

BENEFITS OF INTEGRATION

The potential benefits of successful immigrant integration to the broader society are significant:

- A vibrant, cohesive society shared and valued by established and newcomer residents of different experiences, histories, ethnicities, and backgrounds.
- Revitalization of declining communities through the contributions of immigrant families working in tandem with their native-born neighbors.
- Stronger communities with the ability to meet wide-ranging needs; address racial, ethnic, and economic diversity; and enrich the social and cultural fabric of our society.
- Increased productivity and a robust economy through an expanded base of workers, consumers, taxpayers, and entrepreneurs.
- Global competitiveness through a multi-lingual, multi-cultural workforce.
- A more vibrant democracy in which all groups are accepted as equal members of society with the opportunity—and responsibility—to engage and contribute to the common good.
- A more secure America where all members of society—regardless of race, national origin, or socio-economic status—live in dignity and equality.

“The Chamber strongly supports immigration and believes that immigrants are a driving force in our economy, both filling and creating jobs. They are also our best hope to curb chronic American labor shortages.”

**—Thomas J. Donohue
President & CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce,
which represents over three
million businesses**

ROLE FOR PHILANTHROPY

The successful integration of immigrants in the early twentieth century was shaped significantly by U.S. philanthropy, which played a leadership role, along with social reformers and others, to build public libraries, reform school systems, and enact health and workplace safety laws. In large part, these and other reform measures sought to help cushion immigrants from crushing urban poverty and to facilitate their move up in U.S. society.

In one of the most well-known examples, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie founded nearly 1,700 public libraries—the backbone of the U.S. public library infrastructure—so that children with no access to formal schooling could educate themselves and advance, as he, an impoverished Scottish immigrant, had done.

More than a century later, U.S. philanthropy is in a strong and unique position to respond to the demographic, economic, and social imperatives of immigrant integration. Foundations can consider a range of grantmaking strategies depending on their funding approaches, issue priorities, geographic focus, and goals. By incorporating immigrants into their grantmaking priorities, they can draw upon myriad strategies for community building and social change that philanthropy has long supported. These strategies include but are not limited to: direct services, capacity building, community outreach and education, leadership development, organizing, advocacy, legal assistance, research, policy analysis, communications, media, and litigation.

Regardless of strategies, foundations should link their investment in immigration integration with efforts to address longstanding community issues such as poverty, education, employment, and neighborhood safety. This approach, which emphasizes shared concerns and positions newcomers as part of the solution, will help increase racial and ethnic equity and enhance community cohesion.

“The Zellerbach Family Foundation’s commitment to immigrant integration isn’t only based on humanitarian ideals. It is based on a reasoned approach to building strong, inclusive communities. Guided by a board composed of experienced business and community leaders, the Foundation believes that having large numbers of community residents living on the margins can act as a weak link in community-building efforts, and that investing in the integration of low-income immigrants ends up improving the quality of life for all of us.”

**—Lina Avidan, Program Executive
Zellerbach Family Foundation
San Francisco, CA**

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PIONEER IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICIES

The United States has no national immigrant integration policies, and developing such policies is a long-term goal that merits philanthropic support. In the meantime, a great deal can be done at the state and local levels to facilitate the successful integration of newcomers and encourage their informed and widespread participation in community life.

Foundations are in a unique position to take leadership in initiating and investing in communitywide planning efforts to develop and implement immigrant integration policies. Such efforts are vital to facilitating the integration of newcomers and to strengthening the fabric of our society. Ideally, communitywide planning should be multi-sector, multi-strategy, and multi-ethnic in nature. They should also encompass one or more of the six pathways in GCIR's Immigrant Integration Framework; build on the promising practices featured in this toolkit; and have solid evaluation and dissemination components.

Philanthropy can—and should—play a pivotal role to shape a vision for a vibrant, cohesive society that is shared and valued by all of its members, regardless of their ethnicity, national origin, or socioeconomic status. This section provides foundations with big-picture recommendations to promote successful immigrant integration in ways that strengthen our broader society. GCIR invites you to review the “Promising Practices in Immigrant Integration” section of this toolkit for specific recommendations on grantmaking strategies for each of the six pathways in our Immigrant Integration Framework.

2. PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY

To help immigrant families achieve self-sufficiency and contribute fully to their communities, foundations can support a wide range of programs including: English classes, education, job training, health care, child care, affordable housing,

financial education, access to credit, legal services, among many others. Effective programs are culturally and linguistically competent, well publicized, and trusted by the community (e.g., immigrants know that using such programs will not have negative immigration consequences for themselves or their family members).

In addition to funding these programs directly, foundations can support research, advocacy, organizing, and communications capacity so that the funding and design of government programs (e.g., safety-net benefits like Medicaid) and systems (e.g., public schools and community colleges) that promote self-sufficiency actually meet the needs of immigrant communities.

3. FACILITATE UPWARD MOBILITY

Despite their crucial role in the U.S. economy, many immigrants face enormous challenges in achieving economic stability. Foundations can support a number of strategies to address these challenges and create pathways toward upward mobility for immigrant families through funding in the areas of education, employment, financial services, and entrepreneurship.

Education. The quality of public education significantly defines the ability of children of immigrants to realize their full potential. Grantmakers can support efforts to increase the availability of early childhood education; improve and expand educational programs for English language learners; increase the involvement of immigrant parents; monitor the impact of No Child Left Behind on immigrant students; provide mentoring, counseling, and other educational supports; expose immigrant students to career and higher-education opportunities; and create pathways to pursue post-secondary education.

Employment. Grantmakers can fund programs that help low-skill workers improve English proficiency, increase educational level or vocational skills, and address workplace discrimination and mistreatment. Funders can also support efforts to help immigrants with foreign credentials and work experience secure employment in their professions. In addition, foundations seeking systemic change can invest in living-wage campaigns and other forms of worker organizing, including union organizing, to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for low-wage workers. Partnerships with worker centers, unions, employers, community colleges, advocacy groups, and others can help increase the impact of these efforts.

Financial services. Foundations can increase the availability of affordable financial services to facilitate economic integration. Newcomers can benefit from education on topics such as financial planning, budgeting, and saving for homeownership, college, or other major-ticket expenses. Also important is educating immigrants on predatory lenders and lending practices, as well as services available from banks and other mainstream financial institutions. Services to help working-poor immigrant families apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Care Tax Credit can help promote economic stability.

Entrepreneurship. Foundations can support entrepreneurship opportunities for newcomers, helping them access credit and other resources, conduct market analysis and research, assess financial risks, develop successful business plans, and pool skills and resources. Well-planned small businesses and cooperative enterprises can create a pathway to economic mobility for some immigrants.

4. ENSURE EQUAL TREATMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

True opportunity is not possible without equal treatment for all members of society. U.S. laws and policies need to address barriers to integration, such as workplace exploitation, housing discrimination, and restrictions on immigrants' access to resources such as health, social services, banking, and credit. Policies that impede immigrants' ability to integrate also harm the broader society. For example, the exploitation of immigrant workers depresses wages, deteriorates work conditions, and compromises the well-being of all workers. Funders can support community education, legal assistance, organizing, advocacy, litigation, research, and other activities to ensure equal treatment and opportunity for immigrants and other affected groups.

5. SUPPORT FAIR AND HUMANE IMMIGRATION POLICIES

An immigration system that embodies the American values of fairness, equality, and opportunity is essential to promoting immigrant integration. Such a system advances U.S. social and economic interests and protects civil rights while enhancing national security. Depending on their priorities, foundations can support efforts to develop and advocate for various changes and improvements in immigration policies including workable legal channels to meet current and future labor-market demands, provisions to protect all workers from exploitation and abuse, a humane and effective immigration enforcement program, expedited processing of family immigration visas, and promotion of naturalization and civic participation.

Given the complexity, scale, and political volatility of the U.S. immigration system, long-term funding for ongoing advocacy and monitoring of policy development and implementation will be needed to ensure that the rights of immigrants—and the broader interests of the community—are protected. Funding for a broad-based, nationally coordinated effort to do so will be crucial. Community education and outreach, legal assistance, documentation, research, and litigation are also important activities to support.

