

# IMMIGRANT AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

## STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO LOCAL INTEGRATION PROGRAMMING



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CATHOLIC LEGAL  
IMMIGRATION  
NETWORK, INC.

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***Immigrant  
Integration results  
from an equal  
partnership  
between newcomers  
and the receiving  
community who  
work together  
to make their  
community more  
inclusive.***



# WELCOME LETTER TO COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Congratulations! By downloading this white paper, your organization is taking a critical step in making integration programming a deliberate part of your organization's work. Your promotional efforts will contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive community. CLINIC believes that the most successful integration initiatives are local and seek input, buy-in and participation from a wide range of groups, individuals and institutions of both the receiving and newcomer community. Your organization has a vital role in promoting integration in your area, both conceptually and in tangible, measurable results. This white paper will guide your organization through this process to help you design, implement, evaluate and reassess your integration initiatives while demonstrating how to actively promote integration in your community.

Immigrant integration work can help to address the inherent unequal power dynamics within communities. This paper assumes that your organization already has a conceptual understanding of immigrant integration and that you have read CLINIC's white paper '[Immigrant and Community Integration: Fulfilling Catholic Social Teaching and American Values](#).' It also assumes your organization reviewed [CLINIC's integration surveys](#) and considered using them to gauge understanding, interest and need for integration work at the local level. Specific examples of integration programming at work within the CLINIC network are included throughout this paper: for many more, please visit our Promising Initiatives page. We hope this white paper will serve as a resource to help advance your integration programming in a strategic way. Thank you for your commitment to integration and to serving immigrants locally.

***“The Bible instructs us to welcome the stranger. This biblical teaching is embedded in our mission and is what we all do with deep commitment and love. This includes creating welcoming communities with ample opportunities for immigrant integration. Our network’s legal services directly improve immigrant integration and build stronger communities of united and well-resourced families. Nonprofits in our network provide legal representation to low-income immigrants in addition to other key integration services and opportunities, including leadership development, policy advocacy, English and U.S. civics instruction, workforce development, naturalization application assistance and so on. CLINIC’s Center for Immigrant Integration is an important link between community members, native and foreign-born, seeking to make their cities more equitable, welcoming and prosperous places.”***

**— Anna Marie Gallagher**

**Executive Director, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.**

# LAYING THE FOUNDATION

The most successful integration initiatives are local and account for the needs and desires of community stakeholders. Your organization is uniquely positioned to play a major role in creating and driving the success of immigrant integration programs. Your close contact and reputation with newcomers and volunteers and your relationship with other community-based organizations, local government or other local groups makes you the ideal facilitator and liaison for integration.

Before you can begin your integration work, you must take stock of your area's readiness, willingness and understanding of integration.

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

### **Are you getting input from newcomers about their wants and needs?**

Your organization likely has an in-depth understanding of the challenges and issues immigrants face locally. However, it is vital that you seek and receive newcomers' direct input first, before designing a new service or program. Your idea may serve an important need, but it may not be as much of a priority as you believe it to be. Asking for direct input from those who will participate in the program is key to understanding what the community views as a priority. Consider approaching local leaders — particularly if the program is intended for a particular ethnic or language group — in order to earn that person's trust, suggestions and eventual endorsement of a new program or service.

### **Do agency staff understand your integration initiative, and do they support it?**

If your integration program is going to achieve its goals, agency staff must understand the need for it. This begins by ensuring that staff members understand the definition of immigrant integration. It also means clearly connecting integration work to your organization's mission statement. Staff need to understand the rationale behind offering a new program. Data collected from newcomers should be shared with staff so it's clear how the new program directly serves the needs of the client base. Doing this can help alleviate concerns that limited funds are being diverted away from long-standing services.

### **Does the receiving community understand the benefits and value of integration? Have you received and documented input from the receiving community?**

The best immigrant integration projects are ones that solicit input from the receiving community, in addition to newcomers and staff. Successful integration depends on diverse stakeholders working together to address the overall needs of immigrants and the larger society. Therefore, you should also be asking interested members of the receiving community for their thoughts on what valuable integration projects might look like.

Your organization may need to serve as a spokesperson for integration. This might involve giving presentations on why integration is important and how it benefits individuals and the larger community. For guidance, see our integration talking points resource.

