign-born residents who are not citizens, 45% live in poverty. Even immigrants with bachelor's degrees are more likely to be either unemployed or underemployed at less skilled jobs. These economic hurdles are compounded by language and cultural barriers, and the challenges of navigating complex immigration and financial systems, which reduce immigrants' visibility and full participation in the civic, economic, and cultural life of this community.

**25,552** (12.2%) immigrants living in Champaign County

**53.4%** of immigrants in Champaign County entered the U.S. in 2010 or later

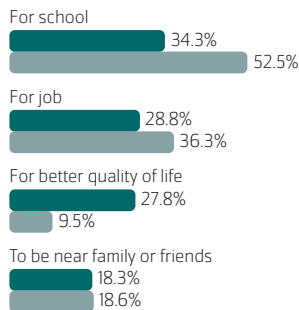
**31.6%** of total population growth in the county attributed to immigrants between 2015 and 2019

**40.1%** of the immigrant population are university students. The remaining 15,302 are likely longer term residents

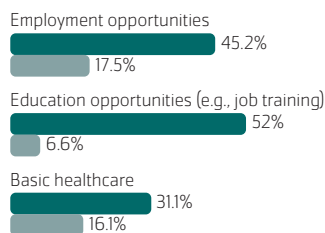
**Facing photo:** Participatory art installation at the University YMCA as part of The Emerson Collective and Inside Out Project's nationwide campaign to support the passage of the DREAM Act, October 25, 2017.

# TOWARD A WELCOMING PLAN

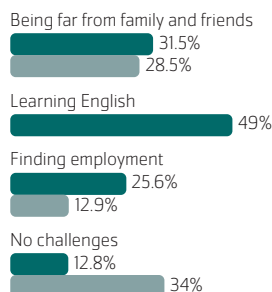
## Why did you move into this community?



## What kind of support would make life better for you and your family in the community? Top three responses.



## What was challenging about starting your life in the community?



■ Foreign-born  
■ US-born

Like other micro-urban areas with an emerging immigrant population, Champaign County lacked the historical immigrant welcoming infrastructure that exists in large urban cities to identify, assess, and address the weaknesses and leverage the strengths and resources available to us — until now. **As a 2017 Gateways for Growth awardee, our community received customized research on the contributions of immigrants in Champaign County and direct technical assistance from both the New American Economy and Welcoming America in developing a welcoming plan.**

After the release of *New Americans in Champaign County: A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants*, a broad cross-section of community leaders from local government entities, the business community, public sector institutions, faith communities, immigrants, and social service providers worked in collaboration to develop recommendations and strategies for immigrant integration. These efforts were overseen by the Welcoming Plan Steering Committee and also included a robust community engagement process.

## ENGAGING COMMUNITY INPUT

In order to create targeted recommendations to close gaps in resources, service distribution, and access, we created an extensive surveying process in order to hear directly from members of immigrant communities, service providers, and employers. This process included these efforts in 2019:

- **Community Member Survey.** We collected data from 824 Champaign County residents from 38 countries in 6 languages to identify improvements that could strengthen our community and increase access to services, education, and employment opportunities.
- **Organization Survey.** We surveyed 80 local organizations to gauge the current state of institutional engagement with immigrants.
- **Employer Survey.** We heard from 82 local employers about challenges they face in recruiting, hiring, and onboarding immigrant workers as well serving the growing immigrant population in our community.

