



Working Together: Building Successful Policy and Program Partnerships for Immigrant Integration¹

Els de Graauw
Baruch College, The City University of New York

Irene Bloemraad
University of California, Berkeley

Executive Summary

Supporting and investing in the integration of immigrants and their children is critically important to US society. Successful integration contributes to the nation's economic vitality, its civic and political health, and its cultural diversity. But although the United States has a good track record on immigrant integration, outcomes could be better. A national, coherent immigrant integration policy infrastructure is needed. This infrastructure can build on long-standing partnerships between civil society and US public institutions. Such partnerships, advanced under Republican- and Democratic-led administrations, were initially established to facilitate European immigrants' integration in large American cities, and later extended to help refugees fleeing religious persecution and war. In the twenty-first century, we must expand this foundation by drawing on the growing activism by cities and states, new civil society initiatives, and public-private partnerships that span the country.

A robust national integration policy infrastructure must be vertically integrated to include different levels of government and horizontally applied across public and private sector actors and different types of immigrant destinations. The resultant policy should leverage public-private partnerships, drawing on the energy, ideas, and work of community-based nonprofit organizations as well as the leadership and support of philanthropy, business, education, faith-based, and other institutions. A new coordinating office to facilitate interagency cooperation is needed in the executive branch; the mandate and programs of the Office of Refugee Resettlement need to be secured and where possible expanded; the outreach and coordinating role of the Office of Citizenship needs to be extended, including through a more robust grant program to community-based

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organizations; and Congress needs to develop legislation and appropriate funding for a comprehensive integration policy addressed to all, and not just humanitarian immigrants.

The federal investments in immigrant and refugee integration we propose are a big ask for any administration; they seem especially unlikely under the Trump administration, whose efforts focus on enforcement and border control, targeting undocumented and legal immigrants alike. Yet immigrant integration is not and should not be a partisan issue. Federal politicians across the political spectrum need to realize, as many local officials and a large segment of the public already do, that successful immigrant integration is a win-win for everybody. When immigrants have more opportunities to learn English, to improve their schooling and professional training, to start businesses, and to access citizenship, we all benefit. A majority of the American public supports immigrant integration, from proposals for learning English to a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Local and state governments are setting up initiatives to promote integration. If the federal government will not act, cities, states, and civil society organizations must continue to work together to build an integration infrastructure from the bottom up.

I. Introduction

The United States welcomes hundreds of thousands of newcomers every year. Yet it lacks a national, coherent immigrant integration policy. Officials in the US Government Accountability Office note that “no single federal entity has been designated to lead the creation, implementation, and coordination of a national immigrant integration capability” (GAO 2011, 25). Academics have characterized the American approach as “laissez-faire” integration or a “patchwork” of policies (Bloemraad 2006; Bloemraad and de Graauw 2012a-b; de Graauw 2016a; Heisler 1992; Jiménez 2011; Schmidt, Sr. 2007). In the media, whether today or a century ago, integration is represented by Horatio Alger-type stories of poor immigrants achieving the American Dream through individual hard work and the support of family and friends. The twentieth-century Andrew Carnegie, a poor Scottish immigrant turned steel industry tycoon and philanthropist, is the equivalent of today’s Silicon Valley giant Sergey Brin, the Google co-founder born in Russia, or entrepreneurs Do Won and Jin Sook, the Korean-born husband and wife team who founded the fashion chain Forever 21 with \$11,000 and high school educations. In these narratives of immigrant integration, the role of government is largely absent.

Such a laissez-faire approach is short-sighted in its depiction of the past and, critically, as a roadmap for the future. Laissez-faire narratives do not acknowledge that for over a century governmental actors in the United States have played a role in immigrant integration. These efforts have expanded notably over the last decade, especially at the local and state levels, producing diverse partnerships between civil society and federal, state, county, and local governments around immigrant settlement. The failure to build on these foundations means that immigrant integration outcomes will fall short of what they could be, to the detriment

of the nation as a whole. In many respects the United States can be proud of its record of incorporating newcomers, as a recent National Academy of Sciences report makes clear (Waters and Pineau 2016), but comparisons with other countries show that benchmarks fall short at times, especially around naturalization, economic self-sufficiency, and residential integration (Alba and Foner 2015; OECD and EU 2015; Vigdor 2011). A more deliberate federal role in a comprehensive immigrant integration strategy is critical for improving immigrants' societal integration.

We argue for the development of an integrated policy. Such a policy should apply nationally and link to current city, county, and state settlement infrastructures and initiatives, as well as to existing civil society efforts. Where local integration initiatives do not yet exist, the new federal policy would provide goals, best practices, and funding to establish local programs and support infrastructures. Building on successes in refugee resettlement and the growing number of city and state immigrant affairs offices, the resultant policy would leverage public-private partnerships, drawing on the energy, ideas, and work of community-based nonprofits as well as the leadership and support of philanthropy, business, education, faith-based, and other institutions. Such partnerships would allow for local innovation and tailoring programs to the unique needs of a particular community, while a national scope would ensure baseline settlement support across the country as part of a cohesive vision for successful immigrant and refugee integration in the United States.

