



Immigrant Integration in Colorado



SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE

كنبه
 Rodzina
family
 famille
 أسرة
 GIA ĐÌNH
 परिवार
 Семья
 家族
 Pamilya
 familia
 家
 Qoyska
 परिवार

AN INITIATIVE OF THE COLORADO TRUST

**THE MISSION OF THE COLORADO TRUST
IS TO ADVANCE THE HEALTH AND
WELL - BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF COLORADO**

**THE COLORADO TRUST
1600 SHERMAN STREET
DENVER, CO 80203-1604
303-837-1200
TOLL FREE 888-847-9140
FAX 303-839-9034
WWW.COLORADOTRUST.ORG**

“The Colorado Trust” is registered as a trademark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Copyright March 2004. The Colorado Trust. All rights reserved.

The Colorado Trust is pleased to have organizations or individuals share its materials with others. To request permission to excerpt from this publication, either in print or electronically, please write or fax: Sarah Moore, The Colorado Trust, 1600 Sherman Street, Denver, CO 80203-1604; fax: 303-839-9034; or e-mail sarah@coloradotrust.org.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION IN COLORADO

THE COLORADO TRUST

PREPARED BY
SUSAN DOWNS - KARKOS
Program Officer
The Colorado Trust

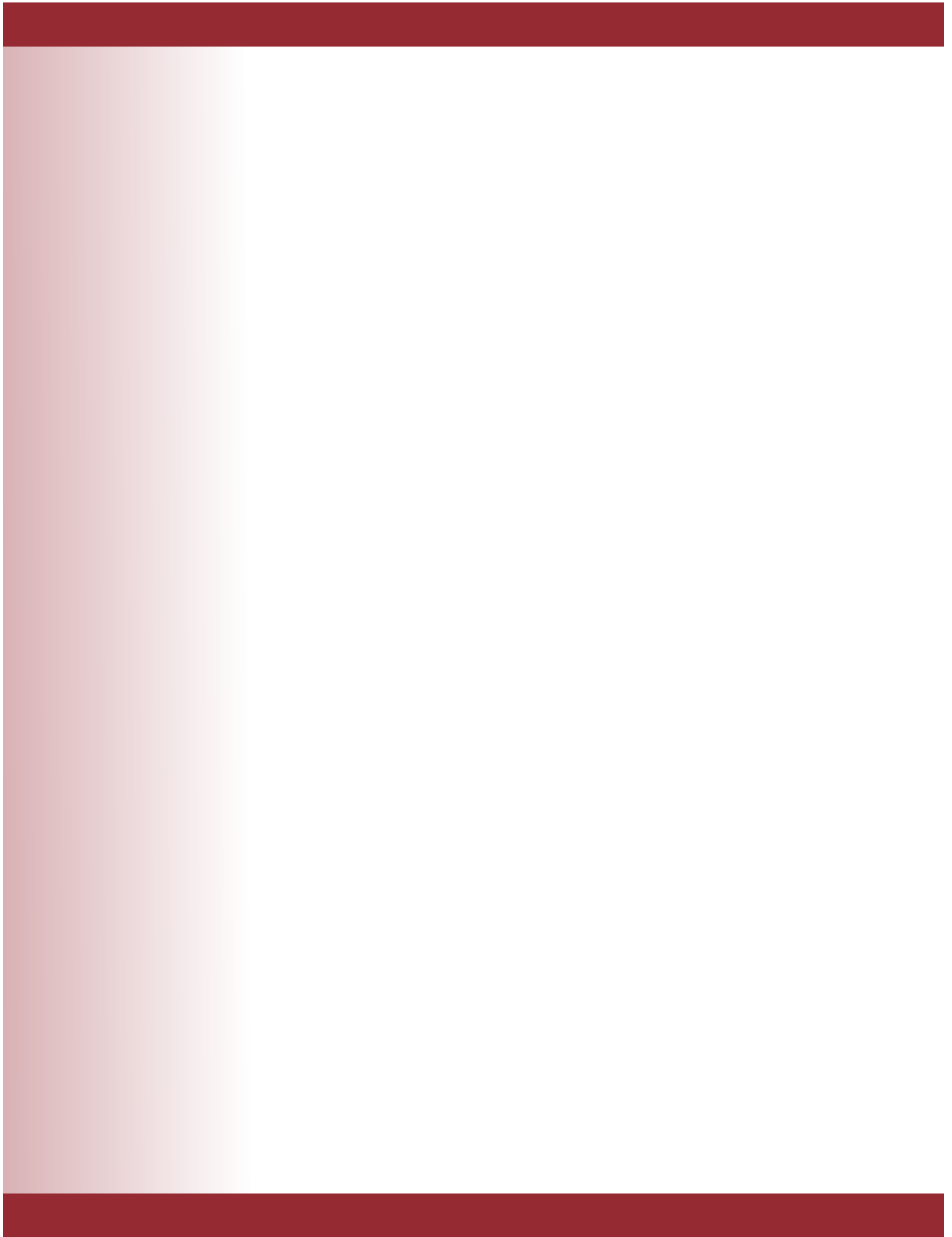


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION 1**
 - THE EVOLUTION OF THE TRUST’S IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE
 - SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE (SIRFI) LOGIC MODEL
 - LEARNING MORE ABOUT IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION
 - NEXT PHASE OF THE TRUST’S INITIATIVE

- CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS 4**

- DEFINING IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION 5**

- COMPONENTS OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION 7**
 - LEARNING ENGLISH
 - EDUCATION
 - EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMICS
 - HEALTH CARE
 - PARENTING AND FAMILY ROLES
 - LAWS, CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP
 - GENERAL COMMUNITY
 - DISCRIMINATION

- CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCING IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION 12**
 - PUBLIC POLICY APPROACHES
 - WORKING WITH MAINSTREAM INSTITUTIONS
 - STRENGTHENING IMMIGRANT-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS
 - THE GENERAL PUBLIC’S ROLE
 - FAMILY/PEER NETWORK OF IMMIGRANTS

- UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES 14**

- RECOMMENDATIONS 15**

- REFERENCES 17**

- APPENDICES 19**
 - LIST OF SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS
 - STAFF PARTICIPANTS
 - AGENDA



INTRODUCTION

Immigrants and refugees have long come to the United States seeking a better life. Fleeing poverty and escaping persecution, people from around the world have been lured to this vast country by the American Dream. The promise of freedom and economic opportunity has endured through hundreds of years and continues today.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TRUST'S IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE