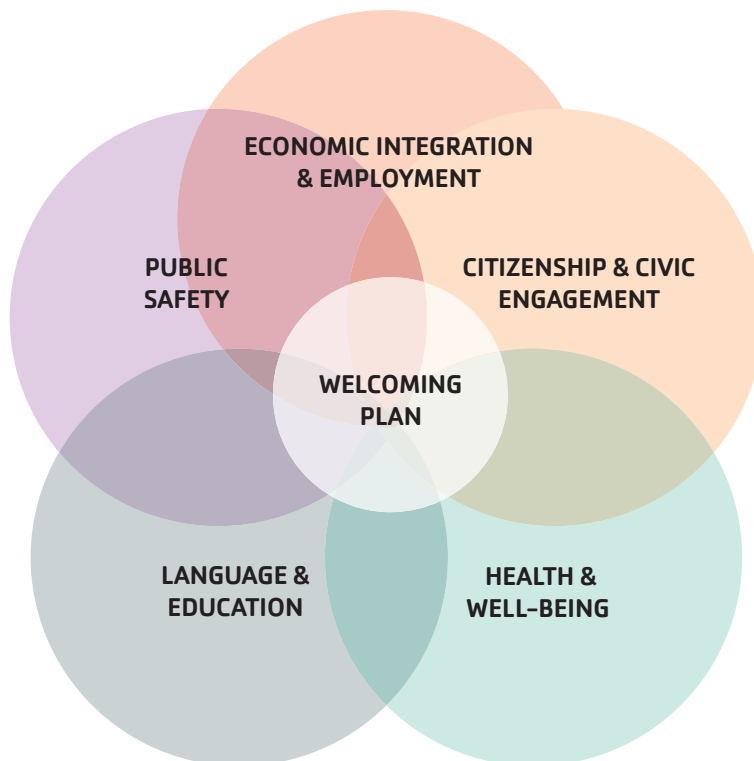
We also sought to elevate the perspectives of both ethnic-specific immigrant communities and as sector-specific organizations by conducting listening sessions and focus groups from 2017 to 2019. The **Listening Sessions** were particularly rich thanks to the involvement of immigrant community members who illuminated the challenges and opportunities that may otherwise be overlooked. For example:

- African immigrant parents shared how factory shifts and long hours made it difficult for them to be on the same schedule as their children, and an unfamiliarity with the US school system could lead to miscommunication with their children’s teachers.
- Chinese immigrants discussed the difficulty in understanding and using English in contexts such as doctors’ visits, where medical terminology is needed to convey their issues properly with the healthcare provider.
- A Latino immigrant family shared the anguish of trying to find mental health support for a family member while simultaneously dealing with communication issues, mistrust of providers, and stigmatization within their ethnic community.

- English Language Learners in high school reported a wide range of accessibility barriers such as securing legal assistance, missing class because of work, and managing mental health challenges.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Our surveys, listening sessions, and focus groups helped reveal the intersectionality of the many barriers and challenges that immigrant communities face. The data was shared with working group members in the areas of economic integration and employment, civic engagement and citizenship, health and well-being, language and education, and public safety. Each working group crafted recommendations for the Welcoming Plan using their knowledge combined with data gathered from community members and stakeholders.



As we continue to navigate a worldwide pandemic, the *Champaign County Welcoming Plan* provides a framework for pursuing a more equitable and inclusive future. This plan, through the recommendations and strategies that follow, functions as a living document that is responsive to evolving community conditions, demographics, needs, and leadership. **This plan is a guide for all of Champaign County to take actionable steps forward in building a community of belonging, where all of us — no matter where we come from — have equal opportunity to thrive.**

## WELCOMING PLAN MILESTONES

**January 2017** Building on foundation of immigrant-friendly community initiatives, the University YMCA launches New American Welcome Center (NAWC)

**April 2017** NAWC Advisory Board convenes to guide trajectory of immigrant inclusion initiatives

**Summer 2017** Community working groups conduct asset mapping along immigrant integration pathways

**September 2017** Champaign County becomes one of 25 communities nationwide selected for the Gateways for Growth Challenge

**May 2018** *New Americans in Champaign County: A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Immigrants* released

**October 2018** Welcoming Plan Steering Committee established

**November 2018** Working groups begin to convene: Economic Integration & Employment, Citizenship & Civic Engagement, Health & Well-Being, Language & Education, and Public Safety

**Summer 2019** Community engagement process launched to collect input from individuals, organizations, and employers via questionnaire surveys (administered in 6 languages) and language-specific focus groups

**Fall 2019** Working groups begin to develop concrete strategies and recommendations along immigrant integration pathways

**2020** Planning disrupted by COVID-19 pandemic as organizations rapidly pivoted to address immediate needs in disproportionately impacted immigrant communities

