

# Immigrant & Refugee (I/R) Report and Action Plan

2007-2009



City of Seattle





Immigrant & Refugee (I/R) Report and Action Plan 2007-2009  
**City of Seattle**

---

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor  
June, 2007

Dear Friends,

With the unprecedented growth of a diverse foreign-born population since the 1980s, Seattle has become a multi-cultural city. This diversity gives us much to celebrate. It also challenges City government to change to embrace Seattle's newest residents. As part of my Race and Social Justice Initiative, I want to strengthen how City government serves immigrant and refugee communities living in Seattle because we all benefit when we're all included.

We have created a broad and comprehensive initiative to promote the full and active participation of our immigrant and refugee communities in Seattle's civic, economic and cultural life. The cornerstone of this initiative is the Immigrant & Refugee Report and Action Plan you see before you.

Input provided by members of Seattle's immigrant and refugee communities, City staff, community leaders and service organizations helped us develop this plan. And, because we're not the only city grappling with these challenges, we also took a look at what other governments are doing to meet the needs of their immigrant and refugee communities.

This Immigrant & Refugee Report and Action Plan highlights the issues we identified, current efforts and actions we plan to take, both this year and in the long-term. This is a living document and as we accomplish some of the items listed in the plan, I know we'll find more actions to add to our "to do" list. We will also monitor our success and progress to ensure the actions we take provide the desired results. For more details on the Immigrant and Refugee Initiative, please go to <http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/rsji/I&RInitiative.htm> or call Yemane Gebremicael at (206)684-8076.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our immigrant and refugee communities as we work to ensure the City of Seattle is responsive to all the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Nickels".

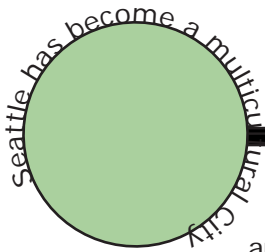
GREG NICKELS  
Mayor of Seattle

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	1
Introduction.....	3
Access to Services and Information .....	5
Issue Statement	
Highlights of Current City Efforts	
Action Steps	
Protection of Civil Rights .....	7
Issue Statement	
Highlights of Current City Efforts	
Action Steps	
Civic Engagement.....	9
Issue Statement	
Highlights of Current City Efforts	
Action Steps	
Work force and Economic Development .....	10
Issue Statement	
Highlights of Current City Efforts	
Action Steps	
Service Delivery .....	13
Issue Statement	
Highlights of Current City Efforts	
Action Steps	
Next Steps – Implementation .....	17
Acknowledgments .....	18

---



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the unprecedented growth in the foreign-born population since the 1980s, Seattle has become a multi-cultural city, rich with diversity. As part of the Mayor's Race and Social Justice Initiative, City government is committed to ensuring quality customer service for all, including immigrant and refugee communities living and working in Seattle.

This Immigrant & Refugee Report and Action Plan identifies key issues for immigrant and refugee communities, describes current efforts Citywide, and sets out short and long-term actions that represent the City's next steps in its efforts to integrate immigrants and refugees into our community.

The report was the result of the following fact-finding activities and a series of consultations with stakeholders, including community representatives:

- A public City Council forum conducted in May 2005.
- An analysis of current City services and programs.
- A review of other jurisdictions' programs.
- A community engagement process involving 260 people.

The following topic areas surfaced and became the major themes and sections of this report and action plan:

- Access to Services and Information
- Workforce and Economic Development
- Protection of Civil Rights
- Service Delivery
- Civic Engagement

This report examines each topic area, with sections covering issues, current City efforts, and short and long-term action steps. The actions identified are the next steps in the City's ongoing effort to create a community that is enriched by its diverse cultures, with full participation by all its residents.

### ACCESS TO SERVICES AND INFORMATION

**Issues:** Many immigrants / refugees (I/R) do not know about City programs and/or how they can access them. Moreover, the City's communication and outreach efforts are inconsistent and uncoordinated among departments.

**Current City efforts:** The City's language web portal indexes departments' documents translated into 26 languages. In 2006, the City re-vamped its Employee Language Bank to improve departments' access to in-house interpretation services.

**Action steps:** The City will implement its new Citywide translation and interpretation policy; establish the newly-named Customer Service Bureau as an initial point of contact; develop new and/or refine existing communications and outreach strategies with I/R communities; and address the needs of immigrants/refugees as part of its emergency preparedness efforts.

### PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS

**Issues:** Too many immigrants / refugees (I/R) have limited knowledge or information about U.S. laws and customs, including their legal and civil rights. Many also lack access to affordable legal services.