In what follows, we first discuss immigrant integration in the twentieth century, highlighting historic examples of public-private partnerships to build on today. We next outline immigrant integration efforts in the twenty-first century, highlighting the increased activism of city and state governments, the creation of new civil society initiatives and public-private partnerships, and recent federal interest in immigrant integration. We conclude by making the case for a more robust national integration policy infrastructure, one that is vertically integrated to include different levels of government and horizontally applied across public and private sector actors and different types of immigrant destinations. By working together with federal leadership and support, we can build nationwide partnerships for immigrant integration that lay the groundwork for many success stories, for newcomers and the communities in which they reside.

II. Twentieth Century Integration: “Laissez-Faire” with Public-Private Partnerships

Immigrant integration during the twentieth century is often portrayed as a laissez-faire process relying primarily on grassroots initiative, not public planning or government intervention (e.g., Jiménez 2011; Schmidt, Sr. 2007). Immigrants became part of American society by using their own resources and ingenuity, the help of family and friends, and — on occasion — the assistance of local community organizations. There is much truth in these narratives. Immigrants could count on an expanding industrial economy and a robust public education system to help them and their children secure economic mobility and a comfortable middle-class lifestyle, but government was otherwise not proactive in creating or promoting integration pathways. Just as the “invisible hand” of laissez-faire capitalism was assumed to produce a self-regulated market based on the individual actions of many people, the individual actions of immigrants eager for a better life in the United States were

assumed to function as the invisible hand in immigrants' societal integration (Bloemraad and de Graauw 2012a).

A. Immigrant Organizations, Settlement Houses, and Americanization Efforts: Organized Assistance before World War II

Laissez-faire narratives ignore, however, longstanding American partnerships between civil society and public institutions. Within immigrant communities, immigrant-run private charities and voluntary organizations have long helped compatriots get a job, secure business loans, encourage citizenship, or provide food, clothing, and funeral benefits during tough times. Starting in the late nineteenth century, US-born social reformers also became involved, setting up "settlement houses." First established in New York, Chicago, and Boston, by 1911, 413 such institutions were tallied across 32 states, the District of Columbia, and the Hawaiian Islands (Woods and Kennedy 1911, vi). Usually funded by religious groups, charitable associations, and wealthy residents, settlement houses targeted the poor, including many immigrants in large American cities in the Midwest and Northeast. These organizations, within and outside immigrant communities, built a tradition of civil society engagement that continues to this day (de Graauw 2016a).

As settlement houses spread, so did the Americanization movement. It brought governments from the local to federal levels into integration efforts, often in partnership with charitable groups, businesses, social reformers, and local school boards. Their efforts were often paternalistic, nativist, and coercive (Higham 1994 [1955]), but at times could be benign and supportive. Rather than laissez-faire, public institutions engaged with local and immigrant partners. For example, the US Board of Education established a Division of Immigrant Education that funded English language, literacy, and civics instruction, while the US Bureau of Naturalization partnered with school officials to identify adults who might benefit from citizenship classes (King 2000, 87-120; Schneider 2001).

Some early government initiatives came with resources. Over four-fifths of state legislatures in the Northeast and Midwest passed legislation with funding support for adult English and citizenship classes in the interwar period; in 1927-1928, these states allocated, on average, \$1.42 per alien resident for naturalization education (Fox 2012; Fox and Bloemraad 2015, 193). At about \$19.50 per noncitizen in 2016 dollars, today this would be the equivalent of the federal government spending over \$440 million on the almost 22.6 million noncitizens living in the country. In 2016, however, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) awarded less than \$10 million in grants to 46 organizations through the USCIS Citizenship and Integration Grant Program.²

B. Post-War Partnerships for Successful Integration: The Case of Refugee Resettlement

Refugee resettlement offers another public-private collaborative framework for integration, one that built on pre-war organizations. The oldest voluntary agency still engaged in

² See <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/citizenship-and-integration-grant-program>. Data on the noncitizen population of the United States is from the 2015 American Community Survey, one-year estimates, available at <https://factfinder.census.gov>.

refugee resettlement today is the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, founded in New York City in 1881 to assist Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. Other private resettlement organizations, with religious or secular roots, sprung up in the 1930s and 1940s as Europe descended into fascism, communist purges, and war (Zucker and Zucker 1987). Working overseas and in the United States, these groups became major players in refugee resettlement after World War II, settling hundreds of thousands of people largely using private resources (Holman 1996). Their efforts led the federal Displaced Persons Committee to speak approvingly of the “religious and welfare organizations through whose cooperative activities so many of the displaced persons have come to the United States” and which “have rendered a most commendable service” in partnership with displaced persons commissions or committees in 33 US states (DPC 1950, 22, 25).