**May 2021** Welcoming Plan Steering Committee reconvenes and develops timeline for finalization and publication

**Summer 2021** Input on recommendations collected from working group members and other stakeholders

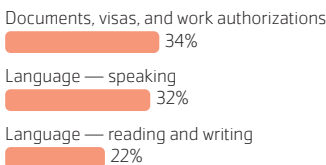
**September 2021** Champaign County Welcoming Plan released during Welcoming Week 2021

# ECONOMIC INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT

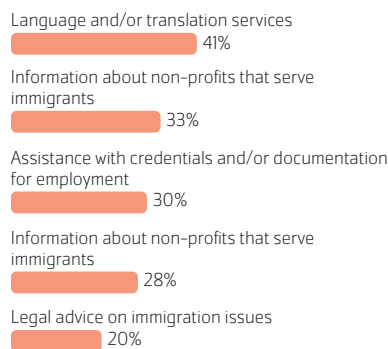
We commit to cultivating the integration of immigrant workers and entrepreneurs into our local economy through inclusive and equitable workplaces.

**1 in 10** self-employed workers in Champaign County are foreign-born

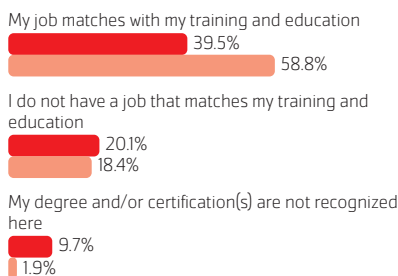
## What challenges, if any, does your company encounter with foreign-born employees?



## Would your business benefit from any of the following services or information?



## Which of the following statements apply to you?



■ Foreign-born  
■ US-born

## RECOMMENDATION I

Support the integration of immigrant workers into our local economy

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Research the extent of underemployment in local immigrant communities
- Strengthen bridges between immigrant-serving agencies and local workforce development programs
- Help local employers address challenges facing immigrant workers by developing a resource guide for working with limited English proficiency immigrants and building connections to national networks and consortia
- Educate immigrants about their rights in the workplace, including how to address wage theft and discrimination

### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Expand local capacity for recertification, accreditation, and upskilling services for immigrants by developing strategic partnerships with national organizations
- Develop a coordinated strategy to retain highly skilled international talent, and address underemployment by convening a working group involving employers, elected officials, the University of Illinois, and Parkland College
- Provide all residents with pathways to economic opportunity by developing an inclusive approach to integrating immigrants who are undocumented into the local economy
- Expand the social networks of immigrant professionals by developing a mentorship program in conjunction with local civic organizations (e.g., Rotary)

## RECOMMENDATION II

Encourage immigrant entrepreneurs and support immigrant-owned businesses

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Activate "trusted connectors" to connect immigrant-owned businesses to business development resources, professional networks, and local government programs
- Increase accessibility of microfinancing opportunities and services for immigrants
- Strengthen support for immigrant entrepreneurs interested in starting a business by working with entities like the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and Champaign Public Library Business Services to host workshops in languages other than English
- Conduct workshops and develop resources on filing taxes as an immigrant





Business, university, nonprofits, and government leaders gather for “Building a Welcoming Economy”, a seminar about inclusive economic strategies led by Steve Tobocman from *Global Detroit*, September 19, 2019.



NAWC Advisory Board Chair, Ricardo Diaz, poses with local entrepreneur, Rick Carrillo, owner of Rick’s Bakery, who was featured at the Inaugural Symposium on Local Immigration Activism, February 28, 2019.

**Long-term strategies** (Year 3 - 5)

- Recruit and train business mentors to assist immigrant entrepreneurs with business planning and securing insurance, legal, and financial resources
- Connect immigrant entrepreneurs with municipal entities, financial services, professional networks, and business associations in order to build credit, conduct business planning, secure insurance, and navigate government requirements

**RECOMMENDATION III**

Improve recruitment, onboarding, and retention of immigrant workers

**Short-term strategies** (Year 1 - 3)

- Collaborate with the Central Illinois Human Resource Group (CiHRG) and county business associations, including Chambers of Commerce to sponsor regular roundtables for humanresource professionals on key topics and to share best practices related to hiring, onboarding, and integrating immigrants into the workforce
- Provide culturally appropriate support programs that boost workplace preparation and employment retention
- Establish an annual recognition program for employers that adopt best practices related to integrating and supporting immigrants in the workplace

