

Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Inclusion Initiative

March 2022 Immigrant Inclusion Blueprint



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Message from Lead Community Liaison, Robin Lewy



Robin Lewy, GINI Initiative Co-Lead

The GINI Blueprint outlines a vision for a safer, vibrant, and more inclusive Gainesville and Alachua County. Thanks to support from the Gateways for Growth initiative, the GINI Blueprint reflects a 15-month collaboration between the City of Gainesville and community members. It is a plan devised by 60 community members, 8 organizations and the voices of 182 foreign-born respondents to the 2022 GINI Immigrant Welcoming Survey. This is a living document which will shift as goals are attained and as new voices come to the table.

The GINI Steering Committee has reviewed data, developed the 2021/22 GINI Immigrant Welcome Survey, and held workshops and listening sessions. We have learned that one in ten neighbors is foreign-born. Immigrant residents represent one quarter of Gainesville and Alachua's growth, and almost one in five new businesses is attributable to this community. Immigrants represent about 14% of spending power in the County (\$696 million) and contribute \$57 million to state and local taxes.

Building a comprehensive plan requires that we identify opportunities for progress. The Blueprint elaborates on five goals to overcome past inequities: Engaged Communities, Equitable Access, Healthy Communities, Safe Communities and Equitable Education. The goals are in recognition of the different realities faced by immigrant neighbors, acknowledging the roles that race, culture, and economic status play in both perception and treatment. Therefore, these goals include actionable steps intended to strengthen our area

with culturally competent, linguistically accessible services, as well as non-bias policies to enhance the safety and inclusion of immigrants and refugees who call Gainesville/Alachua County their home.

Such a plan affirms City and County efforts to support sustainable, innovative, and prosperous communities. We know this work will require adjustments, additions, monitoring, and, most importantly, support from the community. The Steering Committee calls on social service providers, nonprofit organizations, government entities and immigrant community members to engage in this work.

Won't you join us?

—Robin Lewy, GINI Initiative Co-Lead

Message from the Grant Makers



***Jordyne Krumroy, Senior Regional
Manager, Welcoming America***



***Leani Garcia Torres, Deputy Director,
State & Local Initiatives, American
Immigration Council***

In 2016, a partnership between Welcoming America and New American Economy — now the American Immigration Council — created the Gateways for Growth Challenge to support communities that have a demonstrated commitment to developing an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming environment for all residents. Since then, more than 70 communities have been awarded with tailored economic research on the contributions of immigrants and technical assistance in the development of a multi-sector strategic plan for immigrant inclusion in their communities.

In 2020, the City of Gainesville was one of only 10 communities selected nationally to receive both components of this competitive opportunity. Alongside colleagues in communities like Miami-Dade, Florida and Saint Paul, Minnesota, Gainesville received this award because of the commitment from local government, business, and civil society to work collaboratively. This collaboration toward concrete and action-oriented recommendations ensures that

the city is addressing both the challenges and opportunities facing the immigrant community and is creating pathways for all residents to succeed.

The City of Gainesville in partnership with the Rural Women's Health Project has worked over the past year to build a multi-sector task force committed to welcoming and survey the community to ensure that the voices of those most impacted are represented throughout the plan. This process identifies opportunities to advance equity and demonstrates a commitment from all those involved to build a more welcoming Gainesville. We are thrilled to see this plan implemented and look forward to the ways in which Gainesville becomes a more equitable, prosperous community by ensuring that all residents can belong.

—Jordyne Krumroy, Senior Regional Manager, Welcoming America & Leani García Torres, Deputy Director, State & Local Initiatives, American Immigration Council

The GINI Blueprint Background



The City of Gainesville was awarded research and technical assistance grants by the New American Economy (NAE) and Welcoming America in 2020. The competitive awards process was part of the 2020 Gateways for Growth Challenge, a nationwide effort to improve immigrant inclusion and economic opportunities. Gainesville was one of 19 award recipients. As part of the grant our community was tasked with creating a Welcoming Plan that would promote a sustainable model for inclusion and safety in Gainesville and Alachua County for our immigrant neighbors.

