NATIONAL LEAGUE of CITIES | CENTER FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND RECENT IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

A planning guide for local officials and other community leaders

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A planning guide for local officials and other community leaders

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Foreword

We are pleased to present, "Civic Engagement and Recent Immigrant Communities," a discussion guide written and published as a service to NLC member cities and all municipalities. This guide presents local officials with the first steps and directions for developing or re-establishing efforts toward integrating immigrants into the civic life of the city. It provides guidance for conducting meetings with small groups of local leaders that are representative of the many cultural and ethnic facets of the community. It includes suggested agendas, background materials, planning considerations, and successful formats for civic engagement.

While local officials and their staff often seek input from the community in developing priorities and addressing problems, it often takes additional resources and time to communicate effectively with recent immigrants. Civic participation can be a daunting experience for immigrants, since they may speak a different language, and their experiences with government in their countries of origin may not have been productive. Local governments may have to use different strategies for outreach efforts in order to build trust with recent immigrants; these strategies should also work to strengthen relationships between different immigrant communities, and to improve civic engagement generally.

This guide was developed through the collaboration of NLC's Democratic Governance project and the Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration Program (MAII). It is part of a broad strategy by NLC to help cities encourage diversity and inclusiveness by making City Hall the model.

"Civic Engagement and Recent Immigrant Communities" was made possible by a grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. It was written by Matt Leighninger, executive director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium and a long-time consultant to NLC in its democratic governance work.

NLC recognizes the members of the City Future's Panel on Democratic Governance for their input and support to this work. NLC staff that guided the work includes Bonnie Mann, project manager, Democratic Governance Project, Ricardo Gambetta, program manager, Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration, and Jamie Durana, program associate, Inclusive Communities. The contributors would also like to thank Lara Malakoff, senior associate for outreach, for her editorial assistance, and Alexander Clarke, manager of creative design and production, who designed and managed the production of the guide.

We welcome comments and questions from readers, because we are committed to continually improving how we assist municipal officials, local governments, and others concerned with creating more inclusiveness in the civic life of our cities.

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| Getting started with your planning effort: How to use this guide

Why talk about the civic engagement of recent immigrants?

For any community, immigration can be a challenge and a great opportunity. How local governments deal with this issue can have a major impact on the political climate, school system, public services and economic prosperity. Engaging recent immigrants, and strengthening relationships, can have a number of benefits, including:

- Educating recent immigrants about their rights and responsibilities, and about the services provided by local government;
- Educating local government about the needs, goals, cultural traditions and patterns of communication of recent immigrant groups;
- Fostering communication and helping to resolve tensions and divisions between different groups of people in the community;
- Creating an environment where new leaders will emerge;
- Encouraging recent immigrants to contribute their own time and skills to solving public problems.

Many local officials who reach out to recent immigrant communities also see this work as an essential public responsibility that comes with serving in elected office. They argue that in addition to the benefits listed above, civic engagement is simply the right thing for public officials to do.

To figure out the best approach to strengthening relationships with recent immigrant communities, it is important to understand the changes taking place in the city, consider some potential goals for civic engagement, and decide how different leaders and groups might contribute to the work. This guide is intended for use in two planning meetings with a small group (eight to 25) of local leaders. The agenda, discussion questions and process information will help the group set goals, consider different formats and strategies, and think about how they might work together.

These meetings will help form an alliance of community leaders around these issues. This group can be more than an advisory committee that helps develop engagement strategies; the group members can help implement those strategies by making their own contributions to the public engagement of recent immigrants. Keep in mind **that this guide is a template**; no one knows your community better than you and the other people who live there. You should feel free to adapt the suggestions in this guide to fit the needs, goals, and circumstances of your city.