6. BUILD SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BRIDGES

Social and cultural interaction is critically important to foster understanding, build trusting relationships, and lay the foundation for mutual engagement. Such interaction often can make or break the integration experience, either erecting roadblocks or paving a path towards integration.

To build social and cultural bridges, funders can support arts and humanities, cultural production and performance, and civic participation activities that emphasize interaction among immigrants and between immigrants and native-born residents. Forums to educate newcomer and receiving communities about one another's cultures, histories, and concerns are also valuable, particularly in newer immigrant destinations unaccustomed to linguistic and cultural differences but also in traditional immigrant strongholds. These activities help newcomer and longtime residents appreciate differences and find common ground.

7. EXPAND IMMIGRANT PARTICIPATION

The millions of immigrants who participated in rallies, marches, and demonstrations in 2006 clearly illustrate newcomer communities' deep interest in civic life and their commitment to building a future in the United States. Tapping into this groundswell of activism, foundations can support activities such as leadership development, organizing campaigns, naturalization, and non-partisan voter education and registration. Civic education is important to teach newcomers about local institutions and how laws are made; it also gives immigrants the tools they need to participate effectively in local decision-making processes. In funding immigrant participation, funders should pay particular attention to efforts that engage young people and that allow newcomers and established residents, particularly people of color and low-income groups, to work together on issues of common interest.

8. BOLSTER ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Local, regional, and national immigrant organizations—and the coalitions and networks that link them together—do a tremendous amount of work with relatively few resources. Capacity-building grants can help these groups strengthen their organizational infrastructure and effectiveness, positioning them to have greater impact to the benefit of both newcomers and the receiving society.

In addition to the standard menu of capacity-building training, from fundraising to board development and financial management, immigrant organizations can be strengthened by training in communications, leadership development, action research, advocacy, and grassroots lobbying permissible by law. Building the capacity of these groups to work across lines of race and ethnicity is crucial, both in traditional immigrant strongholds with significant diversity and in newer gateway communities that are beginning to diversify.

9. STRENGTHEN MULTI-ETHNIC, MULTI-SECTOR ALLIANCES

Multi-ethnic and multi-sector alliances are vital to successful immigrant integration and effective community building. Philanthropy has long supported efforts that engage both immigrants and native-born, such as organizing and advocacy campaigns to increase access to health care for working families, address educational inequities, and improve wages and working conditions for all workers. Such funding to establish common ground between immigrant and native-born constituencies, regardless of the issues, can improve the well-being for all community members.

Equally important are grants that connect immigrant-based organizations with other strategic partners, such as civil rights groups, labor unions, professional associations, business interests, education systems, health providers, and faith-based organizations. Such grants can support coalition building and the development of partnerships and alliances, regular convenings, strategy sessions, and other activities that connect immigrant groups to broader efforts to improve opportunities for all members of society.

10. ENHANCE COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY

Funding of communications activities is pivotal to creating openness to immigrant integration and policy reform measures that expand, instead of restrict, opportunities for newcomers and other communities that have mutual interests. Activities such as message development, framing, public-opinion research, and ethnic and mainstream media outreach can educate immigrants

about their rights and responsibilities, increase public understanding of the experiences of newcomers and their contributions to society, and inform debates on policy issues that can affect the well-being of immigrant families. Communications training for immigrant leaders and allies is also important to increase their effectiveness in the media and other public arenas. In addition, multi-lingual polling can ensure that immigrants' voices are heard in mainstream debates.

Given the volatility of immigration issues, funders can support the development of "rapid response" capacity to help immigrant groups get their viewpoints out to

At this historic crossroads, philanthropy can play a critical role in promoting the full integration of newcomers into our society. Philanthropic investment and leadership—combined with the vision and hard work of immigrant and allied organizations—will help ensure that America lives up to its heritage as the land of freedom and opportunity. The future vibrancy of our country is at stake.

the media and the general public in a timely manner. Those wishing to make a large investment can support paid campaigns in both print and electronic media. Communications efforts should take place at various levels, from the grassroots to inside the Beltway. Depending on their resources and desired level of impact, local and national funders have a range of options for investing in communications strategies.