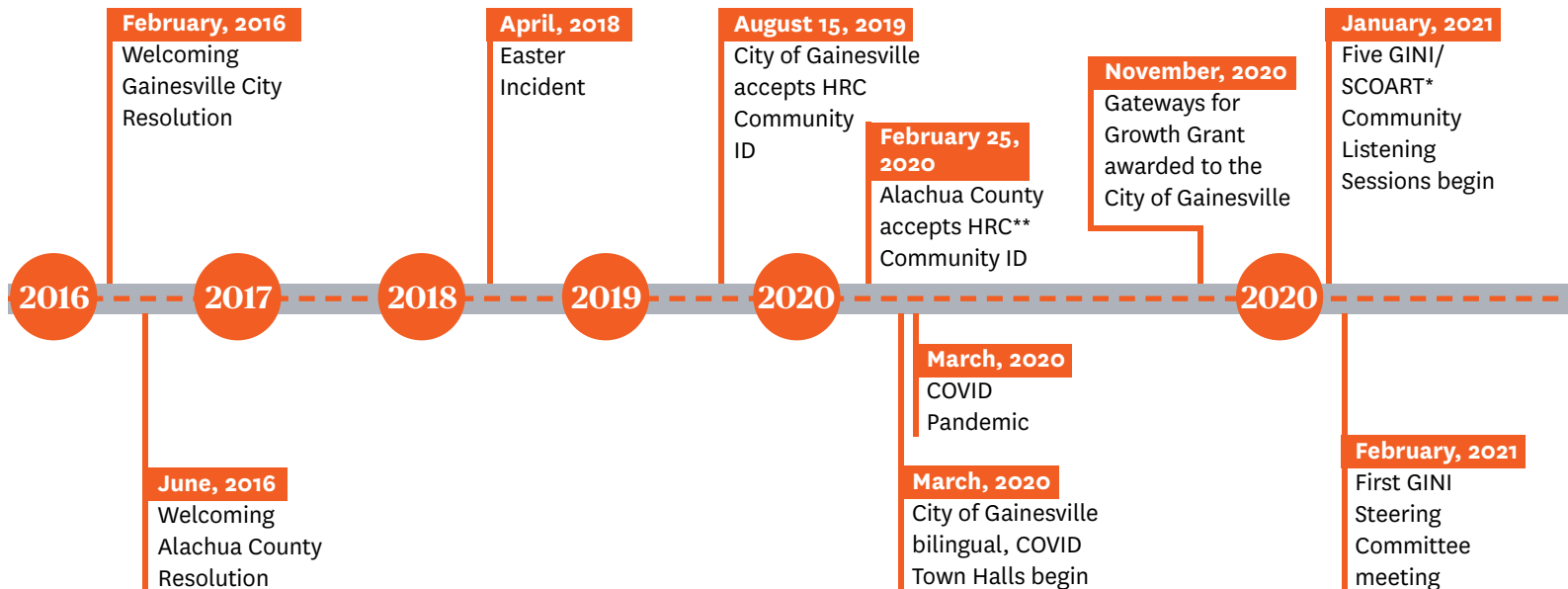
Community leaders, advocacy organizations, academic institutions, health care providers, business partners and immigrant neighbors came together to build a diverse coalition that would focus its work on strengthening the availability of community assets for our foreign-born neighbors, improve access and service delivery and advance policies that reflect the needs of our immigrant neighbors.

As such, the Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Inclusion project (GINI) was launched in 2021. Members of the steering committee were split into working groups to focus on one of five strategic priorities:

- **Safety**
- **Civic Inclusion**
- **Language Access**
- **Education**
- **Health**

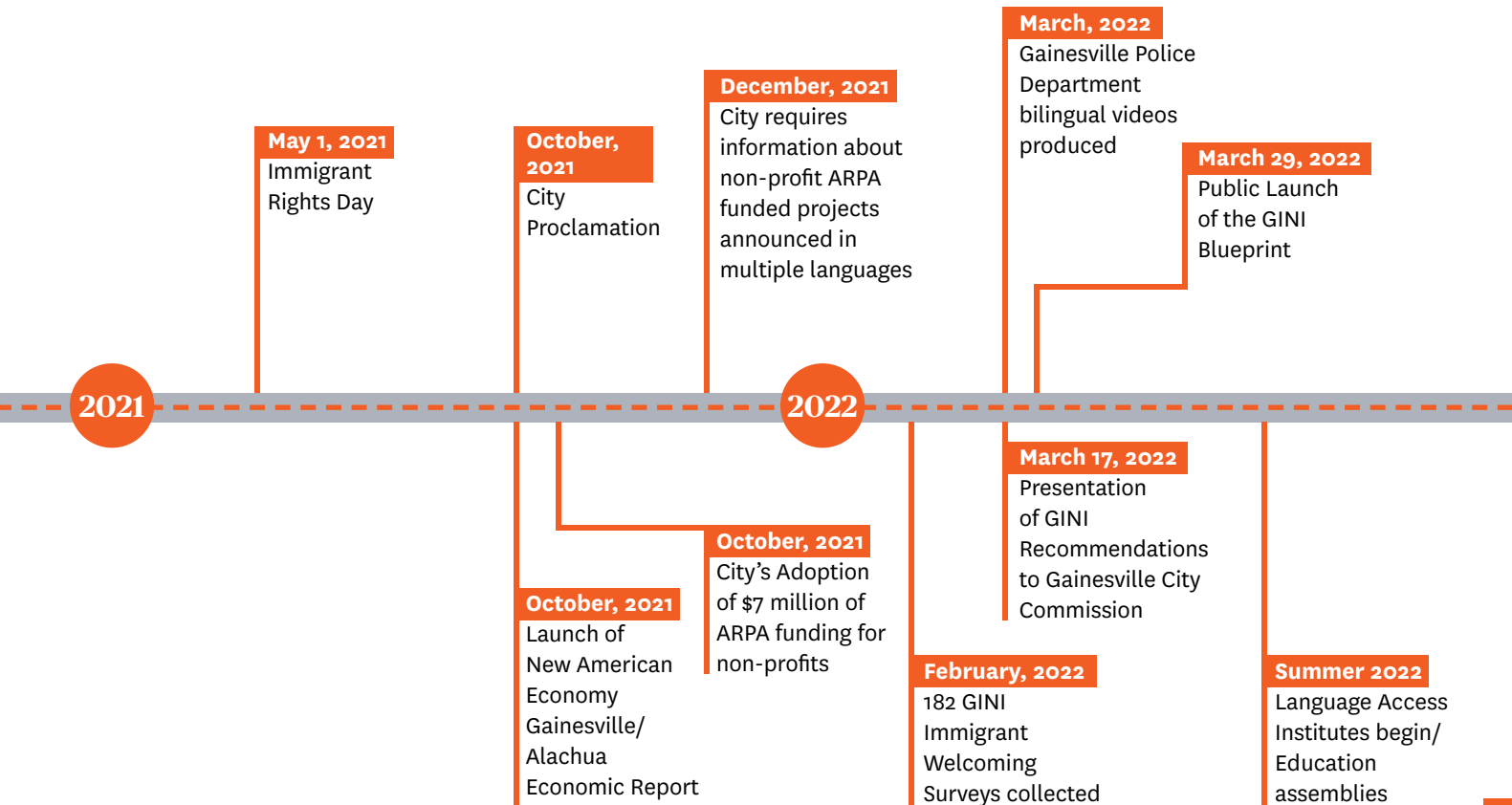
Each working group convened monthly over the span of nine months to discuss policy recommendations that the City of Gainesville and Alachua County could adopt to become more inclusive. The full committee met monthly over a 16-month period to deliberate over working group recommendations and to create a consensus agenda and policy recommendations. This work culminated into the 2022 GINI Blueprint. The Blueprint offers both city and county leaders clear guidance and strategies for achieving the Welcoming City designation.