After World War II, the relationship between voluntary agencies and government gradually became more permanent, including professionalized services by nonprofits and increased government funding and oversight. After thousands of Hungarian refugees arrived in 1956, the federal government offered voluntary agencies \$40 per person to defray transportation costs (Holman 1996, 6). In 1959, the influx of Cuban emigrés in Miami severely strained local, county, and state capacity to secure housing, jobs, and schools. In response, Congress passed the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act in 1962, the first federal law authorizing and financing domestic refugee assistance, although it restricted support to Cubans in Miami (Holman 1996). However, when the fall of Saigon sent 130,000 Southeast Asian refugees to the United States, Congress drew on similar authority and logic to pass the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975. It established a program giving states federal funds to provide medical assistance and financial support to needy refugees and to finance integration programs such as English language and employment training. The 1976 Indochinese Refugee Children Assistance Act reimbursed states for education and special language instruction costs. Unlike the prior program for Cubans, these initiatives were national. Another wave of organizations, often termed Mutual Assistance Associations, were founded to provide linguistically and culturally appropriate services in refugees’ places of settlement. In the late 1970s, Congress reauthorized federal resettlement assistance, while oversight of funding and programs moved around among federal agencies.

In 1980, Congress enacted the Refugee Act to end the ad hoc, patchwork approach to refugee admissions and settlement. In addition to providing a uniform procedure for refugee admissions, the act permanently authorized federal assistance to promote refugees’ self-sufficiency and established the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). An early assessment concluded that calling this a single program would be a “misnomer,” as it was more accurately a “complex web of federal government, voluntary agency, and state and local government roles that provide the overall framework for resettlement efforts” (Haines 1985, 7). Despite the challenges of a policy and programmatic web developed in fits and starts, it nonetheless has served as a valuable safety net from which refugees could establish themselves, a support structure not available to economic or family-sponsored migrants facing similar integration challenges.

Today, the web of federal, voluntary sector, state and local partnerships around refugee resettlement continues, with a focus on getting refugees to economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible. The US Department of State’s (DOS’s) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and

Migration funds cooperative agreements with a range of public and private organizations to facilitate initial settlement through the US Reception and Placement Program. In 2016, a refugee helped by one of the nine contracted voluntary agencies would be greeted at the airport and brought to a furnished residence stocked with some clothes, culturally appropriate foods, and other necessities. Someone from the agency would provide referral services and practical assistance, from applying for a Social Security card and registering children for school to helping arrange medical appointments, enroll in English language classes, find employment, or use local public transportation. Under the 2017 program, DOS provides agencies with \$2,025 per refugee, amounts often supplemented with agency contributions from other public and private sources since grants are often inadequate to cover costs fully (DOS 2016).

A second set of programs administered by ORR provides transitional settlement assistance to refugees and other designated humanitarian groups.³ ORR programs provide formula grants to states to provide refugees with cash and medical assistance, and offer grants to a range of government and voluntary sector partners to fund social and employment services. Partners can include public agencies, faith-based or secular nonprofits, and ethnic-specific Mutual Assistance Associations, many of which also contribute matching or in-kind resources. In the 2015 fiscal year, Congress voted \$1,559,884,000 in appropriations for ORR programs, much of it for cash and medical assistance (Bruno 2015, 8). When the refugee assistance program was first established in 1980, federal assistance was available for up to 36 months. Since 1991, refugees are funded for just eight months, often too short a period to secure economic self-sufficiency for refugees with limited education or arriving with physical or mental trauma (Bruno 2011; Nawyn 2011).

C. A Threadbare Patchwork for Other Immigrants

The policy and programmatic web of refugee resettlement faces challenges in integrating humanitarian migrants, especially as ORR's capacity was stretched serving unaccompanied minors from Central America. However, the refugee infrastructure is still more cohesive and extensive than the threadbare, loose patchwork of integration initiatives in place for other immigrants. Most non-refugee immigrants come to the United States under family reunification provisions of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. These newcomers can call on their families for initial settlement support, but individual families can only do so much. More sustained public support is necessary for optimal long-term integration outcomes.

We might expect the main federal agency responsible for immigration to provide leadership on integration. But throughout much of the post-WWII period, the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) did not engage in proactive immigrant integration work. At most, it oversaw the administration and adjudication of naturalization, which included providing public information on how to become a citizen. The INS generally assumed that those granted permanent residence through employment preferences had the skills necessary to integrate, while those sponsored by family could turn to them for help. Indeed,

3 Immigration and Nationality Act § 412(c), (e). Groups eligible for refugee resettlement include official refugees under the Act, successful asylum applicants, Cuban and Haitian entrants, trafficking victims, Amerasians and immediate family, and Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants (Bruno 2011, 3-4).

unlike the partnerships that characterized refugee resettlement, the INS did not have legal authority to act as a grant-making agency (Bloemraad 2006, 126). When former INS Commissioner Doris Meissner tried to orient the agency to a more proactive stance, the Citizenship USA program came under attack as a partisan effort to naturalize potential Democratic Party supporters in advance of the 1996 presidential election (OIG 2000).