**Long-term strategies** (Year 3 - 5)

- Engage with lawmakers to make professional licensing more inclusive of foreign education and training
- Support reforms to the US immigration system including the implementation of temporary worker programs for skilled workers and international students
- Conduct workshops for employers who need assistance navigating and participating in temporary and permanent worker visa programs
- Develop tools to connect employers to service providers that address workplace training needs, and to nonprofit agencies and ELL providers that serve immigrant communities

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Craig Rost, UIUC Department of Urban & Regional Planning

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\* Working group lead

# CITIZENSHIP & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

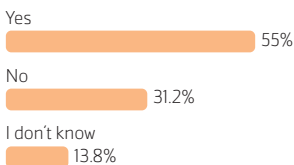
We commit to centering immigrants as changemakers in our community by strengthening pathways to citizenship and civic participation regardless of immigration status.

**4,144** non-citizens potentially eligible for naturalization

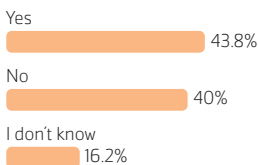
**8,152** naturalized citizens in Champaign County

**31.9%** of foreign-born population in Champaign County that are naturalized citizens

## My organization provides leadership opportunities to immigrants.



## Immigrants are represented on our board or in other advisory capacities.



■ US-born

## RECOMMENDATION I

### Build and sustain pathways to citizenship

#### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Create actionable report on local barriers to naturalization
- Bridge local government, employers, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and constituent services to promote the benefits of citizenship, increase access to naturalization services, and celebrate our community's newest citizens
- Expand general knowledge about immigration relief and about local resources to access legal services

#### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Increase availability of immigration legal services by expanding the number of nonprofit agencies with DOJ recognition and training candidates for DOJ accreditation
- Secure sustainable funding for staffing and service delivery
- Implement a scalable model of immigration legal assistance workshops that develops trained volunteers and strengthens existing pro bono attorney networks
- Develop and implement curricula about US citizenship into local English Language Learner programs

## RECOMMENDATION II

### Develop and elevate immigrant leaders

#### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Create a City Government 101 program for ambassadors from immigrant communities to meet elected officials and learn how our city and county governments work
- Cultivate comfortable conditions for regular immigrant participation in public input sessions, debates, and decision making by creating channels for immigrants to develop knowledge, skills, and voice to forward positive change
- Involve immigrants in local voter registration campaigns by working with the Champaign County Clerk's office to activate new US citizen voters, conduct targeted voter education and registration drives, and recruit representative deputy registrars

"The truth is that this is very inhumane to me. I sometimes see the stories of people who have been here for more than 20 years and are still living in the dark. There are people who are 50 to 60 years old. What are they going to do when they want to retire? Are they going to have Social Security or some other type of money that they will receive? No." — **Immigrant Community Listening Session Participant**



Local IL Count Me In committee members (L to R: Gabriel Lewis, Lisa Wilson, Michelle Awad, Zoë Foote, Wendy Hundley, and Linda Steinberg) at the 2020 Census Assistance Hub Launch, March 2020.



New US citizen, Prisca Mouloma, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, poses with her children on Flag Day at the Champaign City Building, June 14, 2019

**Long-term strategies** (Year 3 - 5)

- Develop assessment tool to evaluate and address inclusivity, diversity, and equity on boards and commissions
- Provide training, mentorship, and opportunities for first- and second-generation immigrant leaders to join different boards and commissions, and engage with lawmakers to advocate for more welcoming practices
- Enhance political knowledge and democratic citizenship skills of first and second generation K-12 students
- Work toward a more representative government by building a pipeline of first- and second-generation and immigrant candidates for local elected office