Timeline



*SCOART is a blended application of a SWOT and SOAR strategic planning tool

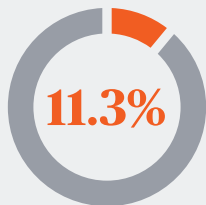
**Human Rights Coalition of Alachua County



Building a Welcoming Community

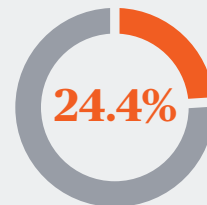
Welcoming America, the national organization that provides guidance, resources and standards for creating inclusive communities has established the following seven categories that define welcoming places:

- **Government Leadership:** In welcoming places, local governments implement systems and programs that strengthen community efforts and embed inclusion within government agencies.
- **Equitable Access:** Welcoming places work to ensure community services and opportunities are available to all residents, including newcomers. This includes improving access to healthcare, childcare, transportation, and more.
- **Civic Engagement:** Welcoming communities actively ensure that residents, including newcomers, fully participate in civic life by increasing access to leadership and democratic spaces.
- **Connected Communities:** Welcoming communities build connections between newcomers and long-term residents by strengthening relationships, communicating shared values, and promoting a welcoming culture through institutional communications.
- **Education:** Welcoming communities strive for an educational system that ensures all students have the support they need to succeed in school and at work.
- **Economic Development:** Welcoming communities harness the potential of all residents by developing economies that leverage the talents of all people.
- **Safe Communities:** Welcoming communities foster trust and build relationships between residents and law enforcement and other public safety agencies.



Immigrants made up 11.3% of the total population in Gainesville in 2019*

14,800
immigrants lived in
Gainesville, Florida, in 2019*



24.4% of the total population growth in the city was attributable to immigrants*

The Blueprint Goals

The GINI Blueprint provides an action plan with goals and recommendations towards creating an inclusive and safe community for immigrants. We believe the steps outlined in this plan should serve as a foundation for future policies coming from the City and County. Specific metrics for the recommendations, as well as best practices and flow charts are available as part of the GINI Blueprint Tool Box.

Safe Communities

Improve the relationship between immigrants and law enforcement and increase knowledge of rights

Engaged Communities

Create an environment that prioritizes inclusion and a sense of belonging for all residents

Healthy Communities

Ensure health services throughout Gainesville and Alachua County are accessible and responsive to the needs of all

Equitable Education

Ensure schools throughout Gainesville and Alachua County are responsive to the barriers immigrant families face

Equitable Access

Implement language access policies across City and County government, educational institutions and health services



GINI Successes to Date:

October 2021: Gainesville's Immigrants Day Proclamation
Mayor Lauren Poe acknowledges the economic impact of immigrant communities and the many struggles they encounter

October 2021: GPD adopts "anti-bias" policy
Prevents officers from inquiring about legal status

Nov. 2021- Feb. 2022: GINI Community Survey Distributed
182 responses representing residents from 35 countries and 8 regions. Offers recommendations and reflections on community inclusion and safety

December 2021: Gainesville City Commission motion on ARPA funding
Adopted a motion requiring the translation of any City initiatives or policies approved for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and the use of the same grant's money to help pay for language access initiatives across all core services.