Steps for planning the meetings

1. Develop an invite list

These meetings will be most productive if they include a range of people who have various kinds of experience with these issues. Consider inviting:

- Local officials (the mayor, city manager or administrator, one-to-two key council members, liaison to the mayor, or city manager);
- School administrators, school board members, principals or other representatives from the school system;
- Leaders of formal or informal immigrant groups;
- Faith leaders;
- Neighborhood leaders;
- Representatives of nonprofit organizations that serve recent immigrants;
- Businesspeople who employ recent immigrants, and/or union leaders who have members who are recent immigrants;
- Representatives of other key civic organizations.

It is important that your group include some **leaders who are themselves recent immigrants.** And it is likely that the recent immigrant "community" in your city is in fact a number of different communities — different sets of people who came from different countries and/or at different times. Local officials are not always aware of the full variety and complexity of immigrant communities, and of the tensions that sometimes exist between them. It is a good idea to explore some of these factors informally, perhaps through conversations with other leaders, to ensure that your invitation list includes a range of different voices from these communities.

2. Think about how to deal with language barriers

Ensure that you are using the appropriate language in your invitation letter. Ask the people you are inviting if they would be more comfortable with an interpreter present and, if necessary, identify an interpreter. (See also Appendix 1, "Language barriers, translation and interpretation.")

3. Prepare a demographic fact sheet

Assemble relevant demographic information on how the population of the community is changing. Put the data on a brief handout to distribute at the meeting; use Appendix 2 as a model. (Find out if you need to have the handout translated, or if an English version is sufficient.)

4. Identify facilitators for small-group discussion

Identify one-to-four facilitators (one for every six-to-eight meeting participants). The role of the facilitator in the meetings should be to help the group use the discussion materials, to help them set and keep ground rules, and to monitor the time. The facilitator should introduce himself or herself like

every other participant, but then focus on the process rather than contributing his or her own opinions and ideas. If possible, find a facilitator(s) who has some experience with this role.

5. Identify a recorder, or note-taker, for the meetings

Make it clear to your note-taker that the goal is to summarize the main ideas from the meetings, not compile a record of what every participant said. Use the sample form in Appendix 3 as a guide. At the end of each session, the facilitator can ask the recorder for a very concise summary, and then ask the rest of the group if the notes reflect the discussion relatively accurately.

6. Think about what you want to happen after the meetings

If one of your goals is to assemble a committee or task force that can continue planning and implementing a civic engagement strategy, consider ending the second meeting by asking the participants if they are willing to join such a group. But regardless of how you want to move forward, it may be important to send the message that "**this is just the beginning**" — these meetings are just the start of the city's commitment to the civic engagement of recent immigrants, and the active help, support and leadership of people outside local government will be critical to achieving the civic engagement goals set by the group.

| Agenda 1: Making connections and setting goals

To make the conversation as productive and meaningful as possible, it is important to limit the number of people in each discussion. ***If there are more than 10 people attending the meeting, divide the participants randomly into smaller groups*** (Six-to-eight participants in each discussion works best).

Part 1 – Ground rules and introductions *(allow 30 minutes)*

Setting a few ground rules for the session helps things run more smoothly, and gives people a sense that they "own" the discussion. Here are some suggested ground rules:

- Give everyone a chance to speak.
- Be courteous and respectful — this includes your body language as well as what you say.
- If you are offended or uncomfortable, say so, and say why.
- It's OK to disagree, but stick to the issues and ideas — don't make it personal.
- Speak for yourself, not for others.
- Personal stories stay in the group, unless *everyone* agrees that they can be shared.
- Everyone shares responsibility for making the conversation productive.
- Turn off cell phones.
- Listen actively — no side conversations.

Tips for the facilitator

- Welcome everyone.
- Explain that you will be facilitating the discussion — **not** joining in with your own opinions.
- The meeting is divided into four parts — use the time suggested for each as a guide.
- Ask the recorder to try to capture **only** the main ideas from the session — use the sample recording form (Appendix 3) as a guide.

