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A Comparative Study of Immigration Integration Programs for Selected City Governments in California, Oregon, Washington, and Texas

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**A Comparative Study of Immigration Integration Programs for Selected City
Governments in California, Oregon, Washington, and Texas**

by

Christelle Lorenzana

A Thesis Quality Research Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master's Degree
in

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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BACKGROUND

Over the last eight decades, immigration into the United States has increased and has become a prominent political issue in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2015). Although the federal government is responsible for enforcing immigration laws, municipalities work with immigrants directly in a more supportive role. Currently, no national policy focuses on integration or welcoming immigrants to the urban community. In recent decades, the federal government has focused on immigration enforcement, border control, and what to do about the influx of undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. However, cities are working to develop their own programs, tools, and policies to address the influx of immigrants into their communities. This research focuses on how selected city governments in California, Washington, Oregon, and Texas are developing and implementing immigrant integration programs.

The United States has the largest immigrant population of any country globally, with over 40 million immigrants as of 2020 (Budiman, 2020). The foreign-born population has steadily risen since 1970, when there were fewer than ten million immigrants in the United States (Felter, Renwick, & Cheatham, 2021). For decades, immigration has been a political flashpoint in the U.S. compared to security, humanitarian, and economic concerns; however, Congress has not reached an agreement on immigration reform for years. Immigration policy has been controversial, with no agreement on who will be admitted into the United States and who is excluded. Some cities have passed laws that aim at driving undocumented immigrants out, while others have enforced policies trying to support foreign-born immigrants, regardless of their status.

U.S. Immigration History

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1965 established a new immigration policy that supported reuniting families and attracting skilled labor into the U.S. While this policy abolished previous immigrant quotas, it did have caps on the number of immigrants entering the country each year overall, and limits on the numbers who can come from one country (History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, n.d.). Rather than distributing visas based on the current population of the United States, the 1965 reform allowed for more immigration from outside of Europe. This policy changed the demographic makeup of the U.S., as immigrants increasingly came from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia, rather than primarily Europe (Chishti, Hipsman, & Ball, 2015).

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was an increase in illegal immigration, mainly from Canada and Mexico. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 was passed in response to the growing numbers of undocumented immigrants entering the United States illegally, primarily for economic reasons. To discourage illegal immigration, the 1986 reform required employers to ensure that their employees were documented (Boston University, n.d.). This law also included two amnesty programs, granting amnesty to more the 3 million undocumented immigrants (History.com, 2019). This was the first large amnesty in US history. It included a special immigration policy for agricultural workers. This legislation represents the first time that the federal government provided assistance to the states to “assist with the costs associated with immigrant integration” (Chishti, Meissner, & Bergeron, 2011, para. 10). Increased border protection, enforcement of bans on employment of undocumented workers, and an amnesty for current undocumented residents were the “three legs” that were intended to end the problem of illegal immigration (Chishti, Meissner, & Bergeron, 2011).

Following this, the 1990 Immigration Act expanded and modified the 1965 Act, and increased the number of immigrants entering the country. New categories included H-1B visas focused on filling jobs particularly in the science, technology, engineering, and math fields (American Immigration Council, 2021b). The 1990 law set an annual cap of 65,000 H-1B visas available per year. In 2004, Congress added an additional 20,000 H-1B visas for foreign professionals with a master's or doctorate degree (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2006). For fiscal year 2021, 274,237 H-1B petitions were received (Federal Register, 2021). The limit of visas is usually met before the end of the fiscal year.

Americans continued to be concerned about the continuing flow of undocumented immigrants after the 1986 amnesty. In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) was passed by Congress, which was designed to improve border control by imposing penalties against alien smuggling and deporting undocumented immigrants who had committed a misdemeanor or felony (Cornel Law School, n.d.). This law allowed the Immigration and Naturalization Services wiretapping authority for human trafficking or document fraud investigations. It also established civil and criminal penalties for false citizenship and unlawful voting (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1996). Immigrants unlawfully present for over a year in the U.S. were barred from returning for ten years, and those unlawfully present for 180 days were barred for three years (Cornel Law School, n.d.).