March 2022: GPD launches multilingual community resource videos Video series highlights recently adopted anti-bias policies

Safe Communities

Cultivating trust between immigrant communities and local governments, law enforcement and the community-at-large is critical to creating a safe and welcoming community. While strides have been made, immigrant-inclusive policies are needed in all agencies within Alachua County to ensure that immigrant community members are informed of their rights and served with respect.



Outcome I: *Increase immigrants' knowledge of their legal rights and responsibilities, improving their capacity to effectively respond to threats to their safety*

Action Step I: Hire a full-time Immigrant Liaison within the City, County, and school board tasked with training and implementation of policies that increase inclusion, safety and support partnerships with immigrant communities and the GINI Steering Committee.²

Action Step II: Hire a part-time community-based representative from immigrant communities that will serve as the intermediary between the Immigrant Liaison and their community.³

Action Step III: Host community listening sessions around safety, run by law enforcement agencies, at willing immigrant organizations, churches and community centers.

Action Step IV: Support “Know Your Rights and Responsibilities” workshops, presented by community advocates and organizations in culturally sensitive locations.⁴

Action Step V: Distribute informative multi-language “Know Your Rights” brochures at locations commonly frequented by immigrant community members.⁵

Action Step VI: Inform immigrant community members that concerns or complaints should be addressed to the city or county Immigrant Liaison.

“Inclusion is a commitment” –GINI Immigrant Welcoming Survey respondent¹

The GINI Blueprint provides an overview of the goals and recommendations towards an inclusive and safe community for immigrants. Specific metrics for the recommendations, as well as best practices and flow charts are available on the online GINI Blueprint Tool Box (will be available in April 2022).⁷⁴



Outcome II: *Improve the relationship between local law enforcement and immigrants*

Action Step I: Prohibit, unless otherwise required by state or federal law, government agencies from asking residents about their legal status; explore the passage of the Trust Act to further support this strategy.⁷

Action Step II: Educate City and County charters, Alachua County Public Schools, law enforcement and other

community service providers about the Human Rights Coalition of Alachua County's Community ID Program.⁸

Action Step III: Promote new policies from the City and County charters, police/sheriff departments, and Alachua County Public Schools into the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁹ and across multiple mediums.

Action Step IV: Provide cultural competence-training to law enforcement staff on issues relating to immigrants.

Outcome III: *Improve access to resources for immigrant survivors of crime.*

Action Step I: Create accessible printed and online materials explaining victim rights, including phone numbers for more information on legal rights, in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area¹⁰ and have these reviewed by community members for clarity.

Action Step II: Update Alachua County Victim Services website with translations of services, victim rights and resources into the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area.¹¹



1 in 4 respondents are unsatisfied with law enforcement⁶

Outcome IV: *Ensure the safety of our Limited English Proficient residents*

Action Step I: Update all tabs, links, and documents under “Virtual Front Desk” on the Gainesville Police Department website to include translations in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area.¹²

Action Step II: Update the Gainesville Police Department and Alachua County Victim Services websites to have victim rights available in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area¹⁴ and ensure that any PDFs and links are also translated.¹³

Safe Communities



Action Step III: Have a designated staff member across all City and County charters responsible for maintaining and updating their respective websites to ensure all new and essential webpages and documents are available in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area.¹⁵

Action Step IV: Create specific language access policies within law enforcement, Alachua County Public Schools, and all City and County charters in order to promote safety and increase accountability.

Action Step V: Educate immigrant communities on language access policies within law enforcement, providing an impartial point of contact, such as a corporate counsel office or human resources department.

Action Step VI: Offer incentives to law enforcement officials who are bilingual to help diversify languages spoken by law enforcement.¹⁶

*How can the community improve safety?**

Address racism/stigma against immigrants by educating law enforcement and community through multicultural education

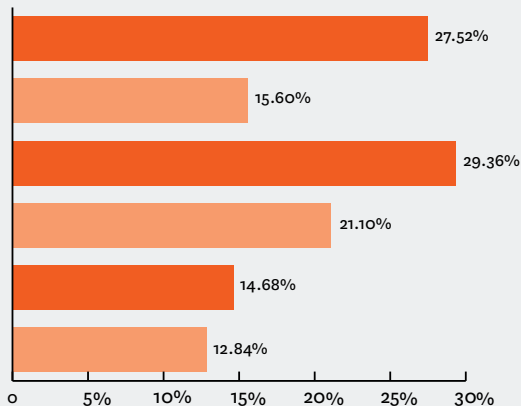
Nothing, city is safe

Increase/diversify law enforcement

Invest in social services and legal education

Expand and promote safety policies and programs in multiple languages

Get community input on safety



*Respondents were able to select more than one option

Community Spotlight: Saeed Khan



Retired Professor from University of Florida, past President of the Muslim Association of North Central Florida, the local chapter of the United Nations Association and RAHMA Mercy Clinic

Growing up in his native India, Saeed Khan's parents were adamant that their eight children attend college. Khan was always impressed with textbooks—especially the references. “It became my dream to become a researcher so I could be cited at the end of textbooks,” he said.

He made good on that dream. He studied biology, completed his master's in botany and received a Fulbright to pursue his PhD in the same subject at the University of Florida in Gainesville. There, he met and married his wife, before taking a post-doc in Australia. When the program ended, the couple quickly returned to Florida.