Discussion questions:

1. *(For the whole group)* Do any of these ground rules seem helpful? Are there others you would add?

2. Introductions *(For each participant in the group, in turn: two-to-three minutes each)*

    - Introduce yourself to the group. Tell the group a little about where you grew up.
    - How long have you lived in this community, and how did you come to live here?

Part 2 – Reviewing some of the changes taking place in the city *(30 minutes)*

It is always important to understand how the community is changing, and to learn more about the groups of people who have arrived most recently.

Discussion questions:

1. Do you have any reactions to the information on the demographic fact sheet — anything that surprised you? Particularly interested you? Confirmed what you already knew?
2. In what parts of the community are these changes most evident?
3. What more do we need to know (i.e. about cultures, or languages, or tensions between different groups, or economic conditions) to get a better picture of the recent immigration to this city?

Part 3 – Setting goals for civic engagement *(45 minutes)*

> **Tips for the facilitator**
>
> - Give people a few minutes to read through the list of goals, OR ask a participant to read them aloud.

In any civic engagement initiative, it is important to think carefully about everyone's interests and goals. Why is it beneficial for the community to have people involved in public life? Why is it beneficial for people to be involved? One common mistake is to focus on the engagement goals of local government, and not take into account why recent immigrants might want to be engaged.

Why is it important for people to be engaged? Take a look at the goals below. Do you agree with any of them? Some of them? All of them?

Goal 1 – To inform recent immigrants about their rights and responsibilities.

In a democracy, it is essential that people know their rights and responsibilities. Recent immigrants are often discriminated against, and they are especially vulnerable to fraud and other kinds of crime. They also may not be aware of some of their civic responsibilities, from legal requirements to the informal expectations people have of one another. Engaging them will help them learn their protections and responsibilities.

Goal 2 – To help recent immigrants feel welcomed and invited into the community.

Cities are more successful, both socially and economically, when people feel like they belong. For all kinds of reasons, recent immigrants are particularly likely to feel as if the city is really not welcoming or open to them; engagement can help change the perception and reality of openness.

Goal 3 – To help recent immigrants access the public services they need, and help agencies understand how to improve those services.

Cities function better when public services — meaning everything from schools to social welfare programs — are provided efficiently and effectively. For this to happen, the people being served need to know about the services available to them, and the people providing those services need to understand the needs, concerns, and skills of those being served. Engaging recent immigrants can establish productive two-way communication about how to improve schools and public services.

Goal 4 – To tap into the power of recent immigrants (and other residents) to help solve public problems.

Recent immigrants bring many skills, talents, and rich cultural traditions to the city. Engagement can bring those assets into play by giving people better opportunities to solve public problems and make improvements to their neighborhoods and city. Asking recent immigrants and other residents to take a hand in problem-solving can lead to better, more sustainable solutions and reduce the strain on government.

Goal 5 – To help local government develop smarter, more broadly supported public policies.

Engagement of all kinds of people is essential for ensuring that public policies reflect what residents want. If people aren't engaged in policymaking, they may not understand the trade-offs and limitations inherent in public decisions — and public officials may not have the information they need to ensure that policies are effective. Engagement can be a way of gathering input from recent immigrants and other residents, and ensuring that people actively support the resulting policies.

Goal 6 – To encourage recent immigrants to become naturalized U.S. citizens, and to vote.

Voting is the single most critical right and responsibility for American citizens. Engaging recent immigrants will encourage them to become citizens, and to vote. Voting will in turn give them a greater stake in the community, and help ensure that governments are responsive to their interests.

Discussion questions:

1. Which of these goals (if any) reflect what you think?
2. Are there other important goals that aren't on the list?
3. What are the overlaps among these goals:
    - Which goals (if any) are most important to recent immigrants?
    - Which are most important to local government?
    - Which are most important to residents who are not recent immigrants?
    - Which are most important to other organizations and groups in the city?