**RECOMMENDATION III**

Increase immigrant-inclusive institutions

**Short-term strategies** (Year 1 - 3)

- Provide educational resources and technical assistance to help local government and organizations to: 1) understand their role in facilitating access to options for immigration relief and 2) effectively engage immigrants in the civic and public life of their communities
- Incorporate immigrant inclusion goals into comprehensive planning process of local governments
- Increase function and usage of Oasis Resource Center as a centralized repository of multilingual resources for immigrant communities and organizations

**Long-term strategies** (Year 3 - 5)

- Hold town halls with elected officials and candidates for public office focused on local immigrant concerns and immigrant integration policies
- Create a forum series that presents and discusses key local issues identified by immigrants (e.g., affordable housing and homelessness, language access, local crime and safety issues)

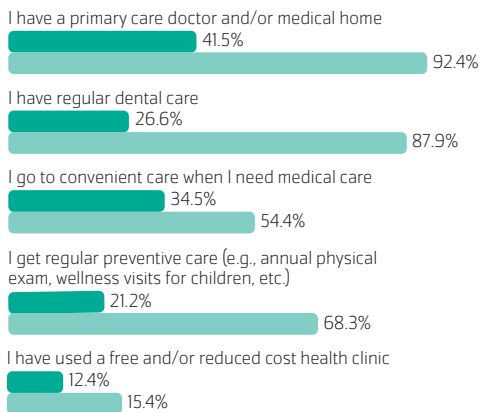
**WORKING GROUP CONTRIBUTORS**

- Lauren Aronson, University of Illinois
- Rachel Fuller, The Urbana Free Library
- Koeli Goel, Hindu Temple & Cultural Society of Central IL
- Gioconda Guerra Perez, University of Illinois
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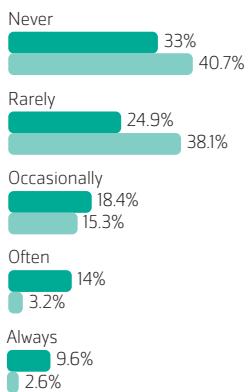
# HEALTH & WELL-BEING

We commit to prioritizing supports for the dynamic range of physical, social, and mental health needs of immigrant communities.

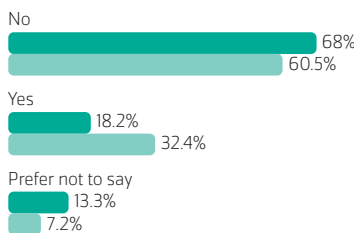
## Which of the following statements is true?



## Do you ever have a problem understanding your healthcare provider when they talk to you about your health?



## In the past week have you felt down, depressed, or hopeless?



■ Foreign-born  
■ US-born

## RECOMMENDATION I

Break down accessibility barriers to healthcare and public health services

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Build supports for immigrants to comfortably navigate the healthcare system, including: mental health resources, family care resources, dental and vision resources, and school medical requirements through use of workshops, online references, and helplines
- Address health disparities exacerbated by communication inequality by developing trained corps of volunteer translators/interpreters and identifying candidates for further training and certification
- Release report identifying barriers to healthcare access for immigrant communities with actionable Welcoming Checklists for healthcare and well-being providers to establish immigrant-friendly environments, including sample policies for limiting relationships with immigration enforcement, ensuring language access, and providing culturally competent care
- Work with community partners to address food insecurity and nutritional needs of immigrant families

### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Facilitate a community advisory board and programming to empower immigrant patients in their relationships with healthcare providers
- Build medical-legal partnerships to assist in the sharing of documents across partners and agencies to more effectively serve immigrant patients and clients

## RECOMMENDATION II

Build trust among immigrant communities, healthcare providers, and wellness agencies

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy by distributing linguistically and culturally appropriate electronic materials, training community leaders to bridge gaps in public health response, and resourcing immigrants whose health and well-being have been adversely impacted by COVID-19
- Connect immigrant communities with healthcare liaisons to address specific healthcare concerns and needs
- Work with healthcare providers to create a strategy and timeline for providing recurring cultural competency trainings for local frontline staff



NAWC staff Laurent Kabuya Kaniki and Jean Cesar Ntedika, Blaise Mbala (NAWC Community Navigator), and regional partners including Western Illinois DREAMers at a community resource fair in Beardstown, Illinois, July 25, 2021.