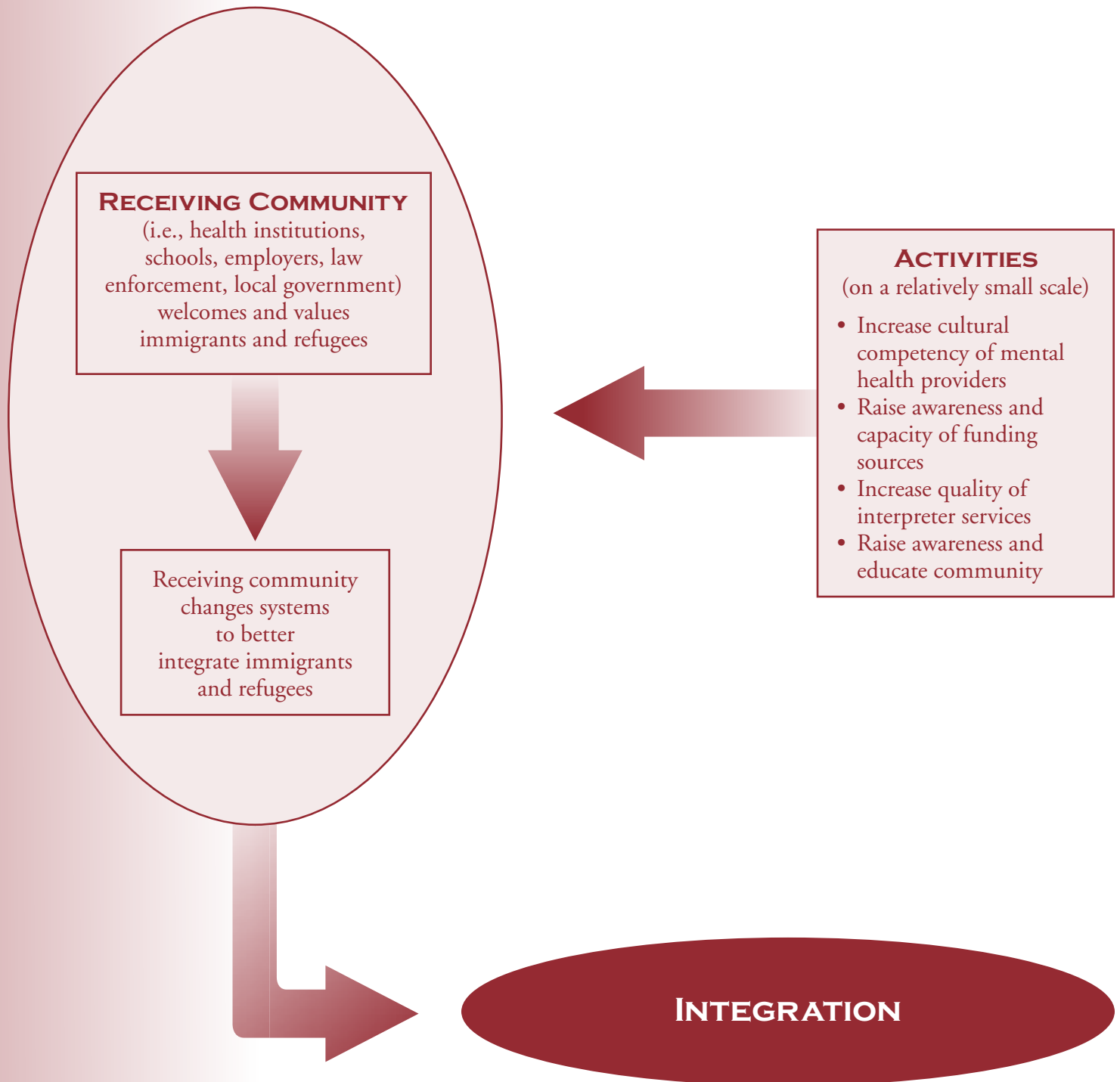
In 1999, The Colorado Trust, a grantmaking foundation based in Denver, began to examine how increasing numbers of diverse immigrants and refugees were changing communities in Colorado. Though Census 2000 data had not yet been collected, it was becoming increasingly clear to people across Colorado that many new immigrants had moved to the state. These newcomers tended to bring many strengths: strong family values, cultural richness and a strong ethic of work and perseverance. At the same time, new immigrants and refugees faced challenges such as language barriers, accessing health care and receiving legal services, among others. To help newcomers adjust to life in Colorado, The Colorado Trust launched its Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative in 2000, which funded 23 immigrant-serving organizations to provide mental health or cultural adjustment services to immigrants and refugees over a three-year period. The initiative was managed by the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, a Denver-based nonprofit organization with a background in strengthening organizations and in providing direct services to immigrants and refugees. Each of the 23 grantees received significant technical assistance such as sustainability planning, fund raising, database development, board development, program evaluation, community outreach and in other areas, depending on the needs of each grantee. Grantee organizational capacity building needs were identified through an organizational assessment process, which served as a way for grantee staff and boards to discuss their strengths and weaknesses, and to develop a technical assistance work plan.

The Colorado Trust originally funded immigrant-serving organizations based on their strong relationships with the immigrants and refugees in their communities. Through the initiative, and the technical assistance received, many immigrant-serving organizations across the state successfully enhanced and expanded their services. As the initiative unfolded, however, it became clear that these organizations, while trusted by the immigrant population and sensitive to their needs, would never be able to meet all of the challenges that newcomer families face. In fact, given the multiple challenges facing some families and the few resources available to help them, immigrant-serving organizations can at times become side-tracked and adopt issues and programs that might fall outside the scope of their missions. While having a strong cohort of immigrant-serving organizations was critical to helping newcomers, The Trust came to understand that to be fully responsive to immigrant and refugee needs, significant work is also needed at the broader community level, particularly with large, mainstream institutions such as schools, hospitals and local governments. A comprehensive approach involving mainstream institutions, immigrant-serving organizations and even individual community members themselves was clearly the next step in more fully addressing immigrant needs.

A logic model (Diagram 1) shows the fully articulated Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative. In the model, under the initiative launched in 2000, The Trust's resources were concentrated on the immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations (right side). This logic model shows that a more comprehensive approach that also directs resources toward the broader or "receiving" community side of the model will provide a more effective means for immigrant integration.