The University Of Florida Department Of Urology hired Khan in 1978 where he worked until his semi-retirement in 2018. In 2016, UF and The American Urological Association awarded him lifetime achievement awards for his research on the formation of kidney stones, a condition that affects approximately 1 in 11 people in U.S. Today Khan sits on the board for the Alachua

Habitat for Humanity chapter. “Once you give the key to the new home owner and you look at their face, that is the most amazing feeling you get,” he says. He serves as a board member for the local United Nations chapter, Welcoming Gainesville and several City of Gainesville departments.

Khan credits his parents for his drive to give back. “We grew up knowing you were supposed to help those who need it,” he says. “And that's something almost everybody—whether you are a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Sikh or have no faith at all—has in us. It brings us together for the common good.”

Engaged Communities

We must work to ensure that immigrant neighbors see their culture reflected and respected. Encouraging the inclusion of underrepresented community members and offering guidance to cultural norms, expectations, and traditions would provide an opportunity to cultivate an environment of inclusion that is truly authentic.

Outcome I: *Create position(s) within the City and County that will be tasked with increasing immigrant community engagement and civic inclusion.*

Action Step I: Hire a full-time Immigrant Liaison within the City, County, and school board tasked with working alongside local charters and organizations to achieve inclusion of immigrant neighbors.

Action Step II: Recruit members from the most prevalent immigrant communities to serve as consultants to help the City plan events and provide cultural knowledge.

Action Step III: Provide training for City and County officials to build cultural competence.



80% of respondents want more opportunities to become fully included in the community¹⁷

Inclusion: *Fostering an environment where everyone feels respected and has the ability to fully participate in the community*

Outcome II: *Create a visible Immigrant Inclusion section on the City's and County's websites*

Action Step I: Feature a listing of City and County resources for immigrant affairs, language access, community events and general services.¹⁸

Outcome III: *Ensure the inclusion of limited English proficient speakers and their interactions with community events and services.*

Action Step I: Require that information on City and County services, resources, and websites, as well as any promotion of City-sponsored events, health and safety-related announcements be available in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area.¹⁹



2/3 of respondents feel their voice is heard by government officials^{35,36}



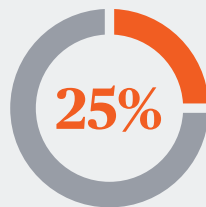
Outcome IV: *Increase immigrants' local and national civic knowledge, community responsibilities, and open a dialogue with City and County charters.*

Action Step I: Provide classes and training on civics for both residents and new citizens living in the community.²¹

Action Step II: Provide presentations and workshops to inform immigrants about City/County services and requirements.²²

Action Step III: Engage the Spring and Fall Gainesville-based festivals with concepts and actions of inclusion from planning to promotion.

Action Step IV: Use community events as an opportunity for outreach with mobile clinics and/or representatives from free clinics and legal services to inform attendees about their services.



25% of respondents don't feel the community respects their cultural traditions²³

Outcome V: *Increase immigrant participation in community events and foster an environment of inclusivity at City, County and school system-sponsored events.²⁴*

Action Step I: Create City, County and school system events that are informed and respectful and inform participants on different cultures.

Action Step II: Create a “Welcoming” event for new residents and business owners that celebrates and provides new immigrant residents with information on city resources/services.²⁵



Nearly 1/3 of respondents feel they are not included and do not belong in our community²⁰

Equitable Access

By taking measurable steps to ensure language access in the community, we show our commitment to providing equitable access to information. It is a community responsibility to ensure that our immigrant and limited English proficient (LEP) neighbors have access to resources provided throughout the community, regardless of whether these neighbors emigrated for reasons related to employment, education, or because life in their home country was deemed no longer safe.

Outcome I: *Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Programs receiving federal funds, including public schools, are required to provide meaningful access to essential services, benefits and programs for limited English proficient speakers.*²⁸

Action Step I: Translate City, County and School Board websites into the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area.²⁹

Action Step II: Translate the Alert GNV app into Spanish with linkage to a website for critical messages in the community's top 4 other languages.

Action Step III: Translate Gainesville Regional Utilities applications and payment options into Spanish, with highlights in the community's top 4 other languages.

Action Step IV: Mandate all contracts with the City, County, and School Board implement and use language lines.

Action Step V: Hands-on training for all front-line City, County and School Board employees on how to use the language line.

Action Step VI: Translate City, County and public-school signage (critical resources, emergency routes, etc) into Spanish and Chinese (Mandarin).

Action Step VII: Fund an Immigrant Neighbor Guide, developed by groups serving immigrants, to explain systems, protocols, rights to services as well as immigrant's responsibilities as neighbors.³¹

Title VI 1964 Civil Rights Act

"In addition to the safety, quality control, ethical and fiscal motivations for instituting language access programs, legal requirements exist. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits "any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" from discriminating based on national origin, which the U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted to include discrimination based on language."²⁶

Executive Order 13166

"The Executive Order requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. It is expected that agency plans will provide for such meaningful access consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency. The Executive Order also requires that the Federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries."²⁷

Outcome II: Establish language access protocols across all services within the City and County, with the help of community organizations.³³

Action Step I: Development and implementation of a Gainesville City Language Access Plan to be responsive to 1964 Civil Rights Act Title VI.