Part 4 – Wrapping up and looking forward to the next meeting (15 minutes)

Questions for summarizing the discussion:

1. [Ask the recorder for a very brief summary of the main ideas from the meeting] Does this summary seem about right?
2. Were there any other insights or ideas that seem particularly important?
3. The next meeting will focus on developing a shared strategy for civic engagement. What do you think will be important to think about, or find out more about, in preparation for that session?

Tips for the facilitator

- *If there was more than one small-group discussion in the meeting*, ask a representative from each group to give a quick recap of their discussion, particularly the top goals of their group.
- Ask for questions or comments from the other group(s).

| Agenda 2: Developing a shared strategy for civic engagement

The purpose of this meeting is to begin developing a shared strategy that reflects the goals set at the last session. If you had more than one small group at the previous meeting, it will work best if the groups remain together for this session. If you have more than two-to-three newcomers who did not attend the first meeting, form a new small group from these participants and ask them to start with Agenda 1.

Part 1 – Picking up from last meeting *(allow 15 minutes)*

Discussion question:

1. What are the most important ideas from the last meeting that you want to bring into the discussion today?

Tips for the facilitator

- Review the ground rules from the previous meeting, and ask if the group wants to change or add to the list.
- Ask any newcomers to introduce themselves, then quickly provide the names of the other participants.
- The meeting is divided into four parts — use the time suggested for each as a guide.

Part 2 – Exploring different civic engagement opportunities *(45 minutes)*

There are many different formats and processes for building civic engagement and public life. Each of them has a unique set of strengths and limitations, and some are generally more difficult to implement than others.

Here are some of the most common formats for engagement, along with some suggestions about how they can work best, and some other factors to consider (in many cases, these factors may suggest ways to improve the format, or combine different formats):

Giving people a chance to address an issue: Events, meetings and projects that help people deal with a particular problem or challenge

These efforts involve large, diverse numbers of people in talking about public issues, and considering a range of options for what should be done. They usually rely on group process techniques like impartial facilitation, discussion materials and ground rules set by the participants. They are intended to help the community consider a range of views or options. They work best when:

- They build on, and connect to, neighborhood associations and other groups that are intended to be more permanent hubs for public life.
- Officials report back clearly and regularly on what they have heard from residents and how that input was incorporated into policy.
- Local media understands the intent of the project, and supports it by providing fair, balanced information on the issues and coverage of the outcomes.

- There is a clear message that participants can help implement solutions, not just make recommendations to government — and a good process for helping people move from discussion to action.

Factors to consider: While they may work well for addressing an issue (achieving all six goals listed in the previous meeting), they may only do so on a temporary basis — all the benefits often begin to fade once the project is over. They are usually also difficult and time-consuming to organize.

Neighborhood associations

These are geographically based groups that usually hold monthly meetings and are governed by a board or steering committee. They work best when:

- They have some sort of staffing (either a director paid by the association, a city employee or a highly committed volunteer);
- The director and other leaders have the skills to recruit members, facilitate discussions and design meetings;
- They have some regular, legitimate role in local policymaking;
- They have access to, and support from, middle-level city employees, such as police lieutenants and planners;
- They engage people in action as well as discussion.

Factors to consider: If they don't have adequate staffing, skills and connections, neighborhood associations are often small, homogeneous and overly reliant on a handful of volunteers. They may not engage recent immigrants at all, and they may not achieve any of the goals listed in the previous session.

Local boards and commissions

These are official advisory bodies, usually appointed by local government; members are often chosen according to how well they represent a particular community. They work best when:

- Members have the skills to recruit members, facilitate discussions, and design meetings;
- Members can rely on other groups, such as neighborhood associations or groups set up specifically for recent immigrants, to help them convene residents;
- They have some regular, legitimate role in local policymaking.

Factors to consider: Boards and commissions can provide input to local government (Goal 5 from the previous session), but since they usually engage only small numbers of people, they may have difficulty achieving the other goals.