**Current City efforts:** The Mayor and City Council support comprehensive, humane immigration reform. The City has ensured the rights of immigrants and refugees to access City services by prohibiting City staff, including the Seattle Police Department, from asking about immigration status and accepting other forms of identification, e.g. Mexican I.D. cards.

**Action steps:** The City will collaborate with community partners to produce a “U.S. Laws and Customs 101” course for immigrant/refugee communities. The Mayor will continue to advocate for comprehensive and humane immigration reform, as well as for state and federal funding to provide affordable legal aid.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**Issues:** Immigrant/Refugee (I/R) communities have few opportunities to engage with City staff and elected officials.

**Current City efforts:** Some City departments maintain active advisory bodies composed of immigrant community members.

**Action steps:** The City will establish an Immigrant/Refugee Advisory Board to advise the Mayor and City Council on relevant issues. The City, through the Mayor’s Office, also will enhance its outreach efforts with I/R communities.

## WORK FORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Issues:** In order to successfully enter and succeed in the work force, I/R need to learn English necessary for employment, gaining citizenship and accessing resources. People also need improved educational and training opportunities.

**Current City efforts:** A number of City programs support English language and computer classes and job-readiness training and services. Economic development initiatives offer resources to many immigrant-owned businesses.

**Action steps:** The City will work with community partners to increase vocational English, computer and citizenship classes, as appropriate. The City also will provide more in-depth technical assistance to immigrant-owned businesses.

## SERVICE DELIVERY

**Issues:** Many types of agencies exist in Seattle to serve I/R communities, including smaller, emergent immigrant-run agencies. At times, several of these smaller agencies, many with very limited capacity, serve the same relatively small community. Additionally, some I/Rs find mainstream non-immigrant led agencies non-responsive to their cultural need.

**Current City efforts:** The City provides direct services to assist I/Rs in the areas of nutrition, senior services and youth programs, funds many types of agencies serving I/Rs, and funds technical assistance for small, emergent, immigrant-led agencies.

**Action steps:** The City will make it easier for small I/R – run community based organizations to apply for service funding, and will work more closely with these organizations to meet their communities’ needs. The City will work with East African communities to assess community needs and strengthen their capacity to address these needs.



## INTRODUCTION

The percentage of foreign-born residents (i.e., immigrants, refugees, people on student or work visas, and undocumented individuals) has increased significantly in the last 25 years. In 1980, the foreign-born population constituted about 11 percent of Seattle's population. In 2000, it was almost 17 percent. By 2010, it could be almost 20 percent and total up to 120,000.

The foreign-born population is a very diverse group. The Seattle Public School District, for example, reports that it enrolls students from more than 70 countries and that more than 90 languages are spoken by its students. The most common countries of origin for Seattle's foreign-born are the Philippines, China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan), and Vietnam. We also know that the number of individuals arriving from Mexico and Africa is increasing very rapidly.

As the face of Seattle changes, Seattle government has and will continue to change to welcome the newest residents of our city. In 2005, the City expended \$7.1 million on services designed solely for immigrant and refugees in our community. Many more services available to all City residents were available to immigrants and refugees, as well. This action plan describes some of the key steps the City has taken previously to meet the needs and engage immigrants and refugees in our community. It also sets forth next steps in the City's effort to change the way it does business so that immigrants and refugees are included in city life. Key goals include helping immigrants and refugees better access City services and resources and increasing opportunities for immigrants and refugees to participate in the civic life of the city. As these goals are realized, the city will enjoy more fully the benefits associated with being a multicultural community.

### CONTEXT FOR THE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Information gathered from a variety of sources helped guide this plan, including:

- A public forum on issues facing Seattle's immigrant and refugee community, conducted in May 2005 by the Seattle Housing, Human Services & Health Committee, chaired by Councilmember Tom Rasmussen.
- An analysis of current City services and programs that assist and involve immigrants and refugees.
- A review of what some other jurisdictions are doing to assist and involve immigrants and refugees.
- The results of a community engagement process designed by the consulting firm Emerging Designs and involving 260 people.

The key issues that surfaced through the investigative process form the major themes and sections of this report and action plan.

- Access to Services and Information
- Protection of Civil Rights
- Civic Engagement
- Workforce and Economic Development
- Service Delivery

Each section includes an overview of each issue, followed by a few highlights of current City efforts to address the issue. Each section then concludes with the action items the City will pursue in the short-term (during 2007) and through 2009, as funding allows.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES

Taken collectively, the successful implementation of this plan will achieve the following results:

- City will improve its customer service with immigrant and refugees.
- Immigrants and refugees will experience improved knowledge of, and access to, City services and City funding.
- Immigrants and refugees will improve their knowledge of U.S. norms and customs.
- More immigrants and refugees will achieve citizenship and improve their English language skills.
- The City will support the various community-based organizations serving immigrants and refugees, as appropriate, to assure effective service delivery.
- Immigrants and refugees will have more opportunities to engage in the civic process and communicate with senior staff and elected officials.