DIAGRAM 1: SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES INITIATIVE (SIRFI) LOGIC MODEL

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION STRATEGY - 2004



SIRFI 2000

THE COLORADO TRUST

- Provide funding opportunity
- Provide leadership and oversight
- Communicate and disseminate initiative information
- Provide evaluation support

SPRING INSTITUTE

- Provide management
- Provide technical assistance
- Provide networking and peer learning opportunities

GRANTEES (N=23)

- Offer mental health and cultural adjustment services
- Help immigrants and refugees access other services (i.e., housing, employment, health, education)

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

access mental health services

Mentally healthy immigrants and refugees

Maximized participation in community and sense of belonging

LEARNING MORE ABOUT IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Much has been written lately about immigrant integration – a comprehensive framework for addressing immigrant resettlement over a long-term period. This framework views resettlement in a new country as a two-way street: it is a mutual and dynamic process between the immigrant family and the new home or “receiving community.” Each has an important, mutually beneficial role to play.

The Trust initiated a couple of efforts to help staff and board members better understand the implications of immigrant integration and how it might be applied to a new gateway state like Colorado. First, The Trust convened a group of local and national leaders who have worked in this arena. This diverse group spent a full day in October 2003 discussing what immigrant integration might mean for Colorado, what activities might help achieve integration and the role of philanthropy in addressing integration. (See Appendix A for a complete list of the immigrant integration participants and the summit agenda.)

To further inform discussions of immigrant integration, at the request of The Colorado Trust, the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning convened focus groups of immigrants and refugees to learn more about their attitudes toward integration. Focus groups were held in November 2003 at five immigrant-serving organizations with immigrants and refugees from Africa, Asia, Mexico and Eastern Europe.

NEXT PHASE OF THE TRUST’S INITIATIVE

The new phase of The Colorado Trust’s Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative will promote immigrant integration in four Colorado communities. Selected communities will receive up to six months of meeting facilitation to develop comprehensive immigrant integration action plans. After planning, these communities will receive four-year grants to implement parts of their plan. Technical assistance through the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning on immigrant integration will continue to be a significant component of the grants. The Colorado Trust’s process and outcome evaluation of the immigrant integration efforts will be designed to examine if, and to what degree, community members are able to rally around the concept of immigrant integration, and to what extent newcomers and long-term residents perceive changes in immigrant integration in their communities.

With this in mind, this report shares information and insights gained by The Colorado Trust through the evolution of its Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative, especially for foundations, mainstream institutions, immigrant-serving organizations and policymakers.

If demographic changes continue, as they are projected to, more and more states and local communities will need to consider and take steps to aid the process of immigrant integration.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Historically, immigrants and refugees have come to the United States and settled in communities where they have job opportunities or family connections. This has often meant that immigrants are drawn to large gateway cities, such as New York City, Miami, Los Angeles and San Francisco. However, over the past 10 years, a new immigration phenomenon has occurred. More than ever, immigrants and refugees are resettling in

communities that haven't before felt the impact of immigration. Job opportunities in agriculture, construction, services and meat processing, among other industries, have brought immigrants to new communities primarily located in the southern and western regions of the United States, though the phenomenon can be seen almost everywhere, including such communities as Lewiston, Maine, and Des Moines, Iowa. Immigration has brought new diversity, and in many cases, new economic vitality to these communities as new families work, purchase products and services, and pay taxes. However, this rapidly increasing influx has also brought challenges, such as providing services to new cultural groups, communication with those who don't speak English and maintaining a sense of community cohesion.

How prepared are new gateway communities to respond to the changing demographics, to new cultures and new perspectives? Until recently, little attention has been paid to this issue. However, once the Census 2000 data was published and publicized, many began to realize how significant their immigrant population is and that it will likely only expand in size. Now some communities are working to learn how to support the strengths immigrants bring, meet a new set of needs that may not be fully understood, and try to maintain a sense of community cohesion during a time of significant change.

Colorado, like many states in the west and south, has experienced a significant increase in the immigrant population. Census 2000 figures indicate that over the past decade the immigrant population grew 160% and began to settle into new regions around the state, well beyond the Denver metropolitan area. Immigrants now make up 8.6% of Colorado's total population. While most immigrants and refugees did settle along the Front Range, which stretches from Fort Collins to Denver to Pueblo, smaller towns also experienced significant increases in their immigrant population. Known for their proximity to world-class skiing opportunities, the counties of Garfield, Eagle and Summit saw increases of 568%, 389% and 722%, respectively, as immigrant families came to fill jobs in ski resorts, hotels and other service industries. On the eastern plains, Morgan, Yuma and Lincoln counties saw increases of 218%, 873% and 792%, respectively, as immigrants came to work in their meat packing and agriculture industries. Wars and unrest across the globe also brought displaced refugees primarily to the Denver region from places such as Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Bosnia, bringing new diversity, new languages, new challenges and new opportunities.

DEFINING IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Historically, the United States has prided itself on being a melting pot, a place to which people have come from around the world, leaving behind their cultures and histories to become new Americans. In more recent years, the limits of this metaphor are more fully understood, for the melting pot implies a leaving behind, loss and even a stripping of one's own identity. Now it is more often acknowledged that coming to a new country and learning a new way of life is a highly individualized process of acculturation during which the individual both keeps and sheds some elements of his or her previous culture and chooses to adopt some elements of an American or mainstream culture. This selective process is usually a gradual one. Factors that influence how quickly an individual adapts, as well as which new cultural elements will be adopted or not embraced, include both personal preferences and how others in the same cultural group choose to adapt. Perhaps the clearest example of this change in philosophy from the melting pot to acculturation is language: no longer are immigrants routinely discarding their native languages; rather, they try to learn English and live bilingually, in many cases passing their languages down to their U.S.-born children who learn to speak two languages from an early age.

“What I like about living here is that in some situations I can act like an American and in other situations I can act more like a traditional Asian.”

Vietnamese woman

Current thinking on immigrant integration advocates not only for the immigrant taking responsibility for the adaptation process, but also for the immigrant's new home community, known as the receiving community, to take responsibility for that process. This two-way street is a model that many people find attractive because it doesn't place the entire burden on the individual family, but rather emphasizes that both mainstream institutions and community members have important roles to play. The goals behind immigrant integration are for the individual immigrant to take responsibility and to be supported in order to be productive and contribute fully, and for the community to be a strong-knit, cohesive whole that recognizes all community members' strengths and needs. Broad principles of immigrant integration include the following:

FOR THE RECEIVING COMMUNITY

- The process of integration is mutual, dynamic and on-going. Established residents, institutions and communities change to adapt to new residents, as the new residents strive to adapt to the new environment.
- Integration creates environments that help immigrants feel they belong. Immigrants are empowered and have opportunities for participation and success.
- Welcoming and hospitable communities increase understanding and work to eliminate racism and discrimination.
- Relationships between community members are strengthened and people take responsibility for each other.

