



## SEATTLE VOTES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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**What is Seattle Votes?** Seattle Votes is the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs' (OIRA) community outreach and engagement campaign to identify the barriers to civic engagement for Seattle's immigrant and refugee residents. By partnering with hundreds of organizations, we hope to survey thousands of immigrant and refugee residents in Seattle-King County about why they don't become citizens, register to vote, or vote.

**Why are we doing a survey?** Better information will result in better policies. In 2015, the Immigrant Voting Rights Task Force released a report with recommendations for city and regional governments. Both must now consider policies to improve the naturalization, registration, and voting rates of immigrant and refugee residents. One of the recommendations was the need for better data about immigrant and refugee voters. The Task Force was comprised of immigrant and refugee civic leaders appointed by Mayor Ed Murray and Mayor Mike McGinn. Their report is available at [seattle.gov/seattlevotes](http://seattle.gov/seattlevotes).

**What is the Seattle Votes survey?** The Seattle Votes survey is a research tool to help us understand barriers to civic engagement (naturalization, voter registration, and voting) for immigrant and refugee residents. The survey responses are anonymous, meaning that the surveys cannot be traced back to an individual. This ensures the survey taker's privacy. It takes less than 10 minutes to complete the survey.

**What languages is the survey available in?** The survey is available in English, Spanish, Chinese (Traditional), Vietnamese, Korean, Somali, Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, and Arabic. You can find the survey at [seattle.gov/seattlevotes](http://seattle.gov/seattlevotes) or call the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs at 206.727.8515 for a print copy.

**Who should fill out the survey?** *Only voting-age immigrant and refugee residents of Seattle-King County should fill out the survey. This means you must be born outside of the United States AND be at least 18 years of age.* If you were born in the United States OR you are younger than 18 years of age, you **should not** fill out the survey.

**What data is helpful to improve immigrant and refugee civic engagement rates?** We lack quality data on this issue. For example, it would be helpful to know the following:

- Language needs of eligible voters.
- Literacy levels of eligible limited English-proficient voters.
- Number of eligible limited English-proficient voters.
- Turnout of limited English-proficient voters.
- The use of ballot drop boxes in past and current locations.

## **Why is it important for me or my organization to support Seattle Votes?**

Immigrant and refugee residents are a growing and increasingly influential population, but our civic engagement rates lag behind other groups. When this happens, our voices are not as strong as they can be in elections and other activities. As a result, we are not part of decisions that affect our livelihood and our families. With so much at stake in the 2016 elections – jobs, education, immigration reform, and more – it's important for immigrant and refugee residents to become citizens, register to vote, and vote.

Also, the lack of immigrant and refugee voter data makes it difficult for city leaders and elections policymakers to understand what is needed to serve all Seattle residents. As members and supporters of immigrant and refugee communities, we have an opportunity to collect this data ourselves. A wise person once said: "Data is knowledge, and knowledge is power." Possessing accurate data about our communities is powerful.

**What can I do to help Seattle Votes?** If you are an immigrant or refugee and are at least 18 years old, you can help Seattle Votes by filling out a survey! After you fill it out, get your friends, family members, and colleagues who are also immigrants/refugees and are at least 18 years old to fill out the survey. You can also share the electronic version of the survey on social media, email, and text messages. You can find the survey at [www.seattle.gov/seattlevotes](http://www.seattle.gov/seattlevotes) or call the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs at 206.727.8515 for a print copy.

**What can my organization or I do to help Seattle Votes?** If you are a community or organizational leader, become a [Seattle Votes Partner](#). We would like to work with you and your organization to distribute the surveys to your members or constituents. ***Organizations that collect a minimum of 200 surveys have an option to receive a special report on the surveys collected by them. You will also be listed as a partner in the Seattle Votes report and on OIRA's web page. Ask us for more details.***

**Is funding available for my organization to do outreach?** We have a very limited budget for Seattle Votes and cannot sponsor or compensate organizations to participate in the campaign. This project is built on a mission: to improve the lives of Seattle's immigrant and refugee residents. Please join us in this mission. Together, we can make a difference.