Action Step II: Require City services, County charters, and the School Board to utilize the language access rubric and resources to self-assess their ability to serve limited English speakers.

Action Step III: Promote all City-sponsored events, health or safety related announcements in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area³⁴ and across multiple mediums (City website and social media, radio, fliers, etc.).

Action Step IV: Foster an environment of collaboration between the different immigrant-serving organizations throughout the City and County.

Action Step V: Support immigrant-serving organizations to collect data on the languages used by their clientele, offering a greater understanding of the diversity and needs of those they serve.

*How can the community improve inclusion?**³⁰



*Respondents were able to select more than one option

Community Spotlight: Yennifer Molina



Yennifer Molina

***Madres Sin Fronteras, Vice President of the
Human Rights Coalition of Alachua County***

In Honduras, Yennifer Molina's mother worked around the clock at the family restaurant to fund private school tuition for her daughters. "We wanted to go to regular school with our cousins and friends," recalls Molina. "But my mom was thinking ahead. She insisted we learn English."

After high school, Molina completed two years of college. But she worried about the long hours her mother worked to cover tuition. "I kept saying, 'Let me go to work in the U.S. and provide for you for a little while.'" At 17, Molina moved to South Carolina to live with her uncle and cousin. "Like any typical immigrant, I wanted to conquer the world," she says. Her English proficiency gave her a real advantage, and she was able to secure multiple jobs in customer service as a Claim Department Specialist, Translator and Quality Inspection professional.

In 2010, after the birth of her son, Zachary, Molina's partner was offered a construction job in Gainesville and the family relocated to Florida. Molina fell in love with the city, but even she was not immune to the anti-

immigrant sentiment that was permeating American politics.

One day, her son's school refused her early check out, because she only had her Honduran passport, not a state-issued ID. This was not school policy and Molina was familiar with the front office workers. "I think she just felt entitled to refuse me because she could," Molina says.

In 2017 Molina, with other community organizers, launched Madres Sin Fronteras to advocate for equal rights and protections for immigrants. She's also Vice President of the Human Rights Coalition of Alachua County. Their Community ID program provides Alachua County residents—regardless of their immigration status—with a reliable form of identification to be used with the local law enforcement, utility companies, schools and healthcare centers. "That was a big win for us," says Molina. They're now working to ensure all city and county entities formally recognize the identification card. "We want to build greater understanding, trust and cooperation between public service agencies and our diverse community," says Molina.

Healthy Communities



Barriers to health care services produces a rippling effect into one's job, education, and as is the case with COVID, the health and safety of one's family and community. The pandemic has helped reveal, to a broad extent, what immigrants have long experienced in our area: challenges in accessing information and public health services. This has created both negative health and economic outcomes.

Outcome I: *Ensure access to healthcare-related resources for limited English proficient speakers and immigrant neighbors.*

Action Step I: Develop opportunities through community-based partners to provide area providers and health systems with a better understanding of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 13166 requirements to provide limited English proficient speakers with assistance in their language, using language access tools such as agency language access plans, language evaluations, and linkage with interpretation services.³⁸

Action Step II: Expand healthcare provider personnel to include more multilingual staff members.

Action Step III: Provide language access and best practices based on successful models from other welcoming communities for working with immigrants in training healthcare providers, emerging healthcare professionals, and social workers.³⁹

Action Step IV: Promote research opportunities for undergraduate/graduate students to gather data from public, private and safety-net healthcare providers on the languages spoken, health challenges by patients to help inform translation efforts.

Action Step V: Promote health, disaster and emergency response efforts via the City and Alachua County Emergency Management in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area and via non-English language media and community outreach agencies.

Healthy Communities

Outcome II: *Increase access to healthcare for immigrant neighbors who have limited economic means and/or no health insurance.*

Action Step I: Support the implementation of a city or county programs that provide coverage to uninsured patients who have limited economic means or who are unable to apply for health insurance.^{42,43,44}

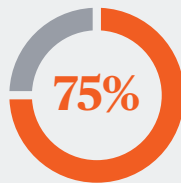
Action Step II: Support the expansion of sliding scale, high-quality medical care in areas of the community that are health care deserts.

Action Step III: Promote health insurance options broadly and throughout the community using navigators and other similar paraprofessionals.⁴⁵

Action Step IV: Expand the capacity of local agencies to provide medical, dental, social, legal, and mental health referrals to immigrant community members.⁴⁶



Over 1/2 of respondents marked language barriers as one of their greatest obstacles to accessing healthcare⁴⁰



75% of respondents want more opportunities to access healthcare in their language³⁷

Outcome III: *Reduce language, transportation, and identification barriers that prevent immigrant neighbors from accessing healthcare.*

Action Step I: Provide information, in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁴⁸, to patients on public transportation options to and from healthcare providers.

Action Step II: Provide special assistance, in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁴⁹, of transportation options for those with disabilities.