Social and cultural events

These include block parties, festivals, fairs and many other events designed primarily to celebrate community. They work best when:

- They connect people with other opportunities to participate in public life;
- They incorporate some form of action to solve public problems or build a local asset.
- They are designed to raise awareness of the cultural diversity in the community.

Factors to consider: Depending on how they're organized, they may help get some important information to residents (helping to achieve Goals 1 and 2, for example), but because they don't create two-way communication, they may not be a good fit for the other goals.

Public meetings

Meaning the official proceedings of the city council, school board, zoning committee, or other decision-making bodies. They usually have a highly regimented agenda and format, designed to help the group formulate policy. Residents usually have at least some opportunity to voice their opinions. They work best when:

- They are supplemented by, and closely connected to, more interactive meetings that allow people (usually in small groups) to learn, deliberate and decide what they think about policy questions;
- They can rely on other groups, such as neighborhood associations or groups set up specifically for recent immigrants, which provide these more interactive opportunities;
- Officials report back clearly and regularly on what they have heard from residents and how that input was incorporated into policy.

Factors to consider: Because the rigid format of most public meetings doesn't allow much meaningful interaction, they can be highly frustrating to both residents and public officials. They usually aren't intended to achieve any of the goals listed in the previous session.

Citizen's academies

These are training programs that provide information and skills to emerging neighborhood and community leaders. They work best when:

- They provide the participants with key civic skills, such as recruitment and facilitation, that help them mobilize residents and influence government;
- Public employees and officials take part (sometimes as trainers, sometimes as trainees) so that they learn the same skills and build relationships with the other participants;
- They build on, and connect to, neighborhood associations and other groups that are intended to be more permanent hubs for public life.

Factors to consider: If citizen's academies are framed merely as information sessions on "how government works," then they may educate residents (Goals 1 and 6, and to some extent Goal 3) without necessarily improving how government works, or how residents and government work together.

Discussion questions:

1. Do you have experience with any of the formats listed here? Do the descriptions, and bulleted items, and "factors to consider" reflect your experiences?
2. Are there other formats, not listed here, that might be useful?
3. Think about the goals that seemed most important to you in the last meeting. Which of these formats seem to be the best fit for those goals?

Part 3 – Working together to strengthen civic engagement *(60 minutes)*

There are no "cookie cutter" answers for how to strengthen civic engagement: every community should come up with ideas and plans that fit their needs and goals. To help people think creatively, ***divide the group into twos or threes for the next 30 minutes.***

Discussion questions for each group of two-to-three people:

1. Which formats seem most valuable to you? How might they be modified or strengthened to fit the goals that seem most important?
2. How might these formats be combined, or used together as part of an overall strategy?
3. How can the burdens and tasks of this strategy be shared among different groups and organizations?

Part 4 – Wrapping up the discussion

Tips for the facilitator

- Bring everyone back together for the final 30 minutes.
- Ask each group of two-to-three people to give a five-minute report on what they've come up with.
- Keep time carefully – give each presenter a one-minute warning.

Questions for summarizing the discussion:

1. What are you taking away from these meetings?
2. What opportunities do you see for strengthening civic engagement in this community?
3. Would you be willing to help contribute to civic engagement efforts that come out of these meetings?
4. Who else needs to be at the table? What other groups, or recent immigrant communities, should be represented in discussions about how to move forward on these issues?

Tips for the facilitator

- Give the message that "**this is just the beginning**" — these meetings are just the start of the city's commitment to the civic engagement of recent immigrants, and the active help, support, and leadership of people outside local government will be critical to achieving the civic engagement goals set by the group.
- Provide a clear picture of how you see the next steps in this work.
- Ask for suggestions on those next steps.
- Thank everyone for their participation and leadership.

| Appendix 1: Language barriers, translation, and interpretation

Language barriers are significant obstacles to building a stronger relationship between residents and local government. Most immigrants are highly motivated to learn English, but family and work obligations limit their time to study. Reaching out in languages other than English is not just a convenience for these families, it is a sign of the city's commitment to communicating with them.