**Where can I get more information?** For more information, contact Elsa Batres-Boni at [elsa.batres-boni@seattle.gov](mailto:elsa.batres-boni@seattle.gov) or 206.727.8515 or go to [seattle.gov/seattlevotes](http://seattle.gov/seattlevotes).



Yes! My organization wants to partner with the Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) to support Seattle Votes. Together, we can identify the barriers to immigrant and refugee citizenship and civic engagement. The results of the survey will help the City of Seattle and policymakers develop solutions to encourage more immigrants and refugees to become citizens, voters, and advocates. This is important because immigrant and refugee families and children need a strong voice to ensure a better future.

Name of Organization \_\_\_\_\_

*Please write the organization's name as you wish for it to be acknowledged in the Seattle Votes report and on OIRA's website.*

Our organization commits to helping as a Seattle Votes Partner and will collect \_\_\_\_\_ (number) of surveys.

**We need the survey in the following languages (check all that apply):**

- |   |                                  |                                |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> English             | <input type="radio"/> Vietnamese | <input type="radio"/> Tigrinya |
| <input type="radio"/> Spanish             | <input type="radio"/> Korean     | <input type="radio"/> Arabic   |
| <input type="radio"/> Traditional Chinese | <input type="radio"/> Oromo      |                                |
| <input type="radio"/> Somali              | <input type="radio"/> Amharic    |                                |

**We will use the following activities to promote, distribute, and collect the surveys (check all that apply):**

- Inviting friends and family to fill out the Seattle Votes survey.
- Sharing information about Seattle Votes in a newsletter.
- Sharing information about Seattle Votes on social media.
- Sending an email to our members/customers/constituents with a link to the Seattle Votes survey.
- Asking the members of my mosque/church/synagogue/place of worship to fill out the survey.
- Asking the immigrant and refugee staff and board members of my organization to fill out the survey.
- Other (please describe). \_\_\_\_\_

Allowing OIRA to set up a table to distribute and collect surveys at our conference or event.

Name of Event \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Event \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Event \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person for Event \_\_\_\_\_

CITY OF SEATTLE  
**IMMIGRANT  
VOTING**  
TASK FORCE REPORT

## Executive Summary

The Immigrant Voting Rights Task Force (“the Task Force”) is pleased to present this report of recommendations to the Office of the Mayor of Seattle. The mayor’s office convened the Task Force over a year ago to identify, analyze, and address the issues that affect civic and political participation by immigrant communities. Even though Seattle’s foreign-born population has grown each year and is currently around 18 percent of the City of Seattle’s (City) population, including over 57,000 naturalized citizens,<sup>1</sup> members of immigrant communities do not participate in civic life at the same rates as other Seattleites.

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The Task Force has identified many obstacles that keep immigrant communities from participating in Seattle’s civic and political life. They identified five general areas of concern and developed a series of practical recommendations that the mayor’s office can embrace to help address these barriers, which taken together can be implemented through a coordinated citywide Seattle Votes campaign with clear benchmarks and metrics associated with each of the following recommendations over the next three years. All of these recommendations assume compliance with federal, state, county and city laws, including but not limited to public gifts of funds.



Photo, Eino Sierpe, 2013

# The City of Seattle Task Force Report 2015

## FINDINGS

### **1] Members of immigrant communities do not receive sufficient information about elections and voting.**

There is not enough civics education targeting immigrant communities, and there is a tremendous need for targeted outreach regarding elections and policy issues that affect immigrant communities. Not enough information about civics, elections, and voting is translated into languages other than English.

### **2] The technology gap between immigrant communities and the rest of the City limits access to important information about elections and voting.**

The information technology used by local governments is outdated and uses platforms that are not commonly used by immigrant communities. The technology gap prevents immigrant communities from accessing important information about elections, which negatively impacts their voting rates and civic participation.

### **3] More ballot drop boxes should be located in neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants.**

The location of ballot drop boxes makes it difficult for members of immigrant communities to vote.

### **4] Immigrant communities face legal obstacles to civic and political participation.**

The failure of comprehensive immigration reform and other electoral structural obstacles such as multi-member electoral districts prevent immigrants from full participation in civic and political activities.