FOR IMMIGRANTS OR REFUGEES

- Integration is a highly individualized process of feeling part of a new community and feeling connected to a new country.
- Immigrants adapt to a new lifestyle without losing their own identity or rejecting their past.
- After arrival in their new community, immigrants are able to contribute as soon and fully as possible and will have opportunities to develop their leadership and civic participation.
- Immigrants themselves must commit to building a life here, rather than seeing living in their new community as a temporary situation.

FOR BOTH

- Immigrants are woven into the social and economic fabric and help shape receiving communities socially, religiously, culturally and politically.
- Both immigrants and community members are willing to commit to making integration happen to strengthen the community.

Some foundations, universities and other institutions have focused on integration by examining civic integration – how to engage immigrants so that they are more involved in decisionmaking in their communities. These types of strategies often emphasize community organizing, gaining citizenship and voting.

The Colorado Trust's immigrant integration approach is broad, focusing on such questions as:

- What makes immigrants or refugees feel like they belong?
- When do they feel connected to their new American community?
- How does the receiving community contribute to this process?

While integration is a highly individualized process, there are ways to enhance the integration process by making it move more quickly and making it less painful for the individual and family.

COMPONENTS OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Information gained from The Trust's Immigrant Integration Summit, the immigrant and refugee focus groups and a literature review has led The Colorado Trust to identify the following key components to immigrant integration.

LEARNING ENGLISH

Many immigrants are adamant that learning English is a key component of immigrant integration. This does not mean that they reject their native language; rather, they understand the benefits of being bilingual and find that fully accessing community services and fully participating in community life in the United States requires English language skills. This is particularly important in new gateway communities where not understanding English can be isolating. It may be that in a state like Colorado, which has a significant Spanish-speaking population, monolingual Spanish speakers are able to feel a part of their communities, but it is difficult to imagine that they don't face some obstacles in full integration because of language limitations, such as in accessing services, visiting the grocery store or getting to know other community members.

On the other hand, some immigrant integration experts are in conflict about this issue. The disagreement harkens back to the melting pot metaphor, for the rhetoric surrounding learning English leads some to fear that immigrants are being forced to abandon their past. Knowing that many refugees, in particular, have already struggled against war and persecution, some hesitate to place further demands on them. Despite these thorny issues, however, many immigrants themselves believe that learning English is a significant step toward integration.

Although most immigrants and refugees are motivated to learn English, the process can be quite difficult. Most children learn English quickly after entering school, and they gain language skills much more rapidly than their parents. Adults, particularly those who come to the United States as seniors, have a more difficult time learning English. Indeed, science has shown that the brain's biology is such that learning languages is easier at a young age. To add to the challenge, many newcomers are often forced to work multiple, low-paying jobs to meet their basic needs while raising a family. Many find they have little, if any, time or energy left in the day for learning a language.

While immigrants and refugees may struggle to learn English, many native-born community members realize the power of learning a second language, and employers, schools, community centers and even some preschools now offer Spanish language classes for native English speakers. This is an example of integration as a two-way street. Indeed, immigrants and refugees report that when people in their communities learn even a few simple words like "hello" or "thank you" in the immigrant's native tongue, it can have a significant impact on helping them feel comfortable and valued.

"People are less empowered when they can't speak even the rudiments of the country's language where they live."

Patricia Brewster-Wilke, Rural Communities Resource Center

EDUCATION

Many newcomers view education as critical to realizing “the American dream,” and they appreciate their children’s opportunity to access public education. Parental involvement in schools is an important aspect of K-12 education today that is often a new expectation for immigrant parents. In many cultures, the teacher is a powerful authority figure and education of the child is mostly in the realm of the teacher, not the parent. Immigrant parents may feel somewhat uncomfortable working with schools, and this may be misinterpreted as ambivalence toward the child’s education.

Additionally, the difficulties of trying to recruit bicultural teachers make ongoing teacher education around cultural differences even more critical. Schools need to strategize about how to best help new families understand and feel connected to the school. For example, they need to provide interpreters, especially at parent-teacher conferences, instead of asking a bilingual child to interpret. And other, more established families can serve as cultural brokers in schools for newer families to help them navigate the educational system and provide emotional support.

Higher education is strongly valued by immigrants, and many first come to the United States specifically for this purpose. Among some groups, however, laws barring undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition rates are seen as insurmountable barriers to higher education.

EXAMPLE: HOW TEACHERS CAN PROMOTE IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Teachers who want to promote immigrant integration can start by reaching out to and being supportive of immigrant students; they should take the time to learn more about the backgrounds and cultures of their students. Such teachers will also consider ways to connect with immigrant parents, which may mean going well beyond the traditional parent-teacher conference to sharing a meal together. They will use someone other than the child as an interpreter when conversing with parents. Teachers can also create lesson plans that highlight the contributions of many different cultures and invite immigrant parents into the classroom to share information about their culture with the entire class. Those who build on students’ cultural strengths will be powerful forces for integration in the classroom and beyond.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMICS

While newcomers genuinely appreciate the employment opportunities available to them in the United States, some feel that they often have to work harder than other Americans to be treated equally, or to be recognized for their skills and knowledge. Many immigrants with training in specific fields are unable to use these skills after coming here because credentialing requirements are quite different. The American workplace is seen as both rewarding the work ethic and, at times, taking unfair advantage of workers from other countries, by sometimes giving them lower pay or fewer benefits than native-born workers might receive.

How employers treat immigrant workers has a significant impact on their integration. Some employers recognize the value of having their staffs learn both English and Spanish to foster communication within their company. Unfortunately, the low-wage jobs that

many immigrants and refugees obtain are not typically in family-friendly workplaces. Like all Americans, immigrants can only benefit from policies that allow for extra time spent volunteering in their child's school, learning English or taking a sick child to a doctor's appointment.

Being able to buy a house and own property is a lifelong dream for many immigrants. They want to understand the economic system, including banking, credit and other financial services. Many also want to gain the knowledge needed to start their own businesses. Assistance in these areas is perceived as an important part of integration into the financial reality of life in the United States. Many community organizations provide programs to immigrants to increase their financial literacy and to help them develop business plans. Banks increasingly view immigrants as an important market and are marketing their services accordingly.