When the US Department of Homeland Security was created by the Bush administration in 2002 to replace the INS, congressional legislation included a provision to establish a new Office of Citizenship within USCIS. This office's mission is "to provide federal leadership, tools, and resources to proactively foster immigrant integration" (Office of Citizenship 2017). Much of its work centers on providing naturalization information, but in a break with INS practice, the office also aims to build community capacity to prepare immigrants for citizenship. This includes funding for collaboration with community-based organizations and other partners to welcome immigrants, promote English-language learning, communicate the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and encourage naturalization. The demand for these Citizenship and Integration Grants far outstrips available funding, however. In 2009, when the program started, there were 293 applications for \$1.2 million in grants, with only 13 organizations eventually funded (Waters and Pineau 2016, 177). From 2009 to 2016, the program awarded a total of \$63 million, averaging less than \$8 million per year, roughly half a percent of allocations for refugee resettlement.⁴

Beyond the USCIS grant program, a patchwork of other integration initiatives exists. The White House Task Force on New Americans (2015b, 50) identified 58 immigrant integration programs administered by 10 different federal agencies. Of course, once naturalized, immigrant-origin citizens can access the same programs as native-born citizens. But before citizenship, immigrants can also sometimes get help under federal policies that seek to increase the life chances of economically disadvantaged US residents. Federal education laws help English-language learners. Federal civil rights laws protect against discrimination in housing and the workplace and seek to promote greater ethno-racial and gender equality through preferential hiring and contracting policies. Federal labor and employment law protections — including minimum wage and overtime provisions, workplace safety standards, and union organizing rights — generally apply to all workers regardless of citizenship and documentation status. Important safety net policies — including Temporary Aid to Needy Families, the Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid, food stamps, and Supplemental Security Income — extend to legal immigrants with a minimum of five years of US residence. Other programs have a citizenship criterion, rendering them unavailable to undocumented immigrants or legal immigrants. These restrictions generate significant integration vulnerabilities for immigrants in their first five years in the United States, years that are critical in accessing good jobs, safe housing, and opportunities to become socially integrated. Thus, while mainstream policies at times support legal immigrants, they do not amount to a coherent national program of immigrant integration, especially as most are tailored with native-born residents in mind (Bloemraad and de Graauw 2012a-b).

More broadly, the federal government offers some baseline constitutional protections that encompass all people living in the United States and that also frame the rights and societal

4 On grants awarded, see <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/citizenship-and-integration-grant-program>.

integration of immigrants. The Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution guarantees due process and equal protection to “any person,” and it guarantees the birthright citizenship for any child born in the United States, thereby rupturing the intergenerational transmission of noncitizenship or undocumented status. The US Supreme Court’s *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) decision guarantees that all children — including those who are undocumented — have the right to a free and equal K-12 public education. Public schools are important engines for immigrant integration because it is there that children learn English, American history and civics, and it is one of the first entry points where immigrant parents interact with their broader community. In short, despite laissez-faire narratives, existing public policies and programs do influence immigrant integration. But much more can be done, a challenge increasingly taken up over the last decade by local and state governments and civil society organizations.

III. Twenty-first Century Integration: Growing Subnational Leadership, New Public-Private Partnerships, and Increased Federal Attention

The twenty-first century ushered in new dynamics in immigrant integration policy and programs. We see growing activism by cities and states, the launch of new civil society initiatives and public-private partnerships spanning the country, and some federal interest in immigrant integration. These developments provide an important foundation on which to build a more cohesive federal integration policy.

A. Growing Municipal and State Leadership

In 2014, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean launched the Office of New Americans to serve the metro area’s immigrant residents, signing an executive order surrounded by Council members, department heads, members of the local chamber of commerce, and nonprofit partners. Although not a historic immigrant destination, Nashville joins a growing number of cities and states that have created new programs and institutions to promote the integration of new residents. In 2016, 41 US cities had a total of 44 formalized offices dedicated to immigrant affairs or immigrant communities (de Graauw 2016b). These offices have different names, including the Office of New Bostonians in Boston, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs in New York City and Atlanta, the Office of International Relations and Diaspora Affairs in Newark, and the Office of New Americans in Chicago, Houston, Buffalo, and Nashville. And while most states have long had offices and programs serving refugees, in 2016 there were five states — California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, and New York — with offices or staff mandated to serve immigrant populations more broadly. The oldest office with an exclusive focus on immigrant issues, created in 1986, is in New York City, which also is the biggest and best resourced office, with over 50 full-time staff. In contrast, the vast majority of other city offices, and all state offices, were set up in the last 10 years, as in Nashville. They are less institutionalized, have fewer paid staff, and operate on more limited budgets.