### **How will you make sure that all participants have equal opportunity and influence over your integration program?**

Within any community, inequalities and gaps in opportunity exist between the members of the receiving and newcomer populations. It takes deliberate effort to ensure that stakeholders have real and equal access in all phases of this new program — from design to implementation to evaluation. This will require intentional work from staff at your organization to check-in with stakeholders throughout the process and to ensure that the program is truly representative of the community's needs and wants.

*In Stamford, Connecticut, Building One Community created a Skills Development Program that provides foreign-born residents with technical and language skills to help them succeed in various local industries. To ensure that their program adequately addressed the needs of both the newcomer and receiving communities the organization surveyed 100 of their clients and 50 members of the business community. The result tailored classes towards the culinary and home healthcare services sectors. The program continues to be a success and has added a construction and landscaping track. For more details on Building One Community's Skills Development Program read CLINIC's full article 'Building Community Through Job Development.'*



# BUILDING THE PROGRAM

After identifying the primary needs of those you serve and securing the support of staff and the receiving community, you can begin to build your program. Successful integration projects incorporate stakeholder input to identify an initiative that has community support; they seek out partnerships and allies, and adequately prepare and train staff, and; they have clearly defined objectives and activities along with measurement and evaluation methods that define and demonstrate success. When designing your program, you should consider the following:

## **How will I solicit input from newcomers, the receiving community, and staff at my organization?**

Focus groups, listening sessions or town hall-style community meetings are some ways in which agencies can gain the input needed to design a new program. [CLINIC's set of client, community member and agency integration surveys](#) are a great way to begin assessing local integration needs and will give you a sense of what additional work may be required before launching your program. After you have acquired informed input on your integration program, it is important to verify that there are individuals or organizations that not only endorse the idea but are willing and eager to actively participate in the program.

## **What organizations or individuals could serve as partners or allies in developing and implementing my program?**

Consider your organization's strengths and existing relationships in the community. Through your close contact with clients and your volunteer base, your organization has already created the foundation for an integration bridge in your community. However, to bring integration work to the broader community, you must harness your organization's role and reputation to engage other organizations and individuals. Consider what other actors might be able to contribute to your program and how participation might further their own goals or objectives. Other community based organizations, city and local governments — [see our four part webinar series on collaborating with cities to promote integration](#) — civic associations, religious organizations or individuals with connections in distinct communities are all examples of potential powerful allies that can enrich and further your integration work. For more information and resources on building partnerships, please visit our [Expanding into the Community](#) page.

## **What are the goals and objectives of my program and how will I determine success?**

Broad goals and concrete objectives must be defined in advance of the integration program launch. Goals are aspirational. For example, an agency could articulate a hope to build greater trust between local newcomers and long-time residents. Objectives break down the goals into reasonable, measurable steps. For example, the agency could decide that it needs to secure a certain amount of funding, appoint a project manager and identify five community partners with whom they will partner.

Similarly, it is important to develop distinct measurement and evaluation or M&E tools to define your program's successes. Like your goals, the M&E criteria will vary widely based upon the unique circumstances of your project. They may be objective and quantitative, such as improvement in English ability on a standardized test, or subjective and qualitative, such as self-reporting from immigrants on navigating opportunities and resources in their community. Predetermined M&E is important. It allows program implementers to plan backwards from the expected outcomes to make sure the inputs or activities are appropriate. M&E also provides valuable information to evaluate your program and make improvements. Finally, well-documented M&E, that demonstrates the success of your program, is something your organization can use to leverage funding opportunities and more community support.



*Catholic Charities of Pueblo, Colorado recently began partnering with the local public school system in an effort to increase its engagement with parents who speak limited or no English. Survey data from CLINIC's immigrant integration survey supported the decision to address this need. The survey indicated that clients did not feel comfortable speaking with their children's teachers. Having data from the survey allows program staff to feel confident that they have buy-in from the community for this new initiative. Catholic Charities of Pueblo anticipates achieving their established outcomes as they work together with the community and the school system to improve communication and increase parental participation.*

*Catholic Charities of Portland and the Portland Police Department have worked together to welcome newly arrived refugees. Police officers and program staff greet refugees at the airport with a culturally appropriate meal. For the police department, it is an opportunity to build trust early with newcomers and let them know that officers are there to serve all residents within the community. The police department also offers orientation sessions to newly arrived refugees on U.S. laws as part of their cultural orientation. The hope is that police officers will be viewed as allies and a resource for community members to live productive and safe lives in their new communities. For more details on Catholic Charities of Portland's airport welcoming initiative read CLINIC's full article 'Catholic Charities and the Portland Police Department work together to welcome refugees.'*



# EXPANDING INTO THE COMMUNITY

With a solid design, input from the community, and established goals and M&E, you are ready to launch your program. To promote success, it is important to remember the following things:

**Starting small is ok.** Your initial integration initiatives may be modest or small. This is normal and even recommended. Starting small allows you to try out an idea on a smaller scale and adjust it, before expanding the program. Integration work can pose unique challenges especially when trying to engage multiple parts of your community. You may want to begin by adapting or tweaking one of your organization's existing programs or engaging with your community to make other programs or services more accessible and welcoming.