Community members of all ages gather together to embrace mental relaxation while increasing their physical movement by practicing Tai Chi at the University YMCA, January 12, 2020.

### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Implement information dissemination strategies with local providers and referral networks in response to specific community and population needs, including expanding language access for agencies and individuals
- Advocate for and fund increased multilingual personnel in clinics and hospitals

## RECOMMENDATION III

Prioritize culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health and trauma-informed care services

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Partner with the Trauma & Resilience Initiative (TRI) to increase support for immigrant youth and adults impacted by stress and adversity, and to train community navigators to provide support
- Form a Community of Practice to identify ongoing challenges, share ideas and best practices and develop educational resources
- Promote awareness of mental health challenges particular to immigrant communities
- Designate local representative to join the Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health (CIMH), a collaborative community-based and research-informed partnership between immigrants, mental health practitioners, community organizers, researchers, and allies

### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Reduce mental health barriers encountered by immigrant youth and adults by working to address community-specific stigma and increasing mental health literacy of faith community leaders
- Prioritize cultural and linguistic competency of local doctors and therapists in recruitment, hiring, retention, and training

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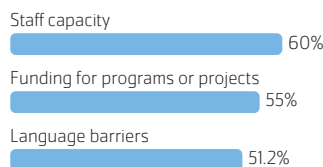
\* Working group lead

# LANGUAGE & EDUCATION

We commit to promoting language acquisition and increasing educational opportunities.

17.6% of households in Champaign County speak a language other than English. In these households, 35.4% speak English less than “very well”

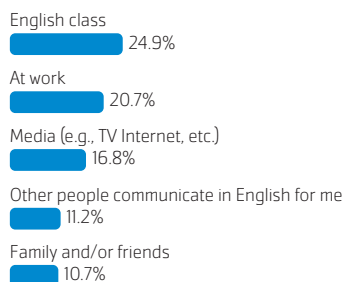
## What are the top three barriers your organization faces when considering integrating immigrants’ needs into planning services, supports, or activities?



## How comfortable were you using English when you moved into this community?



## How have you been able to improve your English since moving into this community?



■ Foreign-born  
■ US-born

## RECOMMENDATION I

Strengthen language acquisition opportunities for learners of all ages

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Facilitate timely access to English Language Learner (ELL) programs for adult learners by conducting courses in immigrant neighborhoods and addressing other access barriers (e.g., transportation, childcare, digital divide)
- Teach adults to use translation apps and similar programs (e.g., Pronunciator) as a stopgap measure to address emergency language needs
- Encourage organizations to prioritize language access (e.g., interpreter services, improving English language resources, representative staffing)
- Make English language resources easy to understand
- Begin joint work between Community Alliance of immigrant-serving organizations and local educational leaders from schools and ELL programs to prioritize ongoing issues in language education and adult education

### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Develop and sustain pre-literacy programming in Spanish for limited-literacy, indigenous Maya communities and other adult English Language Learners who do not have literacy skills in their native tongue
- Equip parents of school-age children and adults to self-advocate by providing education on federal laws regarding language assistance services for individuals with limited English proficiency
- Expand assistance for English Language Learners with different physical and cognitive abilities within the school districts and adult language programs

## RECOMMENDATION II

Build a foundation of cultural sensitivity and appreciation

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Support and expand bilingual GED courses and adult education
- Help K-12 English Language Learners navigate cultural and linguistic challenges by continuing to strengthen support for bilingual teacher and parent liaison programming in schools
- Celebrate and encourage multilingual skills by increasing non-English language book access in public libraries.

### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Equip immigrant parents to successfully navigate US education system requirements and processes by increasing bilingual supports and programming
- Provide cultural competency and sensitivity training for local educators and school administrators



ESL for Citizenship students travel to Springfield, Illinois with their instructor, Kallie-Jo Ho to visit historical sites and to meet public officials, including Illinois Senator Scott Bennett (52 District), March 5, 2019.



Art at the Market teaches participants to screen print butterflies symbolizing the beauty of migration during a Welcoming Week event, September 21, 2019.