Language translation and interpretation are complex tasks, and require knowledge, skills and some basic resources. Translation usually refers to the conversion of written materials from one language to another; interpretation is the oral restating in one language of what has been said in another. Translators and interpreters must not only exchange one set of words for another, but also convey their full intended meaning.

There are numerous problems with using untrained interpreters/translators, including the potential for miscommunication, errors and serious public relations issues. There is a difference between the ad hoc interpreter/translator (a bilingual lay person) and the trained professional. To be fully qualified, interpreters and translators must have:

- Fluency in at least two languages;
- Some college education;
- Basic training in the field;
- Professional accreditation, such as an official certification from the American Association of Translators and Interpreters.

In many instances, city officials are unable to use professional interpreters and translators because of cost limitations, and bilingual city staff members end up serving in these roles. It is important to ensure that these city employees are fully bilingual and culturally competent for these tasks.

| Appendix 2: Sample demographic handout

Demographic data for Grand Forks, N.D.

General Population Characteristics:

Total Population	50,778
Male	26,200
Female	24,578
18+ years	41,046
Civilian labor force	29,978
Unemployed	1,188
Mean family income	$ 77,817
Percent high school graduate or higher (in pop. 25+ years)	92.1%
Percent Bachelor's degree or higher (in pop. 25+ years)	38.3%

Source: American Community Survey 2006-2008, US Census Bureau

Foreign-born Population Characteristics:

Total foreign-born population	1,193
Naturalized citizens	449
Not a US citizen	744
Entered the US in 2000 or after	569
Entered the US before 2000	624

Source: American Community Survey 2006-2008, US Census Bureau

| Appendix 3: Sample note-taking form

Remember: Main themes and ideas only — don't try to capture every word.

Main areas of agreement:

Main areas of disagreement:

Action ideas:

| Resources

Examples of local immigrant integration efforts:

Atlanta
New American Service Program
www.btgonline.org

Boston
Mayor's Office of New Bostonians
www.cityofboston.gov/newbostonians

Cape Coral, Delray Beach, Gainesville, Lakeland and Lauderdale Lakes, Fla.
Citizen's Academies
www.floridaleagueofcities.com/Assets/Files/Publications/CitizensAcademyGuide.pdf

Charlotte, N.C.
Latin American Coalition
www.latinamericancoalition.org

Chicago
Pan-African Association
www.panafricanassociation.org

Dallas
Catholic Charities of Dallas
www.catholiccharitiesdallas.org

Fort Wayne, Ind.
Refugee Resource Center
http://www.cityoffortwayne.org/one-stop-for-community-services-for-refugees.html

Houston
Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs
www.houstontx.gov/moira/index.html

Indianapolis, Ind.
Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs and related initiatives
http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/2480CFC94CAB423AA6234B9735ADA148/MAIIAmericanCities_Indianapolis.pdf

Littleton, Colo.
Immigrant Integration Initiative
www.connectingimmigrants.org

Louisville, Ky.
Metro Office for International Affairs
www.louisvilleky.gov/International/

Minneapolis
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, Park Avenue Foundation/Volunteer Lawyers Network
Walk-in Legal Clinic
www.mnadvocates.org

St. Paul, Minn.
Jane Addams School for Democracy
www.jas.org

San Antonio
Immigrant Population Initiatives
www.sanantonio.gov/comminit

Seattle
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
www.acrs.org

Organizations working with local governments on the civic engagement of recent immigrant populations:

Cities of Migration
www.citiesofmigration.ca

The Collaborative Governance Initiative of the Institute for Local Government (California)
www.ca-ilg.org
See in particular:
"A Local Official's Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement"
www.ca-ilg.org/immigrant
"Ten Ideas to Encourage Immigrant Engagement"
www.ca-ilg.org/engagementpubs