HEALTH CARE

Newcomers often experience a sense of fear and frustration in trying to obtain care through a medical system that is complicated and expensive. These feelings are compounded by language and cultural barriers. While many see the quality of care in the United States as superior to what they received in their native countries, they also feel these health care resources are out-of-reach. Many immigrants believe they cannot afford basic health care because of its expense and because they lack health insurance.

At the same time, health care institutions are grappling with the issues of language interpretation and culturally competent care for immigrant families. Language interpretation in health care settings is at times provided haphazardly, if at all, typically without adequately testing the language skills of the interpreter. Sometimes janitorial staff or a child of the patient may be called upon to provide this critical service. Despite the 2000 U.S. Office of Civil Rights guidance, which stated that language interpretation must be provided to limited English speakers by institutions that receive federal funds through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, many health care institutions are not providing language

interpretation services to their patients, and if they are providing it, the quality of the interpretation may be questionable. Some larger health care institutions are recruiting bilingual providers (who are in short supply) and hiring interpreters as full-time staff.

While many cultural groups are hesitant to seek mental health care at all, those immigrants who do will find these problems greatly compounded. To add to the challenge, across cultures mental health is usually stigmatized, with some individuals unwilling to even admit they experience stress lest they are thought of as "crazy." However, even when immigrants do seek mental health care, there are significant obstacles. In many communities, few of these services are provided in languages other than English. Bilingual mental

"You know, it is very difficult to leave your country. You realize that you can't provide for your family in your community in Mexico. So you leave and take a very hard journey to the United States. You arrive here very beaten down.

**Mexican
man**

EXAMPLE: HOW DOCTORS CAN PROMOTE IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Doctors who want to promote immigrant integration should learn more about the traditional health care beliefs of their patients and take the time to learn to what extent the patient personally holds those beliefs. The course of care recommended to the patient will take these beliefs into account. Qualified interpreters should always be used. Doctors will view this cross-cultural interaction as a new opportunity to learn how to improve patient care, not as an inconvenience.

health providers are in high demand and short supply. Other mental health providers may not have cross-cultural experience to fully understand the nuances related to mental health in other cultures. Most interpreters don't have training in mental health issues and may not understand their full ethical obligations. And, little funding exists to help immigrants pay for mental health care.

PARENTING AND FAMILY ROLES

Parenting expectations in the United States differ from those in many other cultures. The attitudes and behaviors of parents, and fathers in particular, are different from what many newcomers have learned in their country of origin. People find that “machismo” is less accepted in the United States and that the involvement of fathers with their children is actively encouraged.

“Older people have left a whole life behind, so it's more difficult for them to come here. An older tree has deeper roots.”

Russian woman

Most immigrant and refugee parents settle into new communities oriented toward immediate survival: securing a job, finding a place to live, buying food and enrolling their children in school. Few are prepared for the changing family dynamics that occur as their children rapidly become more Americanized. In addition, not fully understanding the U.S. legal system, some immigrant parents fear that exerting their traditional parenting roles, which can be authoritarian and may include corporal punishment, will lead to deportation. Therefore, they may feel that they have no means to discipline their children. There also is a new set of community expectations regarding the parent's role, including a high level of involvement in schools and advocating for children in receiving basic services, such as health care. Many times parents from other cultures have not navigated these types of systems, nor have they had such expectations placed on them.

The level of respect given to adults, particularly the elderly, is very different in an American culture that tends to idolize youth. Activities that promote intergenerational dialogue, such as support groups, are critical because families frequently face a radical change in family dynamics when coming here.

While immigrant-serving organizations try to assist with this adjustment, schools, social services and members of the community can also help newcomer families adjust by explaining these new parenting expectations without being judgmental and by emphasizing approaches that are culturally appropriate. Established community members should examine how schools support immigrant parents, how social services respond to the unique circumstances of immigrant families and to what extent other mainstream institutions meet the needs of immigrant families.

Of all family members, seniors are particularly at-risk for social isolation. They are less likely to feel comfortable speaking English, their adult children often work full-time and their grandchildren's fast rate of Americanization may feel quite uncomfortable. In larger communities, some ethnic-specific services for seniors may be available through immigrant-serving organizations, but mainstream senior services may not meet their cultural needs.

LAWS, CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Early on, immigrants need help learning their new rights and a new set of laws, which is a critical element of becoming integrated into this country. Without this knowledge, newcomers are vulnerable and will not have a sense of security and belonging. Efforts to provide this kind of information are appreciated by immigrants.

Having this core information, over time, many immigrants will participate in community decisionmaking. While some people may originally have entered the United States thinking of it as a temporary step, most will decide this is their new home after a period of time and stay. It is then that citizenship becomes more attractive.

All immigrants and refugees must reside in the United States for five years and pass an English language and civics test before becoming a citizen. Immigrants and refugees feel that citizenship classes that prepare them for this test encourage people to become part of the American community. Ultimately, it is when immigrants become citizens and vote in local, state and national elections that they are truly integrated in American life. It is then that they have a full voice in democracy.

GENERAL COMMUNITY

Newcomers remember and appreciate specific acts of kindness and support they received when first arriving here. Charities, churches, resettlement agencies and other community resources are cited for the critical support services they provide to meet basic needs. Help from individual community members for interactions with doctors, language interpretation and finding job opportunities are highly valued. Moving examples of generosity, compassion and charity from neighbors, colleagues and agency representatives are common. The demonstration of support by one person or a small group goes a long way toward making newcomers feel welcome.

EXAMPLE: HOW NATIVE-BORN COMMUNITY MEMBERS CAN PROMOTE IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

An individual community member who wants to promote integration can get to know newcomer neighbors, volunteer to tutor a family in English, attend and support cultural events, and frequent ethnic restaurants and businesses.

EXAMPLE: HOW IMMIGRANTS CAN PROMOTE IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

An immigrant who wants to promote integration can volunteer in community settings such as schools or libraries to share their personal stories with native-born community members. They can use this as an opportunity to teach others about their cultures and histories. They can also tutor others in their native language.

Some immigrants note the division that can arise between new arrivals and those immigrants who have been in this country much longer. They recognize the need for immigrants themselves to be more accepting of each other and to maintain more open communication.