Action Step III: Educate healthcare providers on the use of the Human Rights Coalition of Alachua County's Community ID and document patient usage, recommending their acceptance.⁵⁰



Over $\frac{1}{4}$ of respondents have difficulty accessing health care services⁴⁷

Outcome IV: *Increase the number of health-related events for immigrant and LEP neighbors and improve their participation in these events.*

Action Step I: Request the City, County, and community organizations to provide health and safety-related promotions into the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁵¹ via social media, websites and non-formal communication mechanisms available in conjunction with immigrant communities.

Action Step II: Request the City and County engage with faith institutions, agencies and worksites where immigrants congregate in great numbers.⁵²

Action Step III: Request the City and County provide funding for community organizations to increase personnel (lay health workers, insurance navigators, social workers) within immigrant communities to supplement promotion and address cultural hesitancy.⁵³

Equitable Education

The following strategies and recommendations are proposed to strengthen the education system's preparedness for ensuring the success of immigrant students and limited English proficient neighbors.

Outcome I: *Ensure equitable access to education and school resources for immigrant and limited English proficient students and their families.*

Action Step I: Each school surveys limited English proficient families to learn if their language needs are being met

Action Step II: Contract with a telephone-based interpretation service to ensure timely, equitable and clear communication between school staff, parents and children who are limited English proficient (LEP) speakers throughout all of the Alachua County School system locations.⁵⁵

Action Step III: Operationalize and train all front-line school system staff, including nurses, special needs professionals, transportation workers and teachers on the operating procedures of the language-line for communication with limited English proficient (LEP) students and their families.

Action Step IV: Create a central Welcome/Registration Hub, with potential mobile units to orient immigrant families when entering the education system to receive essential information, in their language, regarding registration, transportation, and other services in order to ensure the educational success of students.⁵⁶

Action Step V: Provide multilingual signage at critical spaces on school campuses (i.e. main office, nurses' office, library and auditorium) and multilingual maps of each school to assist family visits and interaction within school grounds.

Action Step VI: Require that information on after-school programs, clubs, athletic and summer programs are provided in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area.⁵⁷

Action Step VII: Provide translations of all documents that are given to students and parents in the languages they speak, including, but not limited to: registration forms, progress reports, release forms, all health related or safety information, emergency notices (school shutdowns, early release), etc.

Action Step VIII: Promote the school system's Bilingual Immersion Program and require that promotional information and registration is provided in Spanish and English and across multiple mediums to ensure accessibility.

Action Step IX: Identify a point of contact within each school, to compile a list of students and parents who require communication in a language other than English to facilitate fluid communication (written and oral) in the language of that family.



90% of respondents want the City and County to increase opportunities for immigrants and refugees to access a good education⁵⁴

Outcome II: *Increase ESOL staffing (liaisons, paraprofessional aids, counselors, teachers) to support the multiple needs of an increasing immigrant student community.*

Action Step I: Hire an Immigrant Service Coordinator who will serve as the school system's liaison between LEP students/families and the schools, and work across the education system to ensure language access compliance and immigrant inclusion.

Action Step II: Increase the number of specialists, paraprofessional aids and counselors that work with LEP students and parents in accordance with state guidelines.^{58,59}

Action Step III: Explore the potential of providing pay incentives for multilingual employees that pass certification to assure language mastery and strengthen the diversity of school staff.⁶⁰

Outcome III: *Simplify the registration process for immigrant parents and children entering into schools and programs such as summer activities, clubs etc.*

Action Step I: Prepare all registration or on-boarding forms for families in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁶² to facilitate registration of new students.

Action Step II: Develop an education brochure in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area for new parents and students which outlines the school registration process, information about transportation, ESOL procedures, and English Language Learning opportunities for adults in clear and literacy appropriate language.⁶⁴

Action Step III: Develop culturally, linguistically, and literacy-appropriate materials on critical procedures and routines of schools, provided at time of student registration.

Action Step IV: Provide annual trainings, in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁶⁵, for ESOL families and LEP parents on how to use school website and portals.

Action Step V: Create a mentor-mentee program in each ESOL school where immigrant children and parents who have had experience moving through the school system help newcomers get better footing.⁶⁶

Equitable Education

Outcome IV: *Foster an environment that recognizes and addresses barriers experienced by immigrant families and train those involved in the education system on how best to support these community members.*⁶⁷

Action Step I: Create a Cultural Competency Board (CCB) tasked with broadening the understanding of teachers, administration, drivers and staff on the cultural and socio-economic background of our immigrant communities.⁶⁸

Action Step II: Provide front-line staff with “I-Speak” cards to facilitate easier identification of the language assistance required for literate readers.⁶⁹

Action Step III: Provide front-line staff with phrases in the most common languages spoken by registered students to foster communication with immigrant families and present multi-cultural acceptance.



1 in 4 respondents do not believe the education system meets their needs⁶¹

Outcome V: *Require the transportation center to fulfill the same requirements of language access and fluid communication with LEP families.*

Action Step I: Provide clear guidance, in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁷⁰, of bus procedures and commutes.