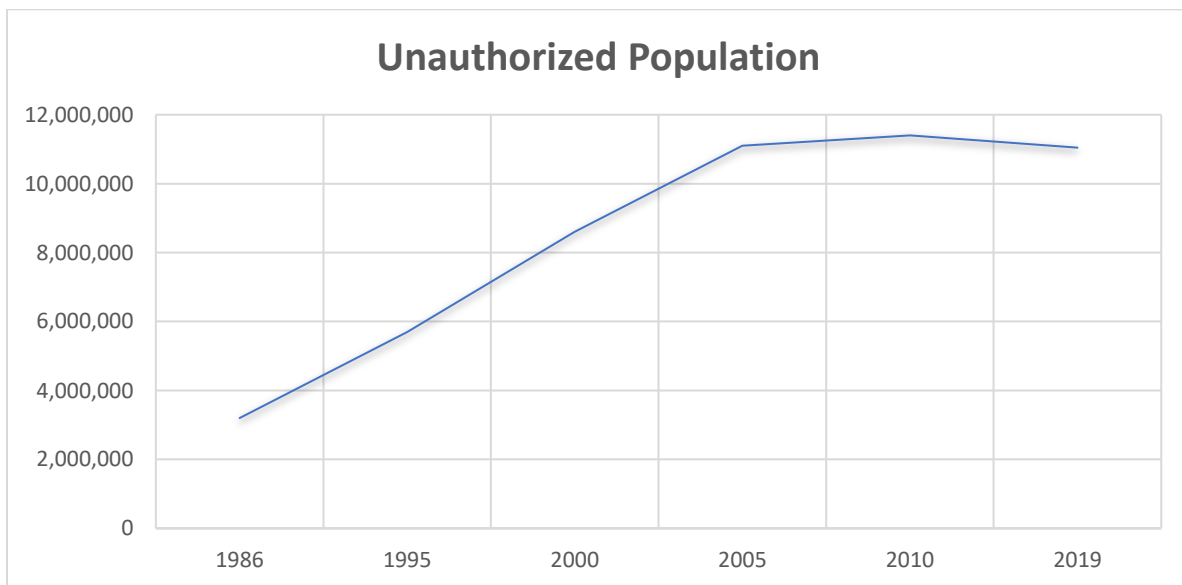
The 297(g) program was also created, which allowed state and local law enforcement officers to perform immigration law enforcement functions (History.com, 2019). This program allows Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to create formal written agreements (Memorandums of Understanding or MOUs) with state or local law enforcement agencies to assist with “the arrest and detention of criminal non-citizens,” including by serving warrants and

detaining arrested individuals (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, n.d., para, 2).

Analysts have said that this law has been costly, targets individuals with no criminal history, and has harmed the relationship between the community and law enforcement. By 2021, ICE has signed immigration enforcement partnerships within 24 states (American Immigration Council, 2021).

Figure 1 below shows the growth of undocumented immigrants from 1986 to 2019. The population increased from 3.2 million in 1986 to over 11 million in 2019 (Lopez, Passel, & Cohn, 2021). While the enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 was to tighten border enforcement and reduce unauthorized immigration, the population of undocumented immigrants inadvertently increased. This increase is often attributed to the opportunities in the United States in contrast to their country of origin. The cap on immigrant visas issued each year also makes it difficult for immigrants to come legally to the country, resulting in illegal avenues (Congressional Research Center, 2012).

Figure 1: Undocumented Immigrant Population from 1986-2019



Source: Lopez, Passel, & Cohn, 2021; Migration Policy Institute, 2019; Congressional Research Center, 2012

The terrorist attack on September 11th, 2001, carried out by immigrants who legally entered the U.S., altered immigration policy tremendously, specifically in border security, to prevent further terrorist attacks. For example, the construction of physical barriers played a bigger role following the terrorist attack as border fencing funds increased from \$92 million in 2005 to \$270 million in 2006 (Chishti & Bolter, 2021). Also, in November of 2001, President Bush signed the Aviation and Transportation Security Act which created the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The TSA requires screening at every commercial airport checkpoint throughout the country to oversee civil aviation security and to protect our transportation systems from terrorist threats (Transportation Security Administration, n.d.). This rise in border security and law enforcement initiatives aimed to remove any criminal noncitizen from the country (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2019).