# ACCESS TO SERVICES AND INFORMATION

## ISSUE STATEMENT

Many immigrants /refugees (I/R) do not know about City programs and/or how they can access them. During emergency situations, knowledge of and access to certain information and services can be the difference between life and death.

- Participants in the community engagement process would like a single point of contact at the City to help them access services and programs.
- Regarding language access, the City's approach to translation and interpretation, historically, has varied on a department-by-department basis, which has sometimes compromised the quality and depth of these efforts. Additionally, the availability of materials translated into other languages varies among departments.
  - Participants in the community engagement process expressed a desire for higher quality and more consistent translation and interpretation services from the City.
  - In addition, the participants believe that services and programs (delivered by the City and/or or by mainstream organizations) are best delivered by bicultural/bilingual employees and/or community liaisons who understand the language, culture, and process of adjusting to life in the United States.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT CITY EFFORTS

- The City's language web portal (<http://www.seattle.gov/html/citizen/language.htm>) features indexes of translated documents for 26 languages. While all documents are not available in all 26 languages, examples of the types of documents include information on domestic violence, resources for borrowers and victims of predatory lending, and a guide to City Light services.
  - A re-vamped Employee Language Bank allows City bi-/multilingual employees to volunteer their time to meet the immediate, short-term language needs of City departments.
  - In recent years, the Seattle Center has hosted the Discover Seattle - Newcomers Fair, which provides a forum for Seattle residents, including immigrants and refugees, to learn how the City works, and how to access City and community resources. It is also an opportunity for City staff to learn from residents about their needs and priorities.

## ACTION STEPS

### Short-Term (to be completed by December 2007)

1. Begin implementing the new Citywide policy on translation and interpretation. On January 29, 2007, the Mayor issued Executive Order #01-07 that requires departments to translate all critical and vital documents (such as consent and complaint forms, notice of rights, notice of free language assistance, and explanations of departments' direct services) into the languages most commonly spoken in Seattle: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog and Somali. (For more information: <http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/rsji/I&RInitiative.htm>) Lead department: Office of Policy and Management.

2. Change the name of the Citizens Service Bureau to Customer Service Bureau, to make the service more welcoming to all Seattle residents. Lead department: Neighborhoods /Customer Service Bureau.
3. Establish 684-CITY (2489) and selected Neighborhood Centers as initial points of contact for immigrants and refugees wanting to access City services and programs. Lead department: Neighborhoods/Customer Service Bureau.
4. As a part of the City's emergency preparedness efforts, address the needs of immigrant and refugee (I/R) communities, establish adequate contacts within these communities, and provide translated information, per translation and interpretation policy. Lead department: Police/Emergency Management.
5. Determine and promote within the City the best communications, outreach and public engagement strategies for working with I/R communities. Strategies, which may include use of ethnic media, work with community groups, and Web-base approaches, will be community-specific and address the needs of pre- and non-literate individuals. Lead departments: Neighborhoods, Public Utilities.

#### **Long-Term (target date December 2008)**

1. Complete implementation of the Citywide policy on translation and interpretation. Lead department: Office of Policy and Management.
2. Determine which City positions warrant bilingual skills as a preferred attribute, modify the City's hiring policies and practices, as appropriate, and recruit candidates accordingly. Lead department: Office of Policy and Management, Personnel.

#### **Areas for Further Exploration (TBD)**

Conduct outreach within immigrant and refugee, and other minority, communities on the City's hiring policies and procedures, including the online application. Lead department: Personnel.



# PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS

## ISSUE STATEMENT

- Immigrants and refugees generally come to Seattle to join family members or to work. Many are fleeing persecution, war, corruption in the courts, and police abuse, as well.
- For many immigrants and refugees, the protections granted to them by our justice system may seem like a luxury. For others, they may seem impossible to achieve. Most undocumented workers, even when they have rights, are fearful of asserting those rights and are less likely to report crimes committed against them out of fear of deportation.
- Other immigrants and refugees are uninformed of their legal rights and, like other low-income residents, may lack access to affordable legal services. They need education, advocacy, and legal assistance.
- Since September 11, 2001, as a growing number of American citizens demand tough measures from federal and local governments to deter illegal immigration and to increase national security, the civil rights and liberties for all, including immigrants and refugees, are being eroded.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT CITY EFFORTS