DISCRIMINATION

Immigrants and refugees believe that understanding and valuing other cultures is a key ingredient for real integration. They tend to accept responsibility for getting involved, for learning new ways of community life while staying connected to their own culture and for suspending judgment about the mainstream culture. However, they don't always see Americans suspending judgment toward them.

Immigrants and refugees often feel stereotyped by people and institutions in their new communities. As a result, some services are either inaccessible or staff are insensitive to the

“What I like about living here is being in a country of immigrants who came to make a difference – with a mind for making it better.”

Nigerian man

“I remember my first Christmas. A resettlement agency, a church group, came and dropped off a gift on our doorstep. I got my very first toy that day. They also gave us food and a large turkey. We had no idea what to do with the turkey, but it was wonderful.”

Vietnamese woman

“I come with all my culture. I try to keep my own values and be accepted. For someone from Africa or Asia, it’s more difficult to be accepted into a monoculture.”

Sudanese man

“Legislators, as part of their role in public service, strongly encourage immigrants to assume greater civic responsibilities. In fact, more than 100 Colorado legislators belong to refugee and immigrant families themselves.”

**Ann Morse,
National
Conference of State
Legislatures**

concerns of newcomers. Some of these newcomers eventually have positive experiences, but remember needing to “fight for what we have coming.” Many express the desire not to be judged as a group. Immigrants report that they are treated differently because of their accent or limited English proficiency. From the perception of racial profiling to what feels like heavy-handed law enforcement since September 11, immigrants too often feel singled out in their communities. Newcomers may perceive that the behavior of authorities is more a result of government policies than of community attitudes.

CROSS - CUTTING STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCING IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

How can an immigrant integration agenda be advanced? The following strategies cut across integration components and are applicable to a variety of institutions. Foundations, policymakers, immigrant-serving organizations, community groups and others can consider such strategies when trying to affect change in their communities.

PUBLIC POLICY APPROACHES

Federal policymakers focus primarily on the economic impacts of the immigrant workforce and on immigration policy. Little attention has been focused on immigrant integration. However, federal policies can significantly assist or hinder immigrant integration at the local level.

The challenges of federal immigration policy reform have left many communities unsure as to how to address the needs of undocumented immigrants, who often play a significant role in the economic and social life of their new communities. Recent federal policy proposals are now being debated to reform immigration laws to allow more legal avenues for immigrants to gain low-wage jobs. Should these or similar proposals become law, the extent to which they will or will not promote local integration is still unknown. The proposed emphasis on a temporary workforce would appear to make integration unlikely for a significant number of immigrants because of its focus on having workers return to their native countries after a certain number of years.

Enacted shortly after September 11, the USA Patriot Act, which granted the U.S. Department of Justice significantly more authority around surveillance and immigration, has left some immigrants feeling singled out and at risk, and has likely hindered community cohesion and trust between certain ethnic groups. On the other hand, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights guidance has promoted the provision of language interpretation services; however, it has not been enforced.

At the state and local level, most governments do not want to be involved in immigration policy or enforcement. However, these policymakers will likely see the benefits of a community in which immigrants are integrated rather than separated. Though immigrants and refugees cannot vote until they become citizens, many policymakers are still interested in reaching out to these populations. Since they have been elected to serve the entire community, they are accountable for policies that affect immigrants. In order to ensure that immigrant voices are heard, immigrant groups can partner with others, such as charitable or religious organizations, to educate lawmakers about different community needs. Policymakers also can be invited to speak to community-based organizations about their

proposed legislation, and in general they will be interested in working with immigrants when they share a common goal, such as addressing health care or school reform.

Current issues affecting immigrants at the state level include challenges surrounding identity cards, driver's licenses and in-state tuition for higher education. While these are all significant issues for undocumented immigrants, other state policies that are also critical for immigrants include funding for English as a Second Language programs, health care for uninsured immigrants and job training. All of these issues require new partnerships between immigrants themselves, immigrant-serving organizations and mainstream institutions that can work together to educate policymakers.

WORKING WITH MAINSTREAM INSTITUTIONS

Emphasis needs to be placed on building relationships and partnerships between mainstream institutions and immigrant-serving organizations. Immigrant-serving organizations have the trust of their constituency and have significant insights to share about approaches that work with specific ethnic groups, but they do not have the capacity to meet all their needs. Mainstream institutions, while stretched thin and struggling in many cases, often have more financial resources than immigrant-serving organizations do to meet needs, but they may need help with outreach and cultural competency as they increase efforts to work with the immigrant population. Mainstream institutions are responsible for meeting the needs of all members of their community so that equal access and opportunities are realities. They can also create safe and welcoming environments for immigrant families and promote diverse leadership within the immigrant community. Too often, one or two people find themselves as spokespeople for an entire ethnic group. More diverse opinions within immigrant groups need to be fostered.

STRENGTHENING IMMIGRANT - SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

Many of the services provided by immigrant-serving organizations are provided voluntarily, often through ethnic-based mutual assistance associations which tend to be grass roots groups with members from the same country or region of origin. Even with paid staff, many immigrant-serving organizations are small and struggle to meet the growing needs of the immigrant population. It is critical to enhance the capacity of these organizations so that they provide services strategically and link with mainstream institutions rather than “trying to do it all” alone. Capacity building should also include leadership development for individuals within the entire organization, not just executive directors, since individuals with specific ethnic expertise are in high demand and they may move on to other organizations.

Because of their strong relationships and cultural ties, immigrant-serving organizations are often in a good position to identify potential leaders in the larger immigrant population, as well as to mobilize them to influence policies and help to bring about improvements. Immigrant-serving organizations can be coached to work effectively and proactively with policymakers on policy issues, as well, and link policymakers with immigrant constituents. However, given the continual pressure to meet basic needs, without significant help, immigrant-serving organizations will struggle to proactively promote these integration strategies.

“Immigrant-serving organizations often don't have a lot of capacity, but there are a lot of expectations.”

**Amber Kahn,
Communications
Network**

“About 10 years ago, we were very good friends with a volunteer who helped us once a week – sort through mail, fill out forms, visit Denver sites. I can still remember that she came Thursdays at 6:00.”

Russian woman

“I have had the opportunity to attend different types of programs, and I learned how to be a responsible member of my community. We are trying to help each other in this community. I distributed information in my area about neighborhood meetings, housing information, etc.”