Beyond formal offices, at least 90 municipalities have developed commissions, committees, councils, task forces, boards, initiatives, and programs dedicated to immigrant issues or

immigrant communities (de Graauw 2016b). Examples include the Immigrant Integration Task Force in Charlotte, the Welcoming Immigrant Task Force in Tucson, the New Americans Task Force in Lincoln, the Commission on Immigrant Affairs in Austin, and the Welcoming City initiatives in Dayton, Columbus, and Pittsburgh. These bodies generally have fewer explicit powers, fewer staff and resources, or a narrower, finite set of tasks than formal offices. They can, however, be an important stepping stone toward further institution-building. Together, city and state immigrant affairs offices and these other municipal bodies demonstrate how the new push for immigrant integration in the United States is coming from lower levels of government, not the federal government. Executive leadership is clearly central: mayors and governors, not legislatures, have created these offices and other bodies.

Integration projects are being advanced in a great variety of cities spanning the country. Most big cities (and traditional gateway states) now have immigrant affairs offices, including longstanding immigrant gateways such as Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco. However, offices also exist in newer destinations, including Atlanta, Nashville, Orlando, and Washington, DC, and in former and reemerging immigrant destinations, such as Baltimore, Buffalo, Denver, Detroit, and Philadelphia. Immigrant affairs offices also can be found in cities with smaller populations, such as Allentown, PA (117,942 residents) as well as in cities with foreign-born populations well below the national average of 13 percent, such as Detroit (5% foreign-born residents). Executive leadership is important, but not necessarily in a top-down imposition disconnected from electoral support. Although nine offices (20% or 9/44) operate in cities with council-manager forms of government, most offices (73% or 32/44) are in cities with mayor-council forms of government, where the mayor has an independent electoral base. A bit over half of city immigrant affairs offices (59% or 26/44) are located in states where the majority of voters are Democrat, but they can also be found in states with wide-ranging climates on immigration issues. They are found in Arizona, the state with the most negative climate for immigrants (with an Immigrant Climate Index of -60) and in California and Illinois, the two states with the most positive climates for immigrants (with indexes of 33 and 38, respectively).⁵

Several common factors underlie the recent surge in immigrant affairs offices. Their establishment follows the decades-long growth of the foreign-born population in the United States and immigrants' greater geographic dispersion since the late 1990s. It also responds to the lack of attention to integration by federal officials, who have focused on enforcement and border control. Many cities and states are stepping into the policy void, often because they feel they have no choice. City and state officials are tasked with devising and implementing public policies that promote a productive local economy and a healthy and safe environment for all; they feel that they cannot ignore the needs and interests of growing immigrant communities in their jurisdictions. In announcing the creation of the Nashville Office of New Americans, the mayor underscored that nearly 60 percent of the city's population growth since 2000 came from immigration, new Americans are overrepresented in four of Nashville's 10 largest industries, and a third of children under 18

5 The Immigrant Climate Index sums up each state's environment for immigrants, positive and negative, by quantifying immigration laws enacted by states as well as cities and counties in each state between 2005 and 2009. See Pham and Van (2014) for more detail on the construction of the index.

in the metro area live in bilingual or non-English speaking households.⁶ The growth in city immigrant affairs offices is also the result of the wider availability of technical assistance and support from organizations and coalitions dedicated to promoting immigrant integration at the municipal level. One example is Welcoming America, a nonprofit organization created in 2009 and headquartered in the Atlanta area that has worked with over 70 municipalities and 40 nonprofits nationwide to build communities that foster immigrant integration (Welcoming America 2017).

We can also identify commonalities in what these offices do and seek to accomplish. They aim to welcome immigrants and foster positive public discourse. To this end, they convene local stakeholders — law enforcement and other city officials, nonprofit service providers, immigrant advocacy organizations, religious institutions, and business organizations — to facilitate interaction between immigrants and native-born residents. Immigrant affairs offices also make the case that immigrants are of current and future economic importance to cities, metropolitan areas, and states. They publicize immigrants' economic contributions and develop initiatives to retain immigrant talent and support immigrant entrepreneurs. They streamline existing city and state integration services, and they encourage immigrant civic engagement, invest in immigrant leaders, and nurture new community organizations that serve immigrants. Such efforts can start small with citizenship ceremonies, diversity and multicultural celebrations, and recruiting volunteers for city events. Resources permitting, immigrant affairs offices can also spearhead grander initiatives that include social change fellowships to cultivate new civic leadership. More institutionalized offices also develop new policies such as language access and municipal ID card legislation and initiatives to help implement, locally, the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and naturalization programs. In sum, cities and states have developed different policies and practices that provide immigrants, including the undocumented, opportunities for inclusion and a sense of belonging even in the absence of federal legalization and integration policies (de Graauw 2016; Suro 2015).