- Expand affordable and culturally responsive childcare programs (e.g., helping community caretakers launch licensed home-based childcare and providing training in early childhood development)
- Increase community information and translation services in multiple languages beyond the top five languages spoken in the country (Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Arabic)

### RECOMMENDATION III

Support education as a bridge to professional development and higher education

#### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Include vocational language skills in English Language Learner courses
- Increase English language proficiency of immigrants seeking recognition of foreign credentials
- Coordinate tutoring for immigrant youth and support professional development of first and second generation immigrant youth

#### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Offer evening courses to create a pathway to high school diplomas for teenagers who must work during regular school hours
- Support ongoing adult education, upskilling, and advancement (e.g., financial literacy, financial aid guidance, workforce training, resources for accreditations and certification)
- Provide language learning stipends integrated with workforce development services for recent arrivals with limited English proficiency

#### WORKING GROUP CONTRIBUTORS

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Felix Cardoso, Urbana Adult Education

Celeste Choate, The Urbana Free Library

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\* Working group lead

*"We can work on helping parents understand the system and how it's important to be involved, but I also think that we have to understand that people have no time. The barrier is they don't have time."*

— Immigrant Community Listening Session Participant

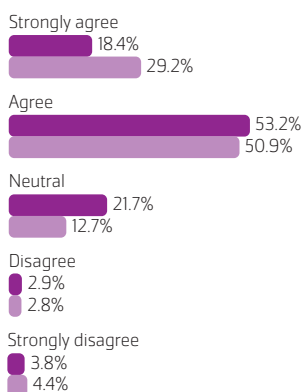
# PUBLIC SAFETY

We commit to building trust and relationships among immigrant communities, local law enforcement, and public safety entities.

## My organization takes steps to build relationships and trust with immigrants.



## I feel safe living in this community.



## Which of the following describes your experience, if any, with police in the community?



■ Foreign-born  
■ US-born

## RECOMMENDATION I

Establish trust among immigrants and first responders, law enforcement agencies, and municipal officials

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Promote regular interactions with first responders, police officers, and government employees via linguistically accessible information sessions on public safety topics (e.g., disaster preparedness, fire prevention)
- Facilitate quick and easy access to help by developing succinct resources (e.g., refrigerator magnets) that list the numbers of first responders and law enforcement agencies

### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Launch a recurring series of public meetings to foster meaningful engagement, interpreter-facilitated discussion, and problem-solving between public safety officials and immigrant communities
- Establish informal and secure channels for communication between immigrant community members and elected officials, local government, and law enforcement agencies

## RECOMMENDATION II

Equip immigrant communities to participate in personal and public safety measures

### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Provide Know Your Rights workshops covering individual rights and responsibilities; strategies to successfully interact with first responders, federal agents, and local law enforcement officials; and information on how to spot and respond to fraudulent calls and scams
- Expand immigrants' understanding of the importance and process of filing complaints and reporting crimes to law enforcement officials
- Increase immigrants' access to file reports and complaints by providing forms in multiple languages and ensuring first responders and law enforcement officials have access to reliable interpretation services

### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Encourage immigrant leaders to chair public safety associations and to serve as liaisons between their communities and local law enforcement officials





NAWC Intern, Anya Takikawa, holds a welcoming sign sharing her belief that everyone deserves to feel at home during Welcoming Week, September, 2019.



Community members chat with Bryant Seraphin, Urbana Chief of Police, at "Coffee with Mayor Marlin", a Welcoming Week event in the city building, September 18, 2019.

### RECOMMENDATION III

Ensure government officials, first responders, and law enforcement officers effectively respond to and protect immigrant communities

#### Short-term strategies (Year 1 - 3)

- Organize trainings, led by trusted local organizations, to inform immigrants on the roles of and separation between different law enforcement and public safety officials and agencies
- Incorporate information on welcoming ordinances, immigrant rights, resources for immigrant victims of crime, and relevant state and local laws intersecting with immigration into first responder and law enforcement official training
- Strengthen communication between municipal entities, city governments, law enforcement agencies and first responders to address public safety concerns of local immigrants
- Create a public safety portal in the Oasis Resource Center with important information, contacts, and educational research that is available in multiple languages