Mexican woman

THE GENERAL PUBLIC’S ROLE

Immigrant integration is aided when relationships are built between newcomers and receiving community members. Sharing stories can be an effective way to begin making connections between these two groups. Facilitated discussions between communities and institutions can help to identify issues and solutions in a supportive manner that brings people together. Cultural expressions that celebrate ethnic art or music, for example, are also important in communities. This need not mean adding an array of new cultural events but can be achieved by incorporating other cultures into existing fairs or festivals.

There are many structured and unstructured volunteer opportunities available for local residents to help newcomers integrate. This includes everything from hosting a refugee family, tutoring in English, helping with completing paperwork and providing simple emotional support. When residents of the receiving community offer small kindnesses, like helping someone navigate a new system or saying hello in their native language, most immigrants are touched by this and feel welcome.

FAMILY/PEER NETWORK OF IMMIGRANTS

Immigrant families who are resettled can have a significant role in educating newer immigrant families about roles and norms, values and laws in their new community. They can also connect new immigrants to community resources and provide emotional support. Those immigrants who are more integrated can serve as mentors and role models to others in the community. This can happen formally or informally. These immigrants should be encouraged to participate in mainstream as well as immigrant-serving organizations, because they have critical perspectives to share. And they can help mainstream institutions understand cultural issues and help them build trust in the immigrant community. Also, immigrants who are integrated can help immigrant-serving organizations ensure that their services continue to be in alignment with the true needs of the ethnic community.

Having a peer network in the community also helps newcomers maintain a connection to their own culture and helps them find appropriate ways to pass their culture down to their children. Extended families and peer networks play an important part in allowing them to maintain their identities.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

While immigrant integration may sound like a unifying concept that brings community members together, depending on how it is approached, it can resonate in communities or it can create further factions. Change is often uncomfortable for individuals and communities. Those who feel that change is occurring too quickly or that it is extreme may have a negative response to attempts to advance immigrant integration.

Immigrant integration efforts start with a specific institution or community, but comprehensive efforts often involve building coalitions. In such coalition-building efforts, there is always a risk that smaller institutions will be overshadowed by larger institutions, which may have more influence but not always more insight. Situations that create infighting between organizations is always a danger and can harm the community. From the beginning of the coalition-building process, incorporating meeting facilitation by a neutral facilitator

and a full discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each member of the coalition will help to mitigate these problems.

Communicating about immigrant integration also requires care and planning, especially because of the highly political environment around immigration policy. Some media will emphasize the negative aspects of this work, and a backlash can develop against immigrants if messages about immigrant integration are too extreme and if they somehow imply that there are not other important community needs. Local focus groups can help coalitions refine messages for their community audiences and decide how to best frame integration work. Crisis plans can be created for sensitive issues and coalitions can work together to make sure that each member's communications efforts are aligned and effective and not unwittingly undermining the group's effort.

For most audiences, messages should not focus solely on the rights of immigrants, but should also emphasize their responsibilities and contributions to communities. Over-emphasizing the needs of immigrants will likely be detrimental as significant needs exist around poverty, education and discrimination for Americans who have lived in the United States a lifetime. Coalitions that work across communities of color and across income levels can build trust between groups and strengthen the likelihood of achieving immigrant integration. They will be in much stronger positions to communicate about their effort.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Immigrants themselves have a broad vision of integration and how they can feel a part of community life. It has many components and aspects to it, but the process will be highly individualized. What can community institutions do to make immigrant integration a faster, smoother, less painful transition for both individual immigrant families and for the broader community?

Recommendations for community groups, including policymakers, community-based organizations, mainstream institutions and coalitions:

1. Where possible, communities should address the issue of immigrant integration holistically and comprehensively.
2. Begin addressing an integration process by bringing groups together, creating links and building coalitions between community members and institutions. Create safe and welcoming environments within public institutions and encourage outreach.
3. Provide opportunities to share stories and develop relationships between newcomers and more established residents. Schools, libraries and local coffee shops can be good venues for these activities.
4. Dispel myths and provide information about community resources. Support language learning, which includes supporting learning English for immigrants and refugees and learning foreign languages for the native-born.
5. Provide language access at the same time as English language proficiency is emphasized.
6. Immigrant-serving organizations should be encouraged to coach and partner with mainstream institutions to help with this outreach and to help them better meet the needs of immigrant families.
7. Because of their different perspectives, encourage both local governments and businesses to become involved in integration work. Help them understand how these efforts promote community cohesion and a stronger workforce.

“The tensions of immigrant integration are inherent; they are the tensions of democracy.”

**Craig McGarvey,
Philanthropic
Consultant**

8. Emphasize leadership development and training that includes skill building, fostering relationships, mentoring and creating cultural broker positions.
9. Enforce anti-discrimination laws. Hold institutions and communities to high standards.

Recommendations for foundations:

1. Simply by expressing immigrant integration as a priority, foundations can build credibility for the concept in local communities. Foundations can increase awareness of integration as a two-way street by bringing the issue into mainstream America and popularizing it.
2. Educate local, state and federal policymakers about the immigrant integration framework and its potential for strengthening communities. Public policy that supports principles of integration can achieve change at a large scale.
3. Consider how an integration philosophy can be incorporated into current grantmaking strategies.
4. Convene and facilitate community workshops so that local groups can discuss what integration means to them and how they might achieve it.
5. Incorporate newcomers as stakeholders. The process of planning for their futures and that of future waves of immigrants is itself a step toward integration.
6. Be a neutral party to bring coalitions together around the concept of immigrant integration.
7. Find avenues and promote communications that help immigrant voices be heard in the broader community.

“When I traveled to Mexico and I saw a car with Colorado plates, my heart was with them. I feel I’m part of that community.”

**Mexican
woman**

With an aging workforce and a steady national birthrate, future demographic projections indicate that the numbers of immigrants across the country will continue to be significant. By being proactive and planning for immigrant integration now, institutions and community members will be much more likely to find themselves in strong, cohesive communities in the years to come. That can only benefit everyone.