The experiences of city and state immigrant affairs offices highlight several challenges. Key is the lack of resources to get things done. Limited staff and small budgets hamper most offices' ability to develop new initiatives, especially as municipal and state budgets remain under stress. The struggle to survive and justify their existence, especially in places where there is opposition to immigration, can detract from efforts to move the needle on immigrant integration. The federal division of powers also constrains city offices, and even state initiatives, as does the fact that determination of legal status — whether citizenship through naturalization, legalization of undocumented residents, or temporary protection from deportation — must emanate from the federal government. Without federal immigration reform and a cohesive national integration program, the impact of city and state immigrant affairs offices will have limits.

For immigrant affairs offices to succeed, their staff need to tap into the existing knowledge, practice, and culture within immigrant communities in their cities and states. Sustained collaborations between immigrant affairs offices and community organizations carry

6 See “New Americans in Nashville: A Snapshot of the Foreign-Born Population,” a factsheet distributed with the press release for the new office, available at <https://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/MayorsOffice/docs/news/140922-MONA-FactSheet.pdf>.

many benefits. For immigrant affairs offices, such collaborations enable them to learn about needs in immigrant communities, so they can develop appropriate programs and initiatives to respond. For community organizations, such collaborations open access to municipal and state decision makers and possibly to funding to support their work. Finally, for immigrants, these collaborations offer a helping hand and opportunities to be engaged in local and state civic and political affairs. These collaborative benefits are constrained, however, in newer immigrant destinations with fewer potential partner organizations. Those jurisdictions require investments to nurture new community organizations and build capacity for immigrant integration. Here we see openings for the federal government, philanthropic organizations, and even the business sector to get involved.

B. New Public-Private Partnerships and Increased Federal Interest

In recent years, new initiatives have also sprouted bringing non-governmental and governmental actors from across the country together to address immigrant integration issues. Welcoming America, mentioned earlier, is one example. Others include the National Partnership for New Americans, a coalition created in 2010 of 37 regional immigrant and refugee rights organizations spanning 31 states that work to influence integration policies and practices at the local, state, and federal levels (NPNA 2017), and Cities for Action, a large national coalition of 123 mayors and leaders from 20 county governments formed in 2014 to build stronger, welcoming, and inclusive cities through immigration action (Cities for Action 2017). The New Americans Campaign (NAC), launched in 2011 and funded by a network of six national foundations, gives resources to nine national and over 100 local nonprofits to provide citizenship assistance to immigrants in 18 large metro areas across the country. By mid-July 2015, NAC-affiliated organizations had completed over 230,000 naturalization applications (NAC 2016). And the Partnership for a New American Economy, launched in 2010, is a coalition of 500 mayors and business leaders nationwide who advocate for immigration reform and public and private programs that offer English-language, civics, and educational classes to immigrants (PNAE 2017). Absent robust federal engagement, city, county, and state leaders have teamed up in vertical and horizontal networks with civil society organizations to further immigrant integration.

These are all bottom-up initiatives where local government actors and grassroots civil society leaders, at times with significant foundation and business backing, have taken the lead in building local, regional, and national momentum for immigrant integration. The new public-private partnerships focus on policy innovation as well as immigrant leadership development and improved, more efficient service delivery to immigrant communities. As interactions between public and private sector actors have become more coordinated and sophisticated, they have facilitated mutual learning and sharing of resources. There are now regular convenings where city, county, and state leaders, funders, and practitioners share best practices, including the annual meetings of the National Immigrant Integration Conference (since 2009) and the Welcoming Economies Global Network (since 2012), focused on the Midwest. All in all, we find a growing energy to sustain, expand, and scale up municipal and state efforts and public-private partnerships for immigrant integration.

The absence of a coherent, robust federal integration policy remains, but the new energy and activism has not escaped federal attention. In 2006, President George W. Bush created,

by Executive Order 13404, the Task Force on New Americans to investigate ways to “strengthen the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security and Federal, State, and local agencies to help legal immigrants embrace the common core of American civic culture, learn our common language, and fully become Americans.” After little engagement with local officials or grassroots organizations, the task force published its 84-page report in December 2008. It recommended building a modern-day Americanization movement, in large part reiterating the integration philosophy and approach of the first Americanization movement a century earlier (DHS-TFNA 2008). The report emphasized the need for federal leadership and a national integration strategy that coordinates existing efforts by local and state governments, community-based and civic organizations, public libraries, adult educators, business organizations, and foundations. During its 2.5-year existence, the task force provided some training and resources to public libraries, adult educators, and immigrant-serving organizations narrowly focused on civics and citizenship education. It did not address economic integration or the integration challenges of undocumented immigrants.