#### Long-term strategies (Year 3 - 5)

- Provide cultural and linguistic competency training for law enforcement officers and first responders to effectively communicate and establish trust with local immigrants
- Ensure resources, forms, documents, and materials for public use, such as police reports, are available in multiple languages
- Implement easy, ready-to-use interpretation and translation services for first responders, law enforcement officers, and other government officials
- Launch a series of community conversations co-organized and co-led by immigrant leaders and elected officials, law enforcement officers, and first responders that covers how to handle police interactions and approach public safety situations (e.g., child safety, domestic violence, human trafficking, drunk driving, fraud)

#### WORKING GROUP CONTRIBUTORS

- Anthony Cobb, City of Champaign
- Dustin Heuerman, Champaign County Sheriff's Office
- Rachel Joy\*, City of Champaign
- Matt Myrick, University of Illinois Police Department
- Bryant Seraphin, City of Urbana
- Charlie Smyth\*, City of Urbana
- Jack Wilkie, Attorney at Law

\* Working group lead

# NEXT STEPS



Representatives from local organizations convene at a Welcoming Collaborative meeting to discuss inclusive engagement strategies and community events in preparation for Welcoming Week, April 9, 2019.

The process of producing the *Champaign County Welcoming Plan* involved partners and stakeholders at every level of the community — we are deeply appreciative of the hundreds of hours invested by volunteers from all sectors of the community. **As a broad and diverse coalition of stakeholders, our county has demonstrated strong cross-political support and a clear commitment to welcoming immigrants.** With the release of this plan, our shared work continues to ensure the realization of multi-sector recommendations and strategies. Some wins will be readily attainable, while others will require significant coordination, resource development, and municipal enactment.

The New American Welcome Center (NAWC) at the University YMCA will oversee the Welcoming Plan's implementation process, monitoring efforts to ensure that the multi-sector plan is carried out. Initial goals are as follows:

- **Expand Partnerships.** Keep in regular contact with partner organizations and secure commitments to advance the plan's implementation across the community.
- **Launch Communities of Practice.** Establish communities of practice organized along each recommendation area, cultivate spaces for stakeholders to prioritize strategies for implementation, share promising practices, and refine our work.
- **Pursue Certified Welcoming.** Invite Welcoming America to assess our efforts to include and welcome immigrants in all areas of civic, social, and economic life in our community. Work to distinguish our local efforts, build a competitive advantage, and gain access to opportunities to share our welcoming practices on a regional, national, and global stage by securing a Certified Welcoming designation for Champaign County.
- **Secure Funding.** Collaborate to pursue funding for project and resource implementation.
- **Publish Annual Progress Reports.** Inform the community about implementation progress, successes, and challenges.
- **Create Website.** Develop a website for the *Champaign County Welcoming Plan* featuring data, recommendations, and engagement opportunities.

Thank you for working together to build resilient, cohesive and flourishing communities.



We invite you to share your feedback, get involved, and learn more about the *Champaign County Welcoming Plan* by using the QR code or by visiting: [www.welcomingchampaigncounty.org](http://www.welcomingchampaigncounty.org)

## NAWC ADVISORY BOARD

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**To those that came before us** and tilled the soil for this Welcoming Plan to take root — The Refugee Center, C-U Immigration Forum, La Colectiva, Latino Partnership of Champaign County, The Immigration Project, Cultivadores, and so many more — thank you.

**To the hundreds of community members** who dedicated their time, stories, ideas, and expertise to make our community a place where immigrants can thrive and flourish. Thank you.

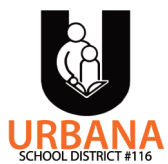
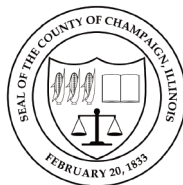
**To our funders** at Welcoming America, New American Economy, YMCA of the USA, Immigration Funders Collaborative, and United Way of Champaign County — thank you for your generous support of our strategic planning and community engagement process.

**To our peer cities around the country** — thank you for leading the way. We studied your community engagement processes, strategic planning efforts, and are proud to join you in implementation.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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