### **5] Significant resources are needed to assist eligible immigrants who want to naturalize. The existing resources are not coordinated to enable as many people as possible to receive assistance.**

There are not enough resources to help Seattle residents who want to become citizens complete the complex process and existing resources have not been effectively coordinated.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Improve civic engagement of immigrant communities.**

- Improve and expand data collection relating to electoral participation and language needs of immigrant communities.
- Develop and implement the Seattle Votes campaign, a comprehensive civic engagement strategy that includes funding for focused voter registration, civic education, multilingual training and information, and voter registration of young voters in coordination with the Seattle School District.

### **Address the language needs of new American voters.**

- The City should partner with community-based organizations and King County Elections to provide information and assistance in non-English languages to immigrant voters, including languages not mandated by Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act.
- The City should develop translation standards for voting information produced for limited English proficient (LEP) voters, and adopt the translation industry's best practices for simplicity and reading level comprehension.
- The City should ensure that non-English voting information is available on its website. The non-English information should be both easy to find, and all of the links to non-English information should be optimized for access over multiple platforms (e.g., mobile phones).
- The City should establish a multilingual voter hotline to provide assistance to limited English proficient (LEP) voters.

### **Ensure that neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants have readily accessible ballot drop boxes.**

- The City should ask King County Elections to place permanent ballot drop boxes in neighborhoods with large concentrations of immigrant voters.
- The City should encourage King County Elections to use permanent drop boxes rather than mobile election vans.

### **Advocate on behalf of immigrant communities.**

- Local policy makers should actively support legislation on the local, state, and federal level designed to increase immigrant civic and political participation.
- The City should conduct outreach to immigrant ex-felons in order to educate them on the process of restoring their voting rights.
- The City should encourage the state legislature, and particularly Seattle's delegation to Olympia, to pass the Washington Voting Rights Act.
- The City should encourage Washington State's delegation to Congress to support comprehensive immigration reform legislation with a pathway to citizenship.

### **Develop and fund comprehensive civic education for new Americans.**

- The City should increase funding for the New Citizen Program, and expand eligibility for program services up to 200% of the poverty level.





# Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

## About Us

Our mission is to improve the lives of Seattle's immigrant and refugee families.

We work to strengthen immigrant and refugee communities by engaging them in decisions about the City of Seattle's future, and improving the City's programs and services to meet the needs of all constituents.

## Contact

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## NEW CITIZEN CAMPAIGN

The New Citizen Campaign makes citizenship assistance more accessible to larger numbers of eligible Seattle residents through partnerships with community centers, libraries, and neighborhood service centers. The New Citizen Program provides free naturalization assistance and support through 14 community-based organizations.

## READY TO WORK

Ready to Work was designed for residents who face immense barriers to learning English and gaining employment. The program combines English as a Second Language (ESL) classes with computer literacy instruction and case management to help immigrants gain job readiness skills and take steps toward economic self-sufficiency.

## IMMIGRANT FAMILY INSTITUTE

Immigrant Family Institute is an innovative program designed to build understanding and trust between Seattle refugee communities and the Seattle Police Department (SPD). The institute helps build a grassroots network of refugee/immigrant leaders while increasing the cultural competency of the participating SPD officers.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

OIRA staff has deep relationships in immigrant and refugee communities that enable them to provide technical assistance and cultural expertise across City departments.

## LANGUAGE ACCESS

The goal of our Language Access Program is to ensure City of Seattle departments serve all City residents regardless of the language they speak. This includes providing interpretation services, translating important documents/outreach materials, and simplifying access. OIRA also provides language access technical assistance to other City departments.

## ETHNIC MEDIA PROGRAM

We believe successful outreach to immigrant and refugee communities must involve ethnic media. OIRA assists City departments in developing comprehensive outreach campaigns, which include media that serves immigrant and refugee communities. OIRA also ensures ethnic media outlets have equitable access to the latest information from the City.

## SEATTLE VOTES

Seattle Votes is our community outreach and engagement campaign to identify and better document the barriers to civic engagement for Seattle's immigrant and refugee residents. By partnering with hundreds of organizations, thousands of Seattle-King County immigrants and refugees will be surveyed about why they don't become citizens, register to vote, or vote. The findings will help inform local election policies.