Similar inquiry and advisory efforts characterized the next administration. In 2014, President Barack Obama established, by presidential memorandum, the White House Task Force on New Americans, an interagency effort to create a coordinated and more deliberate federal strategy for immigrant and refugee integration. The task force’s strategic plan, published in April 2015, was developed by representatives from nearly 20 federal agencies and drew on recommendations from 350 organizations and more than 1,000 members of the public. It outlined 16 core goals and 48 recommendations to support the linguistic, economic, and civic integration of immigrants and refugees (WHTFNA 2015b). Unlike the Bush administration report, the plan provided a whole-of-society integration approach that included a broad range of stakeholders. But like the prior task force, it was long on recommendation and short on implementation beyond public services messages, webinars, and regional convenings. It included the “Standing Stronger” citizenship awareness campaign and the “Building Welcoming Communities Campaign,” which consisted of a series of convenings to support local integration efforts around the country. The US Small Business Administration also developed a new website to promote immigrant entrepreneurship (WHTFNA 2015a). These initiatives provide baby steps forward but fall short of the programs and resources required to realize a robust national integration policy and infrastructure.

IV. Towards a Robust and Coherent National Integration Policy

What can we learn from past and current efforts? The laissez-faire approach, supplemented with growing activism by non-governmental actors and subnational governments, has certain advantages. In line with arguments for devolution in other policy areas, the current system allows for local experimentation and innovation. Even though immigration increasingly affects many urban, suburban, and rural communities nationwide, different locales are home to distinct immigrant and refugee communities that face diverse economic conditions, political dynamics, cultural realities, and different infrastructures of civil society organizations. In a country as large and diverse as the United States, a one-size-fits-all approach to immigrant and refugee integration is neither possible nor desirable.

Laissez-faire integration, with its emphasis on immigrant agency and the supportive role of immigrant-led organizations, also minimizes the risk of paternalism and the idea that immigrants' culture needs to be erased for successful integration. In the early twentieth century, native-born Americanizers in government, public schools, business, and private organizations often underestimated immigrants' ability to devise their own effective integration pathways. Instead, policies and practices were often "culturally imperialistic" (Carlson 1987), focused on "indoctrination in 'the American way'" (McClymer 1978). Fueled by sentiments of nationalism and nativism, some initiatives denigrated immigrants' cultures of origin by advancing a one-way assimilation process. Today, such a unilateral approach is no longer acceptable or desirable. As the White House Task Force put it, "[i]ntegration is a dynamic two-way process"; what immigrants bring with them helps keep "our country young, dynamic, and entrepreneurial" (WHTFNA 2015b, 1, 6). Moving forward, we need to make sure that immigrants, refugees, and their organizations have the ability to influence what integration policies look like and how they are implemented. If the Trump administration shuns integration policy, much can be done at local and state levels, in partnership with civil society groups.

Under the current system, immigrant integration has been happening. Contemporary immigrants learn English faster than European immigrants did a century ago, and the majority of their children and nearly all their grandchildren speak only English (Alba 2004). Over time and across generations, they improve their educational attainment, income, occupational status, and homeownership, and they tend to live in more integrated urban and suburban neighborhoods (Iceland and Scopilliti 2008; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Park and Myers 2010; Waters and Pineau 2016). Marriages between immigrants and native-born individuals sharply increased since 2000 (Qian and Lichter 2011). Finally, since the late 1990s, more immigrants have acquired US citizenship at a faster rate than in prior decades, although naturalized citizens are still less likely to register and vote than native-born citizens (Lee 2011). It is the case, though, that immigrant integration remains stratified by immigrants' educational and economic resources, racial inequalities, and legal status, barriers preventing many immigrants from participating and contributing as fully as they could (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Telles and Ortiz 2008).

Indeed, despite important successes, the United States still fails to meet important integration benchmarks, which comparisons to other western democracies make clear. Immigrant naturalization, voter participation, and homeownership rates in the United States trail those of Canada and several European countries (OECD and EU 2015; Vigdor 2011). Compared to immigrants in many European countries, immigrants in the United States are more likely to live in poverty, experience sharper income inequality with native-born residents, and experience workplace discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin (OECD and EU 2015). Data such as these highlight room for improvement. A national, coherent integration program can play a vital role in ensuring that immigrants' integration is faster, easier, and more successful. Studies highlighting the relationship between public policies and immigrant integration suggest, for example, that helping immigrants learn English, acquire citizenship, and secure better jobs enables them to earn higher incomes and thus contribute more fully to the economy and their children's future (e.g., Biles, Burstein, and Frideres 2008; Enchautegui and Giannerelli 2015). In Canada, government integration policies have facilitated immigrants' naturalization and encouraged their civic and political participation (Bloemraad 2006).