- In March 2006, Mayor Nickels and the City Council notified members of the Washington congressional delegation of the City's support of the McCain-Kennedy "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005," which provided for comprehensive, humane immigration reform.
- Between 2003 and 2005, the City of Seattle issued Executive Orders and legislation to support the rights of immigrants and refugees to access City of Seattle services, e.g., E.O. 04-03, accepting Mexican I.D. cards as a form of identification and Ordinance 121063 prohibiting City staff from inquiry into immigration status, unless needed for criminal investigations.
- Seattle Police Department (SPD) has developed and implemented a number of policy initiatives to address the wide array of issues that exist when working with immigrant and refugee populations, including, for example, Directive 03-57, which prohibits officers from asking for specific documents for the sole purpose of determining someone's civil immigration status.
- In accordance with its policy #3.009, whenever possible, SPD utilizes interpreters and translators when dealing with non-English speaking people and sign language interpreters and translators for hearing-impaired people.
- The Seattle Municipal Court provides language and sign interpreters for more than 60 different languages and dialects during proceedings and hearings before the Court. In 2006, the Seattle Municipal Court created the position of Interpreter Coordinator and is currently in the process of creating a formal Interpreter Services Program.
- The City's Office of Civil Rights provides a number of services and resources to assist immigrant and refugee communities including: tips on identifying housing discrimination; trainings and materials on Employing Non-Citizens; and translated brochures on such matters as "How to File a Complaint with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights" and "Fair Housing."

## ACTION STEPS

### Short-Term (to be completed by December 2007)

1. Study and create, in collaboration with community colleges, community organizations, and others, a "U.S. Laws & Customs 101" course to effectively orient new I/R communities. Lead departments: Neighborhoods, Office of Policy and Management.
2. Continue support and advocacy for comprehensive and humane immigration reform. Lead department: Intergovernmental Relations.
3. Organize and coordinate dissemination of relevant I/R rights information, including that which exists in the online resource directory. Lead department: Office for Civil Rights.

### Long-Term (target date December 2008)

Advocate for state and federal funding for organizations that provide affordable legal aid for low-income residents, including immigrants and refugees. Lead department: Intergovernmental Relations.

### Areas for Further Exploration

Secure private funding to implement the "US Laws & Customs 101" course. Lead departments: Neighborhoods, Office of Policy and Management



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

## ISSUES STATEMENT

- Few formal opportunities exist for immigrants and refugees to engage City staff. Without clear paths in place, immigrant and refugee communities do not always have sufficient access to communicate their needs and offer their perspective on how the City may best respond to those needs.
- Participants in the community engagement process would like to have a more active voice in how City government serves their communities; they positively responded to the idea of establishing an advisory group on immigrants and refugees.
- During the community engagement process, participants expressed a desire for more opportunities to interact with City officials through walking tours, community dialogues, and other events.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT CITY EFFORTS

- The Seattle Police Department (SPD) has created citizen-based Multicultural Boards to advise them on emerging issues. Other departments are considering similar bodies or are determining if they could use these existing boards. For example, SPD currently sponsors 10 demographic advisory councils, which represent the following communities: African American, East African; Southeast Asian; Korean; Filipino; Latino; Muslim, Arab & Sikh; Youth; Native American; and LGBTQ. SPD also has an 11th Advisory Council, the Citywide Advisory Council. It consists of representatives from the ten demographic advisory councils and the five precinct advisory councils and meets quarterly with the Chief of Police.
- In 2006, the City Race & Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) Public Engagement work group conducted an analysis of the City's current public engagement strategies by surveying six City departments. The work group's findings and recommendations will form the basis of a plan to design and implement efficient, inclusive, culturally appropriate public engagement activities. This information also will serve as the foundation of Citywide training offered to employees who plan, conduct, or facilitate public engagement activities.

## ACTION STEPS

### Short-Term (to be completed by December 2007)

1. Develop outreach strategies for City Departments to disseminate information to immigrant and refugee communities. In addition to the use of ethnic media, community groups, Web-base resources, the strategies may incorporate Mayoral walking tours and community-specific events. Lead departments: Office of Policy and Management, Mayor's Office.
2. Proactively recruit I/R community members who qualify for membership on the City's boards and commissions, as appropriate. Lead department: Mayor's Office.
3. Establish an advisory group to provide a more formal opportunity for immigrants and refugees to engage City staff and leaders. This group would have the following scope of work: (1) advise the Mayor and City Council about I/R issues and (2) advise departments about best practices for serving the City's many I/R communities, particularly in relation to the Immigrant and Refugee Action Plan. Lead departments: Office of Policy and Management, Neighborhoods.



# WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## ISSUE STATEMENT

- Recent immigrants' rights marches in Seattle and across the nation have increased the visibility of the work force challenges faced by immigrant/refugee populations. Some of these challenges include learning the English necessary for employment, gaining citizenship, and accessing the resources needed for success. At a City-sponsored brown bag forum on immigrant and refugee issues held in May 2005, several attendees voiced similar concerns about education and work force development.
- Participants in the community engagement process voiced a strong desire for training on various systems and processes in the United States, including public schools, adult education, and employment.
- Participants in the community engagement process (across all groups engaged) also specified jobs and training as unmet service needs of high priority. A person's ability to speak English remains a central concern for these unmet needs.
- Several indicators of academic achievement show disparities between populations proficient in English and populations with limited English proficiency (LEP). Such disparities could adversely affect the skills held by and opportunities available to foreign-born workers in the future.
- The 2000 U.S. Census estimates that approximately 15,300 (25 percent of total) immigrants/refugees who entered the country between 1980 and 2000 reported the lowest levels of education (i.e. less than a high school diploma).

## HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT CITY EFFORTS

Classes on English Language and Computer Literacy:

- Seattle Public Library (SPL) is a major provider of City-funded English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, including "Talk Time," which gives adults an opportunity to practice speaking English in a comfortable environment and "Wired for Learning," which provides computer skill classes in three languages – Chinese, Russian, and Spanish. Such skills can often help people learn another language.
- The Department of Parks and Recreation administers seven programs striving to improve the English language skills of immigrants and refugees. In 2006, one program, free ESL classes, involved a partnership with North Seattle Community College and served approximately 50 people in the Bitter Lake neighborhood. Another program, adult ESL basic computer classes, meets twice a week at Yesler Terrace.
- The Office of Economic Development helps support the Seattle Jobs Initiative, a community-based organization working to eliminate barriers to good-paying jobs by establishing partnerships that align supportive services, like childcare, with job skills training and job placement assistance. About a third of those who participate in its programs are immigrants and refugees. This includes two specialized programs for immigrants and refugees offered in partnership with the Asian Counseling and Referral Service and Neighborhood Housing/Highline Community College, respectively; a two-week intensive vocational ESL/job skills hospitality course; and an eight-week vocational ESL/job skills janitorial course.

- In July 2006, the City granted Technology Matching Fund awards to 13 community projects aimed at helping further digital inclusion. These projects will provide web-based community conversations, audio and video technology to engage youth in conversations about social justice issues, and bring together International District youth with members of 10 other Seattle neighborhoods to use Public Development Authorities, community mapping, and photojournalism as tools to raise voices and foster discussion about the current status and future development needs.
- Classes on Citizenship: The New Citizen Initiative (NCI) is administered by the Human Services Department (HSD) and delivered by 22 partners, such as SeaMar Community Health Centers, Asian Counseling & Referral Services, and the Refugee Women's Alliance. The program provides citizenship instruction and other resources for immigrants and refugees. Between 2000 and 2005, NCI served approximately 5,300 people. Of this number, approximately 2,000 persons or 39 percent became naturalized citizens.
- Economic Development: Through the Rainier Valley Community Development Fund, the City's Office of Economic Development (OED) provides support and funding to businesses in the Rainier Valley. OED estimates that immigrants and refugees own and operate approximately 270 businesses – 50 percent of all businesses in the area. The Fund has the goal of mitigating the closure and/or relocation of businesses during construction of Sound Transit's light rail line.

## ACTION STEPS

### Short-Term (to be completed by December 2007)

1. Enhance the City's citizenship services by (1) purchasing curricula and sponsoring teacher training to help its partner agencies provide citizenship classes to prepare 1,200 immigrant and refugee applicants for the new Citizenship Test and (2) supporting community workshops and the development of web-based "how-to" guides/toolkits to help immigrants and refugees that do not require intensive assistance to pursue their citizenship. Lead department: Human Services.
2. Invite immigrant/refugee-owned businesses to participate in the City's annual fair for women and minority-owned (WMBE) businesses. Lead department: Executive Administration.
3. Conduct an assessment, including gap analysis, of the quantity and types of English as a Second Language programs and computer classes offered in Seattle and the populations served by the various programs. Lead department: Parks
4. Complete an assessment of the economic impacts of small businesses in Seattle, including a special focus on immigrant and refugee businesses. This assessment also will include a compilation of information on the types of businesses, who owns them, where they are located, and their needs. Lead department: Economic Development.
5. Establish a Career Pathways in Health Care pilot project that will provide opportunity for immigrants and other working poor employees at a local health care organization to move into higher-skilled jobs. Lead department: Economic Development.
6. In partnership with South Seattle Community College, Puget Sound Industrial Excellence Center, and other local economic development agencies, develop and deliver a business development and entrepreneurial training program targeting low-income and immigrant communities. Lead department: Economic Development.

