

FEDERAL INTEGRATION ACTION PLAN

READ THE FULL ACTION PLAN HERE.

The [Action Plan](#) places a strong emphasis on the principles and recommendations put forward by Welcoming America, placing a strong emphasis on efforts that build bridges between immigrants and receiving communities. The following excerpts from the plan demonstrate how these will be core to future federal and community efforts:

“The Obama Administration is guided by the core principle that being American is about more than what we look like or where we come from. What makes us Americans is our shared commitment to an ideal — that all of us are created equal, and all of us have the chance to make of our lives what we will. By bringing immigrants, refugees, and receiving communities together around integration strategies, we create communities with a welcoming culture and strengthen our ability to ensure that all community members have the tools and opportunities to succeed and fully contribute to our nation.

In order to ensure successful integration, the Task Force seeks to support and increase the capacity of receiving communities to build welcoming communities. Ultimately, these efforts will require a multifaceted and cross-sector strategy that leverages existing efforts by key stakeholders, all working in partnership with receiving communities.

Integration is not something immigrants and refugees can achieve in isolation; welcoming environments are necessary to ensure successful outcomes that benefit local communities as well as our nation. For effective integration, we need a comprehensive national and local effort that draws on the strengths and capacity of all sectors of society and all levels of government — a “whole of society” approach.

Communities play a vital role in welcoming immigrants by celebrating and valuing their diverse linguistic and cultural assets, connecting new residents to long-time residents, and building support networks to assist in integration and community cohesion. Like any relationship, the relationship between immigrants and their communities must be a two-way process with shared opportunities and responsibilities.

The Task Force takes inspiration from the Welcoming Communities Movement, which engages receiving communities and creates welcoming environments for all community members. This movement is focused on building 21st century communities that attract and retain global talent and investment.”

The plan affirms more broadly that New Americans contribute significantly to the United States’ social and cultural fabric and are also critical to our country’s continued economic prosperity.

WELCOMING-RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Building Welcoming Communities.** This spring, the Task Force will launch a challenge to encourage local governments to develop and implement local immigrant and refugee integration strategies. Working with Task Force members, the Administration will provide technical assistance and other opportunities to participating communities that put them on the path to building welcoming communities.
2. **Toolkit for Local Communities on Federal Efforts to Support Welcoming Communities and Integration Efforts.** While many communities have the will to engage in the hard work of building welcoming communities, many do not have the resources to develop integration plans and implement recommended actions. The Task Force will develop a toolkit to guide these communities in their welcoming efforts and to share information on federal funding streams and initiatives that promote integration and welcoming communities' efforts.
3. **Second Annual White House Convening on Immigrant and Refugee Integration.** In July 2014, the Obama Administration hosted the first-ever White House Convening on Immigrant and Refugee Integration, bringing together more than 170 leaders to share best practices and provide information on federal initiatives. Building on this effort, the White House will host a second annual convening to provide technical assistance and share best practices with "Building Welcoming Communities" challenge participants. The Task Force will also consider hosting regional summits to encourage state, regional, and local planning.
4. **New Americans Corps to Build Local Capacity.** Local communities are on the front lines of building welcoming communities. National service members, such as AmeriCorps VISTA members, could serve a critical role in municipal governments as they identify local needs; expand multisector networks; and develop and implement local integration plans. CNCS will establish a new corps of AmeriCorps VISTA members to increase capacity and foster immigrant and refugee integration.
5. **Build Strategies and Better Practices to Enhance Integration of Refugees.** Though efforts are in place to engage refugees and assist with their integration, more work must be done to develop relationships and better practices for engagement with local communities. For example, the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) will enhance refugee

engagement and develop strategies around integration by ensuring discussions on refugee integration at local quarterly stakeholder meetings and creating and disseminating welcome letters to refugees encouraging local community engagement upon their arrival. PRM will also collaborate with ORR during this process.

6. **Emphasize Existing Funding Opportunities to Assist New Americans and Welcoming Communities.** For example, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program at HUD provides annual grants to over 1,200 units of local government and states in order to fund public facilities to improve communities, ensure decent affordable housing, provide services to community members, and create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses. HUD will highlight how localities can use CDBG funding to implement activities in an effort to more intentionally and meaningfully engage with new Americans.

7. **Connect the Promise Zone Initiative with Welcoming Communities Efforts.** The President named the first five Promise Zones in 2014 and will designate an additional 15 Promise Zones by the end of calendar year 2016. In these Promise Zones, the federal government is partnering with local leaders to help them access the resources and expertise they need to create jobs, increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, and reduce violent crime. Many current Promise Zone communities are already engaged in welcoming communities work, but more can be done to give them the tools to successfully integrate immigrants and refugees. The third-round Promise Zone competition will commence in 2015. HUD will solicit public comment on the proposed selection process, criteria, and submissions for the final round of the Promise Zones initiative. During the public comment period, HUD will solicit feedback on how to increase resident engagement, including the engagement of current residents with new Americans, as part of the next Promise Zone Solicitation. HUD will also work with the Task Force to encourage written comments from integration stakeholders.

8. **Ensure Federal, State, and Local Government Programs Uphold Civil Rights Obligations.** DOJ will continue its efforts to investigate the extent to which — despite existing federal guidance — new American families still face language barriers when obtaining services or enrolling in programs. For example, immigrants, refugees, and children of immigrants can encounter language barriers or experience other forms of discrimination when enrolling in school. As a result, earlier this year, ED and DOJ released joint guidance reminding states, school districts, and schools of their obligations under federal law to ensure that English learner students have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. Other agencies will engage in

similar proactive efforts to ensure equal access to federally funded programs and activities. For example, HUD plans to launch a two-year pilot to improve the agency's communication with ELs.

9. **Increase Low-Cost Legal Services Capacity for Immigrants and Refugees.** Many immigrants and refugees face barriers to accessing affordable immigration-related legal services. In recognition of the need to increase local capacity to provide lowcost immigration legal services, DOJ will issue new rules to clarify the process for becoming a recognized and accredited legal service provider. It is essential that communities learn about these changes that will allow more organizations to assist individuals. DOJ will work with other Task Force members, including DHS and HHS, and receiving communities to publicize the proposed changes and launch a public campaign on the final guidelines. DOJ will also work with national, state, and local bar associations, law schools, and others to share information and encourage communities to become accredited.

10. **Combat Notario Fraud.** The Federal Partners Working Group — a consortium of agencies including DOJ, DHS, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) — engages in intradepartmental and interagency efforts to protect immigrants and the immigration process from the Unauthorized Practice of Immigration Law (UPIL) and immigration scams. Federal partners will continue to provide education to the public on how to identify signs of UPIL or “notario fraud,” how to find authorized practitioners that can provide legal advice, and how to detect and report immigration scams. Public education efforts will include presentations at community events, dissemination of educational materials in 14 languages, and capacity-building efforts targeting immigrant-serving organizations. Federal partners will also continue to support and encourage law enforcement efforts at the federal, state, and local levels to combat UPIL and hold unauthorized practitioners accountable.

11. **Promote Productive Engagement between New Americans and Law Enforcement.** DOJ's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) awards grants to local law enforcement agencies so that they may better hire and train individuals and develop strategies that advance community policing. Through the COPS program, local law enforcement can develop a better understanding of their local communities, work to build relationships, and best address issues of importance to community members. COPS will develop best practices for training officers on cultural sensitivity and building trust with and educating immigrants and refugees about community policing. DOJ's Civil Rights Division, Special Litigation Section, also will continue to develop best practices for advancing community policing through its settlement agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies, and through its compliance monitoring of those agreements.