The Colorado Trust (Immigrant Integration Initiative)
http://www.coloradotrust.org/grants/show-grant?id=51

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)
www.naleo.org

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
www.nclr.org

National League of Cities, Municipal Action for Immigrant Program
http://www.nlc.org/resources_for_cities/PROGRAMS___SERVICES/MAII//aboutmaii.aspx

Organizations that provide civic engagement resources:

AmericaSpeaks
www.americaspeaks.org

Deliberative Democracy Consortium
www.deliberative-democracy.net

e-democracy.org
www.e-democracy.org

Everyday Democracy
www.everyday-democracy.org

International City/County Management Association
www.icma.org

Involve
www.involve.org.uk

National Civic League
www.ncl.org

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation
www.thataway.org

National League of Cities
www.nlc.org

Participedia
www.participedia.net

Public Agenda
www.publicagenda.org

| About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for more than 1,600 member cities and the 49 state municipal leagues, representing 19,000 cities and towns and more than 218 million Americans.

Through its Center for Research and Innovation, NLC provides research and analysis on key topics and trends important to cities, creative solutions to improve quality of life in communities, inspiration and ideas for local officials to use in tackling tough issues, and opportunities for city leaders to connect with peers, share experiences and learn about innovative approaches in cities. Center for Research and Innovation projects include Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration and Democratic Governance.

Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration

Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration (MAII) is focused on promoting civic engagement and naturalization among immigrant communities in cities throughout the United States. MAII has two components to support these efforts: (1) the NewCITYzen Naturalization Campaign, which includes materials to help city officials launch naturalization awareness campaigns in their communities; and (2) the CITYzenship Community Initiative, through which MAII provides technical assistance to promote civic engagement at the local level.

In addition, the project will establish a knowledge-sharing network across different cities and organizations. The goal of MAII is to be a resource for municipal officials and community-based organizations who seek assistance in addressing immigrant integration challenges in their communities. MAII seeks to establish international connections between cities in order to further the goal of developing a knowledge-sharing network. Promoting these international connections ensures that NLC member cities are able to draw ideas and best practices from a wider pool of examples of successful immigrant integration initiatives. The opportunity to participate is open to all NLC member cities.

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Democratic Governance

NLC has many years of experience working in the field of democratic governance. NLC has used its unique position to employ effective techniques to encourage and enable city officials in dialogue and inquiry around various forms of civic engagement, consensus building, collaboration and participatory practices.

NLC established a City Futures Panel on Democratic Governance to support members seeking to engage citizens more effectively in responding to their cities' most daunting challenges and promising opportunities. Democratic Governance is an area that can serve to foster communication and collaboration across all areas of local governance — budgets and finance, race and human relations, transportation and infrastructure, community and economic development and education. By exploring,

understanding and articulating this inter-connectedness, democratic strategies can help local officials strengthen the position of cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance.

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| About the Deliberative Democracy Consortium (DDC)

The Deliberative Democracy Consortium (DDC) is an alliance of the major organizations and leading scholars working in the field of deliberation and public engagement. The DDC represents more than 50 foundations, nonprofit organizations, and universities, collaborating to support research activities and advance democratic practice, in North America and around the world.

Matt Leighninger is the Executive Director of the DDC. Over the last sixteen years, Matt has worked with public engagement efforts in over 100 communities, in 40 states and four Canadian provinces. Matt is a Senior Associate for Everyday Democracy, and serves on the boards of E-Democracy.Org, the National School Public Relations Association, and The Democracy Imperative. He has also been a consultant to the National League of Cities, NeighborWorks America, Centers for Disease Control, and the League of Women Voters. His first book, *The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule is Giving Way to Shared Governance – and Why Politics Will Never Be the Same,* traces the recent shifts in the relationship between citizens and government, and examines how these trends are reshaping our democracy.

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