7. Provide more in-depth, individualized technical assistance to businesses impacted by light rail construction in the Rainier Valley including immigrant and refugee. Lead department: Economic Development.
8. Assist the businesses in the Little Saigon neighborhood in assessing the benefits of forming a Business Improvement Area. Lead department: Economic Development.

### **Long-Term (target date December 2008)**

Create and distribute, in accordance with the Citywide policy on translation and interpretation, a list of City-sponsored technical assistance and other resources available to immigrant/refugee-owned businesses. Lead department: Economic Development.

### **Areas for Further Exploration**

In collaboration with community partners, expand the vocational English language and computer classes currently offered within the community, if appropriate.<sup>1</sup> Lead department: Policy and Management.

---

<sup>1</sup> The City of Boston has enjoyed tremendous success in securing philanthropic and corporate donations for its English for New Bostonians (ENB) program. Approximately \$3 million was raised between June 2001 and June 2005 for ENB (<http://www.cityofboston.gov/newbostonians/default.asp>).



## SERVICE DELIVERY

### ISSUE STATEMENT

- The immigrant and refugee community in Seattle is a very diverse one, representing numerous nationalities, ethnic groups, and languages.
- In some cases, the communities (e.g., the East African community) are very factionalized due to misperceptions, mistrust, limited communication and political and social issues carried over from countries of origin.
- Many different communities have created community-based organizations (CBOs), often called Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), that endeavor to create a bridge between the homeland and their new home in this community for recent immigrants and refugees. For the Somali community alone, 10 such CBOs exist. Over the last 10 years, 18 Somali MAAs have existed at one time or another.
- The immigrant/refugee-run MAAs struggle to survive. They lack staff capacity and have difficulty competing with larger, more established agencies, including larger immigrant-based agencies, for funding. Yet these agencies appear to have close relationships with recent immigrants and refugees. During the community engagement process, representatives of these emergent agencies communicated that they believe that their own grassroots organizations are best able to define their community's needs, and then design and deliver culturally appropriate services. These individuals want more outside investment in their grassroots organizations.
- Immigrants and refugees are served not only by emergent CBOs/MAAs but also by larger or more stable CBOs that serve multiple immigrant populations. During the community engagement process, some participants expressed concern about the cultural competency of the services provided by some of the more mainstream CBOs and dissatisfaction with these services.
- Members of the immigrant and refugee communities have challenges that are common to the mainstream community members (e.g., understanding and paying utility bills, accessing health care, and addressing violence in the family). However, language and cultural differences create additional barriers and hardships. Among key challenges are children-rearing, poor school performance, providing senior services, and preventing domestic violence.
  - 30 – 40 percent of I/R children are not prepared for learning as they enter K-12. Immigrant and refugee students with limited English proficiency, as well as African American and Native American students perform very poorly on the WASL.
  - Youth of color, including immigrant and refugee youth, account for 83 percent of middle school suspensions and 76 percent of high school suspensions.<sup>2</sup>
  - In Seattle, the number of limited English-speaking children has increased 59 percent from 3,832 students in 1988 to 6,091 students in 2005.<sup>3</sup>
  - About 25 percent of the 84,800 foreign-born residents of Seattle are over the age of 55.<sup>4</sup> In addition to physical and psychological changes that are part of the normal aging process, immigrant and refugee elders also must deal with dislocation, loss, isolation, and confusion because of language and cultural differences.

2 SPS Data Profile, December 2005.

3 SPS Data Profile, 1989 and SPS Data Profile, 2005.

4 2000 U.S. Census.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT CITY EFFORT