REFERENCES

- Bach R. *Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in U.S. Communities*. New York, NY: Ford Foundation; 1993.
- Building the New American Community Symposium. *Perspectives on Integration: Why, Why Now, and What We Hope to Accomplish*. Washington, DC: Building the New American Community Symposium; 2000.
- Carnegie Corporation of New York. *The House We All Live In: A Report on Civic Integration*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York; 2003.
- Garson J, Neymarc K. Integrating Immigrants Into Urban Life. *OECD Observer*. 1995;2:31.
- Goldfarb E, Berger A. *Executive Summary: Opinion Leader Response to "We the People."* Unpublished; 2003.
- Hing BO. Answering challenges of the new immigrant-driven diversity: Considering integration strategies. *Brandeis Law Journal*. 2002;40:861-907.
- Little Hoover Commission. *We the People: Helping Newcomers Become Californians*. Sacramento, CA: Little Hoover Commission, 2002.
- McConnell S. Americans no more? *National Review*. 1997;49:30-35.
- National Conference of State Legislatures. (2000). *Building the New American Community L.A. Symposium on Integration*. Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2000.
- National Immigration Forum. *Together in our Differences: How Newcomers and Established Residents Are Rebuilding American Communities, Executive Summary*. Washington, DC: National Immigration Forum, 1995.
- New Iowans, University of Northern Iowa. *Welcoming New Iowans*. Cedar Falls, IA: University of Northern Iowa, 2002.
- Papademetriou DG. *Policy Considerations for Immigrant Integration*. October 2003. Available at <http://www.migrationinformation.org>.
- Penninx R. *Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions and the State*. October 2003. Available at <http://www.migrationinformation.org>.
- Public Agenda, Carnegie Corporation of New York. *Now That I'm Here: What American Immigrants Have to Say About Life in the U.S. Today*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2002.

Weil P, Crowley J. Integration in theory and practice: a comparison of France and Britain. *West European Politics*. 1994;17:110-117.

Zellerbach Family Fund. (2000). *Immigration and Immigrant Policies in 2000: Building Welcoming and Productive Communities*. San Francisco, CA: Zellerbach Family Foundation, 2000.

Zimmerman W. Teaching immigrants English: Growing needs and shrinking resources. *Migration World Magazine*. 1994;22:13.

APPENDICES

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION SUMMIT THE COLORADO TRUST OCTOBER 23, 2003

FACILITATOR

Derek Okubo

Vice President
National Civic League
Denver, Colorado

LIST OF SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

Patricia Brewster-Wilke

Co-Director
Rural Communities Resource Center
Yuma, Colorado

Randy Capps

Research Associate
Urban Institute
Washington, DC

Barbara Carr

Colorado State Refugee Coordinator
Colorado Department of Human Services
Denver, Colorado

Alison De Lucca

Program Consultant
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants
and Refugees
Los Angeles, California

Mariana Enriquez-Olmos

Evaluator
McREL
Denver, Colorado

Richard Garcia

Executive Director
Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition
Westminster, Colorado

Chris Gibbons

Director of Business/Industry Affairs
City of Littleton
Littleton, Colorado

Bill Ong Hing

Professor
University of California, Davis
Davis, California

Arturo Jimenez

Counselor at Law
Denver, Colorado

Senait Ketema

Social Case Worker Supervisor
Denver Department of Human Services
Denver, Colorado

Amber Khan

Executive Director
The Communications Network
Washington, DC

Maciek Mabeny

Case Manager, Colorado Refugee Services Program
Colorado Department of Human Services
Denver, Colorado

Craig McGarvey

Philanthropic Consultant
San Francisco, California

Ann Morse

Program Director, Immigrant Policy Project
National Conference of State Legislatures
Washington, DC

Mar Munoz-Visoso
Secretary for Hispanic Ministry
Catholic Archdiocese of Denver
Denver, Colorado

Maro Zagoras
President
Desired Outcomes
Silt, Colorado

Max Niedzwiecki
Director of Programs and
Resource Development
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Washington, DC

COLORADO TRUST STAFF PARTICIPANTS

Carol Breslau
Senior Program Officer

Soo-Jin Yoon
Evaluation Officer

Susan Downs-Karkos
Program Officer

SPRING INSTITUTE FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING STAFF PARTICIPANTS

Myrna Ann Adkins
President

Joe Wisman-Horther
Chief Operating Officer

Rich Wildau
SIRFI Project Director

THE COLORADO TRUST'S IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION SUMMIT
OCTOBER 23, 2003
8:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

OUTCOMES

- Define what we mean by “immigrant integration”
- Provide direction as the prioritized activities to achieve immigrant integration
- Identify ways to measure progress in the area of immigrant integration

AGENDA

- 8:00 Breakfast and Welcome
- 8:10 Background – Why We Are Here
- 8:25 Introduction Icebreaker
- Name and organization
 - History of your name
- 8:45 Defining Immigrant Integration
- Purpose: Lay a common foundation on which the discussion will be based
- What are the ingredients of immigrant integration?
 - List and discuss
- 9:15 Break
- 9:30 Discussion on the Activities Required to Achieve Immigrant Integration
- Purpose: Produce the first cut of required activities to achieve immigrant integration
- Based on our common definition and experience in the field, what activities could be implemented to move toward the achievement of immigrant integration?
 - Small groups – using a provided worksheet that incorporates the areas of policy, organization/institutions, peers/family, community and individuals, participants will brainstorm and prioritize the most important activities to achieve immigrant integration
- 10:30 Small Group Report Out and Discussion
- Purpose: Produce a prioritized list of activities to achieve immigrant integration
- Small groups report out
 - Label each flip chart sheet with the logic model areas; list the prioritized activities that emerge from each group
 - Based on the prioritized activities, receive advise on where to start
- 11:15 Break
- 11:30 Discussion: The Role of Philanthropy
- Purpose: Discuss potential roles that philanthropy could play with these activities
- Large group discussion: What is the role philanthropy could play to help achieve immigrant integration?

- Noon Lunch and Conversation
- 12:45 Review the Morning Accomplishments and the Afternoon Agenda
- 12:50 Measuring Our Effectiveness
Purpose: Identifying potential indicators/measures to gauge our effectiveness with our prioritized activities
- Using the prioritized activity list from the logic model, ask the group: What are the benchmarks? What would we measure to gauge progress in these areas over time?
 - Over what range of time should we expect to see change?
 - What would be happening to indicate change in qualitative areas such as “a sense of belonging?”
- 1:50 Discussion on Unintended Consequences
Purpose: Based on the experience of participants in addressing immigrant issues, receive insight and advice on things to do and things to avoid
- Given the current political and economic environment, what are the potential unintended consequences of addressing immigrant integration?
- 2:50 Session Evaluation/Closing Remarks
- 3:00 Adjourn



**THE COLORADO TRUST
1600 SHERMAN STREET
DENVER, CO 80203-1604
303-837-1200
TOLL FREE 888-847-9140
FAX 303-839-9034
WWW.COLORADOTRUST.ORG**