Action Step II: Provide clear messaging, in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁷¹, when there are changes in the bus route, pick-up and drop-off times.

Action Step III: Streamline the inclusion of ESOL children who ride the bus into their assigned bus within days, not weeks.

Action Step IV: Expand bus routes to neighborhoods where ESOL students reside.

“...it is the responsibility of the school community to encourage and support a positive, safe learning environment where every child reaches his or her maximum potential.”

–Alachua County School Board Mission statement



Outcome VI: *support English Language Adult Programming.*

Action Step I: Provide information on English language learning opportunities at multiple venues, including culturally relevant locations that are frequented by immigrant groups (churches, community centers, etc.).

Action Step II: Promotion of any English-language learning opportunities must be provided in the top five languages spoken within the Gainesville/Alachua area⁷³, easily accessible/navigable and across both traditional and nontraditional mediums (social media, radio, flyers, churches, supermarkets, etc.).



~90% of respondents want more opportunities to improve their English⁷²

Community Spotlight: Jyoti Parmar



Jyoti Parmar
Executive Director, North Central Florida
Indivisible

At age 11, Jyoti Parmar competed in an annual neighborhood race in her Indian town. The first-place prize: a shiny, red bicycle with tassels. But when Parmar won, she was told, “That’s the boy’s prize.” She argued with the judges but ultimately walked away empty handed. The following year, however, there were two bicycles. “It proved to me that one person can make a difference,” she said.

In 1981, when Parmar was 16, her father was recruited by Bethlehem Steel in Pennsylvania. A month after moving to the U.S., he died unexpectedly. The family was suddenly without its breadwinner. And though Parmar’s mother held an economics degree, no one would hire her. “She wore a sari and had an accent, and it was actually traumatic for her at times, the way she was treated,” says Parmar.

Parmar’s mother used her expertise to invest in the stock market, while Parmar and her siblings got part-time jobs. Within two years, the family was able to purchase a home.

But Parmar never forgot the discrimination and barriers her family faced as Brown immigrants in America. “I know what it’s like to be underestimated and marginalized,” she said. “So, if I can see a solution to a challenge a group is facing, I act.”

Parmar has served as an advisory board member for the Victim Services and Rape Crisis Center in Alachua County and launched a group called Baby Steps to support new parents. In 2018, she started North Central Florida Indivisible, a voter registration and civic engagement group with 50 active volunteers. The organization was instrumental in the Stop Asian Hate March in 2021.

Parmar says that English-only resources prevent many minority and low-income residents from accessing city services. “But there is a growing awareness and support for finding solutions that work for us,” she says. “Together we are creating a pathway to bring more underrepresented people into the political and community conversations.”

Next Steps



The GINI Blueprint is a living document. The Steering Committee has already seen proof of the group's influence taking root within the community in the areas of safety and inclusion. As such, the Steering Committee recognizes that, while we expect some recommendations outlined in the GINI Blueprint will take time to implement, many are actionable strategies that can and should be taken promptly by the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, and our school board. These steps will serve to solidify their commitment to the inclusion of immigrants and advance efforts towards becoming a more Welcoming City.

We urge swift action by the Gainesville City Commission, Alachua Board of County Commissioners and the Alachua County School Board on the following two recommendations:

1. Implementation of telephone-based language services

This includes contracting, training and comprehensive use of this service across the organizations.

2. Hiring of Immigrant Liaisons

Will be tasked with operationalizing language access and spearheading the implementation of practices that increase immigrant safety and civic engagement.

To date, the staff and leadership at the city and county have been instrumental to GINI's work. It is the hope of the GINI Steering Committee that these key players will continue to work with immigrants, their allies and community organizations as we move toward the implementation of the Blueprint recommendations.

To this end, we have created the GINI Toolbox⁷⁴ Steps, which includes metrics for success, essential resources, and examples of best practices from across the nation. This resource will provide a step-by-step guide for each action step outlined. The City and the GINI Steering Committee will continue to work together to inform the community about our progress as our important work continues.

We understand that several key elements are likely missing from this blueprint but our work is not done. As the Steering Committee charges ahead, we anticipate deep discussions on entrepreneurship, job training, affordable housing and the creation of a welcoming center, just to name a few. The GINI Steering Committee will serve as a sustainable resource of guidance for the city, county, school board, and other community agencies seeking to adopt new inclusion practices and policies.

Becoming a Welcoming Community requires a united effort by all of us, for all of us. Let's work together to ensure everyone living in Gainesville and Alachua County is welcomed and feels a sense of belonging!

Contact us:

GINI@rwhp.org

Endnotes

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__ Immigrant

“Each new dawn we share the same
hog town sun

_ but

does it warm our
distant hearts

we breathe
the same
ancient

windblown
_ air

share
the same feeble
_ globe

lines of
language
_ we probe

possession

but
who can own
_ a river

a rock

a neighbor's thirst
_ a stranger's hunger

the fear of
_ not belonging
the anxiety of
_ entering in

for i am
_ human
and
i consider nothing that is
_ human
alien
to
me

i was hungry and
you gave me food

i was thirsty and
you gave me drink

i was a stranger. and
you took me in”

— E. Stanley Richardson