We thus advocate for a robust, comprehensive national integration policy and infrastructure in the United States, one that is vertically integrated to include different levels of government and horizontally applied across public and private sector actors and different types of immigrant destinations. To that end, the federal government first needs to create a national immigrant affairs office, building on the efforts of the Bush and Obama White House Task Force reports. This new office would need dedicated staff and funding to oversee, develop, and coordinate immigrant and refugee integration among federal departments and across levels of government. The office would need to be centrally located, such as in the White House, with direct lines of communication to the president and his advisors, so that it is well-positioned to serve as the interagency liaison to all major federal, state, local, and civil society integration stakeholders. Its work and activities should be supported and monitored by an intergovernmental and cross-sectoral advisory board that includes integration experts from different levels of government, different private sector organizations, and different immigrant communities from across the country.

Besides more centralized coordination of integration efforts from the executive branch, existing programs need revisiting and expanding. For example, the DHHS Office of Refugee Resettlement should be renamed, and it should expand its activities to include longer-term integration goals beyond an eight-month settlement period. The reimagined office should work in close partnership with the national immigrant affairs office and highlight, in the medium term, three to four integration goals, such as adult English-language instruction, naturalization, and small business support, and develop a robust grant program open to civil society organizations and subnational governments to provide direct services. Congress will need to appropriate the necessary resources for these efforts, especially since ORR already is struggling with budget shortfalls given humanitarian demands. If these programs show early successes, the office can expand its programs to address other integration goals and immigrant populations, including economic and family-sponsored immigrants.

The Office of Citizenship in DHS should also expand its activities and set up more direct lines of communication with and support to all 50 state governments and other interested partners at the county and city levels. It should provide more seed funding — perhaps with complementary support from the philanthropic sector — to state, county, and city governments that want to establish their own immigrant affairs offices. Within its mission to engage partners in welcoming immigrants, promoting English, providing civic education, and encouraging citizenship, it should work with education officials at all levels of government to provide free or low-cost instruction to immigrants wanting to acquire US citizenship. It should work with community-based partners to expand the “Welcome to the United States” guide for new immigrants, making it accessible in more languages and a variety of formats, including informational videos and social media apps.

Finally, Congress needs to develop immigration reform legislation that includes funding for a comprehensive integration policy. The goals and structure of future legislation can be modelled on and expanded from already existing legislation on refugee resettlement and integration in the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by the 1980 Refugee Act and other subsequent amendments. Such legislation needs to address the integration of all immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, who need to be provided a path to legalization and citizenship. It also needs to invite collaboration with non-governmental

entities to leverage the energy, ideas, and work of community-based nonprofits as well as the leadership and support of philanthropic, business, educational, faith-based, and other institutions.

The federal investments in immigrant and refugee integration we propose are a big ask for any administration, but especially for the Trump administration. The 10-point immigration plan that Donald Trump campaigned on made no mention of integration and his executive orders in the early days of the administration clearly prioritize enforcement, increased border control, and restricted admissions of refugees and immigrants, making any immediate federal immigrant integration efforts improbable. The four-month suspension of the refugee program and the reduction in the number of refugees to be admitted from 110,000 to 50,000 suggest that ORR will be facing difficult times. Congress has not yet provided a clear or unified response, with Democrats determined to undo Trump's early policies and Republicans divided over how to respond.

However, the administration's decision to ignore immigrant integration and possibly roll back the minimal federal integration infrastructure currently in place will be to the detriment of all. Majorities of Americans think that immigration is a "good thing" for the country, that undocumented immigrants should have access to a path to citizenship, and that immigrants should learn to speak English (Gallup Poll 2017). The federal government should take cues from public sentiment to embrace a more proactive role in immigrant integration. When immigrants have more opportunities to learn English, to improve their schooling and professional training, to start businesses, and to access citizenship, we all benefit. More fully integrated immigrants and refugees boost the economy and strengthen community cohesion (e.g., Enchautegui and Giannerelli 2015; Sumption and Flamm 2012). These are integration outcomes that all Americans, regardless of their partisan preferences, will support.

If the federal government will not act, cities, states, and civil society organizations must continue to work together to build an integration infrastructure from the bottom up. Indeed, there is room for states, in particular, to take a more pronounced leadership role on immigrant integration to complement the growing activism by local governments. We must also focus on better knitting state, local, and civil society initiatives together and creating more fora for developing and sharing best practices across sectors. There has been a sharp increase in public and private interest in and action on immigrant integration issues at the local and state levels, especially following the launch of the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (de Graauw and Gleeson 2016; Kerwin et al. 2017). This work has been focused, however, on legal and administrative support for a sub-group of the immigrant population, not the broader range of integration outcomes so important to newcomers and the communities that welcome them. The subnational and cross-sectoral capacity to facilitate language training, job placement, immigrant entrepreneurship, positive community relations, citizenship acquisition, and a host of other opportunities must be strengthened and expanded in the coming years, regardless of how the Trump administration and Congress choose to proceed on immigrant integration.

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