- Through the PeoplePoint: Bridge to Benefits Initiative, the City's Human Services Department and Public Health-Seattle and King County provide one-stop access to several benefit programs for low to moderate-income families and individuals, including child care, food, health care and utility/energy assistance (<http://www.peoplepoint.info/>). A multilingual staff member is available at the International Family Center weekly. Some program information (brochures) is available in the following languages: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Cambodian, and Somali.
- In 2005, 14 percent of the 5,994 domestic violence service recipients served by the City of Seattle were identified as immigrants and/or refugees<sup>5</sup>, and about 29 percent of approximately \$1.8 million in City expenditure was contracted with agencies providing I/R-specific domestic violence prevention and protection services.
- The City supports the Multilingual Access Project (MAP), which has launched a new multilingual web site on domestic violence ([www.map-seattle.org](http://www.map-seattle.org)), and trained almost 100 bilingual domestic violence advocates since 2004.
- The City, in collaboration with various agencies, currently provides several services for older immigrant and refugees. In 2005, 1,500 frail, isolated immigrants, and refugees in public housing received case management services; more than 3,200 received ethnic meals, fresh fruits, and vegetables and participated in social and fitness activities; and 2,850 benefited from bilingual/bicultural information and assistance.
- In 2001, HSD's Division on Aging and Disability Services convened a coalition called Key Partners in Transportation. In December 2006, the partners finalized a formal King County Coordinated Special Needs Transportation Plan and hope to secure federal transportation funds that have become available recently. The coalition includes Metro, King County Community Services, Sound Transit, Puget Sound Regional Council, City of Seattle/ Aging and Disability Services, City of Bellevue, HopeLink, and United Way of King County.
- Cultural Competency/Capacity Building: The Reinvesting in Youth Project funded the development of an assessment/training protocol to help build the capacity of youth-serving community-based organizations, specifically in the area of cultural competency.
- South Park Action Agenda: South Park has a large population of Spanish-speaking immigrants and residents of other immigrant communities (e.g., South Pacific Islanders). Through a comprehensive public process, the City worked closely with South Park residents to determine a list of priorities for city action in 2007 and beyond. In addition, in response to rising youth violence, in 2006 the City of Seattle invested an additional \$300,000 to expand the South Park Teen Center. The funding also supports youth counseling and gang prevention services through Consejo Counseling and Referral Services, as well as Sea Mar's Youth Boxing Program.
- Seattle Youth Employment Program (SYEP): 45% of program participants are youth primarily from Southeast Asia and East Africa. The program includes counseling, homework assistance, and school re-entry services.
- Seattle Team for Youth (STFY): This case management program focuses on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services to help youth stay in school and succeed academically. HSD contracts with community-based organizations to provide intensive case management services to Latino, Samoan, Southeast Asian, African American, and Native American youth.

5 City of Seattle 2005 client profile data for domestic violence services.

- The City of Seattle, with funds from its Families and Education Levy, supports high-quality and culturally appropriate early learning pre-school services in more than 11 languages in classrooms that are dual language or bilingual. Additionally, the Refugee and Immigrant Family Support Project provides 722 families assistance in becoming more involved in their children's school activities to support academic success.
- The City provides funding to the Nonprofit Assistance Center (NAC) and other organizations to provide technical assistance and training services to small CBOs.
- The City's Community Facilities Loan Program provides resources that assist community-based agencies that provide public benefits. During the last three years, the City has assisted various organizations including Asian Counseling and Referral Service, Filipino Community Center, and the Lao Highland Community Center.
- Since 2002, Seattle Public Utilities Environmental Justice Network in Action has worked with immigrant and refugee community-based organizations to identify and address the top environmental service and environmental health issues faced by immigrant and refugee communities. Some of the key issues: recycling, water quality, water and energy conservation, and household hazardous waste disposal.

## ACTION STEPS

### Short-Term (to be completed by December 2007)

1. Improve access to funding opportunities for small I/R agencies by fully implementing HSD's Request For Investment (RFI) process. Changes will allow longer response deadlines, clarification of written proposals, and interview/site visits with individuals responsible for program implementation. Lead department: Human Services.
2. As part of developing a new Area Plan on Aging strategy for I/R seniors, conduct at least one forum with existing partners including UW Nutritional and Science Department, School of Nursing, Pharmacy Department, and King County Public Health, to address emerging issues relating to I/R seniors and others. Lead department: Human Services.
3. Work with the coordinated special needs regional transportation planning effort to address language and access barriers facing I/R seniors. Lead department: Human Services.
4. Research and provide information to I/R senior communities about public gathering places where they can socialize. Lead department: Human Services.
5. Develop strategies that clarify the City's ongoing working relationships with CBOs working to meet human services and cultural needs of I/R communities and to assure effective service delivery. Strategies may include use of partnerships between CBOs, where appropriate, and the types of outcomes the City will fund. Lead department: Human Services, Policy and Management, Neighborhoods.
6. Work with East African communities to assess service needs and organizational capacity to address them; if appropriate, develop a plan to strengthen organizational capacity over time. Lead department: Policy and Management, Neighborhoods.