**Make sure you commit to your initiative and follow through.** Before beginning your program, make sure adequate resources and staff time are in place for the program to run as intended. Identify a specific time period for which you will commit to your program. If you are working with a partner organization, check-in with them regularly and consider drafting a Memorandum of Understanding to make sure roles and responsibilities are well defined and understood.

**Take time to evaluate your program and make changes.** Monitor the progress of your program and work to assess what is and is not working. Do not be afraid to make changes as they may be necessary to achieve the overall goals of your project. Continue to solicit feedback from all relevant stakeholders, and ask members of the receiving and newcomer community to affirm that the project is still working to serve the needs of the larger community. Measure progress by using your predetermined objectives and other measurement tools.

**Celebrate and publicize your work-** When you can point to success in your program, no matter how big or small, make sure you share it with the public. Social media, local media, agency newsletters and community presentations are just a few of the ways you can tout your program's achievements. Highlighting your success is important to draw attention and positive energy to your organization and to support integration work more broadly in your community. Effectively publicizing your work may also draw the attention of funders or other influential partners in your community. Additionally, your integration work is something you should be promoting actively within your organization through annual or board reports. This will help to solidify and expand support for intentional integration programming within your agency. For more information on using data to promote your organization's good work view our webinar: [Demonstrating Your Program Successes](#).

## CONCLUSION

Concrete and intentional integration work is fundamental to CLINIC's mission statement and its deep roots in Catholic Social teaching. This guide provides a foundation upon which to create or expand your own integration program. Cultivating an integrated community and promoting the underlying values of equality, justice and opportunity for all takes time and consistent effort. Whether your integration program is an instant success that has a broad and profound effect or simply brings together a small group of people to address a common need, your organization is moving the needle towards inclusivity, cohesiveness and a more welcoming community for all.



*New American Pathways takes a holistic approach to immigrant integration. Their goal is to work with newcomers, respond to their needs and help guide them on their integration journey from arrival to naturalization. The organization begins by working with newly arrived immigrants to help secure basic needs. Then it moves to help with cultural integration, connecting them to more opportunities to interact and engage with the broader community. New American Pathways administers periodic evaluations with its clients to help track progress and measure success on clients' individual goals and needs, giving the organization the ability to point to specific milestones or and indicators of integration success. To learn more about the organization's integration work read CLINIC's full article 'New American Pathways.'*

*The Cabrini Immigrant Center administers a local Justice for Immigrants program in Lower Manhattan. The program seeks to empower community members by providing trainings and information sessions to encourage involvement in direct advocacy work.*

*Much of the input for the program came from the program's immigrant-led steering committee where members have been encouraged to take on leadership roles. However, committee members made it clear that they did not feel they had the right skill set or knowledge base to step into those roles. In response, the steering committee was transformed into a leadership program that helped to address the skills gaps and provide information members felt they needed to be better and more active leaders in their communities. For more details on how the Cabrini Immigrant Center made changes to their integration program read CLINIC's full article 'Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC and Justice for Immigrants empower leaders in the community.'*



*“ Our strategy builds upon both the church’s call to welcome newcomers and upon the U.S. history as a place where people from around the world are welcomed and given a chance to succeed. ”*

## **ABOUT THE CATHOLIC LEGAL IMMIGRATION NETWORK, INC.**

Grounded in Catholic social teaching, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., is the largest network of community-based nonprofit immigration legal programs, with about 400 affiliates in 49 states and the District of Columbia. CLINIC’s principal services include legal and management training for our affiliates, advocacy for humane immigration policies, representing foreign-born religious workers, and leading several national projects to protect the rights and promote the dignity of immigrants. We also provide some pro bono representation to detained individuals and families, and offer public education materials on immigrants’ rights and Catholic teaching on migration.



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