## Areas for Further Exploration

1. Assess current domestic violence and sexual assault immigrant and refugee services offered by City-funded agencies; identify promising approaches, best-, and evidence-based practices that could be implemented in our community. Identify new funding sources (i.e. federal grants), if additional resources are necessary, to implement these programs; undertake an RFI in 2008 or 2009, and fund programs according to funding source timelines. Lead department: Human Services.
2. Begin providing training on cross-cultural communication and relations to City employees as part of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) and to mainstream organizations that work with I/R communities. Lead department: Office for Civil Rights.
3. Implement a coordinated, multi-lingual access system (e.g., services, crisis lines, shelters) so that domestic violence victims, including immigrants and refugees, need make only one or two calls in order to access the services they require. Lead department: Human Services.

## **NEXT STEP - IMPLEMENTATION**

To assure successful implementation of this Immigrant and Refugee Action Plan, and future updates, the City has or will implement a number of administrative mechanisms to guide and support staff in the work necessary and assure accountability. The key mechanisms are as follows:

### **IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE PROGRAM PLANNER**

The Mayor's Executive Human Services Team is charged with the overall implementation of the Immigrant and Refugee Action Plan. To fulfill this responsibility, the Mayor authorized the creation of a new planner position. This individual will work closely with departments to assure successful implementation of the plan by providing technical assistance, organizing trainings, and monitoring progress on a quarterly basis. This individual will also staff the Refugee and Immigrant Coordinating Group and the Translation / Interpretation Inter-departmental Team.

### **REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT COORDINATING GROUP**

The plan identifies lead departments for each action items. The staff leads for each item will form a workgroup to guide the implementation of the plan, coordinating across areas of responsibility where appropriate, resolving problems, and monitoring progress. Each member of this team will submit quarterly reports, which the Immigrant and Refugee Program Planner will review.

#### **Inter-departmental Teams**

When the implementation of an action item involves multiple departments, inter-departmental teams will be formed to guide implementation. An example of one such team is the Translation and Interpretation team. This group will help guide the implementation of City's new translation and interpretation policy and consist of the departmental translation & interpretation liaisons. The work of the group will include defining procedures, identifying and resolving training needs, monitoring progress, and updating the policy, as appropriate.

### **DEPARTMENTAL TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION LIAISONS**

To assure successful implementation of this new translation & interpretation policy, the Mayor required each department director, as a part of his/her accountability agreement with him, to assign a staff person as the department's translation/interpretation liaison. This person will play a critical role in assuring strong communications between the Executive Human Services Team, department leadership, and department staff about procedures, practices, resources and training needs & opportunities available to help departments implement the new policy.

### **IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE ADVISORY BOARD**

The newly established Immigrant & Refugee Advisory Board will play a major role during implementation. Staff will brief the Board on implementation progress, at least quarterly, and solicit advice on strategy and program development. In addition, the Board will help shape 2009 update of the plan.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Office of the Mayor

Mayor Greg Nickels

## City Council

Council Member Tom Rasmussen

## Office of Policy and Management

Mary Jean Ryan, Director  
Marilyn Littlejohn, Executive Manager, Human Services Team

## Project Coordinating Team

Matthew Eng, Office of Policy and Management  
Jacque Larrainzar, Seattle Office for Civil Rights  
Marilyn Littlejohn, Executive Manager, Human Services  
Haddis Tadesse, Human Services Team  
Sebhat Tenna, Office of Policy and Management  
Kip Tokuda, Human Services Department

## City Interdepartmental Working Group on Immigrants and Refugees:

Christine Andrade, Department of Personnel  
Claudia Arana, Office of the Mayor  
Delia Burke, Department of Information Technology  
Michelle Chen, Office of Intergovernmental Relations  
Janet Credo, Department of Finance  
Michael Davis, Seattle Public Utilities  
Mark Ellerbrook, Office of Housing  
Bobby Forch, Department of Executive Administration  
Cheryl Fraser, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Gina Hooks, Department of Information Technology  
Nancy Locke, Department of Executive Administration  
Henri McClenney, Department of Personnel  
Peter McGraw, Department of Neighborhoods  
Yazmin Mehdi, Seattle Public Library  
Emma Moreno, Department of Neighborhoods  
Elisabeth Perrin, Seattle Public Utilities  
Cynthia Phillips, Department of Neighborhoods  
Lisa Stewart, Office of Economic Development  
Cathy Wenderoth, Seattle Police Department

## Emerging Design Consulting Team:

Bonnie Olson, Principal  
Ginger Kwan  
Mercedes Cordova-Hakim  
Aster Dibaba  
Abdullahi Jama