Although Congress agreed on some elements of immigration policy, there was no consensus on developing overall immigration reform. The USA Patriot Act tightened United States' national security to deter terrorism in the country. The law granted executive authorities more power to detain and deport an immigrant without hearing or presenting evidence. Congress authorized noncitizens' deportation, imprisonment, and arrest without judicial review (Massy & Pren, 2012). Under this law, immigrants suspected of having links to terrorists' activities “ must be held in government custody without bond pending deportation proceedings and removal from the country” (Sinnar, 2003, para. 1). As this went into effect, hundreds of immigrants were detained and held without charge for an extended period of time. This generated concern as it had infringed on the constitutional rights of immigrants by denying noncitizens the opportunity for meaningful review and authorizing the detention of aliens on inadequate grounds (Sinnar, 2003).

Another immigration-related Congressional initiative was the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, known as the DREAM Act. It stated that “persons who do not have a legal status, but who were brought to the United States as minors, could apply for legal permanent status, leading to naturalization” (Georgetown Law Library, 2021, para. 20). Since 2001, the DREAM Act has never passed into law; however, in response, President Obama initiated the immigration policy known as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2012. This policy protects eligible immigrants who came to the U.S. as children or teens from deportation and also provides them with work permits (Berkley University of California, 2022). Those brought into the country by their parents when they were children or teens and do not have legal immigration status, known as DREAMers, integrate into communities, schools, and workplaces through their work, study, and public service. DREAMers are highly motivated to obtain legal status and are crucial participants in the U.S. economy and workforce.

President Barack Obama signed a series of executive orders to fix the immigration system by focusing on deporting felons, increasing border security, and enacting a criminal background check requirement. He also focused on expanding DACA to cover additional DREAMers, reduced family separation for immigrants waiting to become a lawful permanent resident, provided work authorization to high-skilled lawfully permanent residents, and enhanced options for foreign entrepreneurs (The White House, 2014). The White House Task Force on New Americans was also created to make a national strategy for immigration integration. The task force encouraged counties and cities to develop plans for integrating administration efforts and local planning with immigration policy (The White House, 2015).

The federal attitude towards immigration changed when Donald Trump was elected president, as he pushed for a stricter approach to illegal immigration (Gramlich, 2020a). The Trump Administration created “scores of proclamations, regulatory changes, legal decisions and executive orders seeking to reshape immigration policy” (Miroff et al., 2020, para. 4). This led to tightened border security, travel bans on Muslim nations, separation of migrant children from their parents, and a decline in immigrants receiving permanent statuses (The Center for Migration Studies, n.d.).

On September 22, 2018, the Trump Administration announced the proposed changes to the “public charge” regulation. Public charge, also known as an inadmissibility test, has been part of federal immigration law for over one hundred years and was “designed to identify people who may depend on the government as their main source of support in the future” (Protecting Immigrant Families, 2021, p. 1). The government can deny a person’s admission into the U.S. or application for permanent resident status if someone is determined to have become a “public charge.” In 2019 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State (DOS) published the final rule, which took effect in February 2020. Under this new rule, the criteria for becoming a public charge were expanded. Rather than checking whether one had relied on government assistance, it now asked if a green card or visa applicant was “likely” to rely on U.S. government benefits in the future (Petts, 2021). This new rule also expanded public charges by now including the new criteria of “income thresholds, age, health, education, and use of noncash benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or “food stamp” benefits), nonemergency Medicaid (with some exceptions), and housing assistance” (Straut-Eppsteiner, 2020, para. 2). This led to much fear among the undocumented immigrant population, deterring them from accessing health care, nutrition, and housing programs.

Although this did not apply to permanent residents and U.S. citizen children of immigrants, many were uninformed and avoided participating in any benefit programs (Straut-Eppsteiner, 2020).

The Biden Administration's goal in 2021 was to end the public charge rule and ensure that immigrants could access health care, food assistance, and other public benefit programs. As of March 19, 2021, the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) stopped enforcing the public charge final rule for all pending applications (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2021). Although public charge is no longer in effect, many immigrant families continue to forgo receiving aid from the government for fear of being deported.

Today, immigrants in the U.S. are in a variety of statuses. Some people have immigrated with documentation that permits them to become permanent residents or “green card holders,” who have many of the same rights as citizens. Others come with work-related visas and are authorized to stay for a specified period of time to work for a specified employer. Refugees and other displaced persons immigrate with documentation that provides specified services and may lead to permanent residence (Homeland Security, n.d.). However, in recent years, many immigrants come with no documentation and are in violation of U.S. immigration laws (Gramlich, 2019b).

Challenges That Immigrants Face

Immigrants, particularly those with lower skills or who are undocumented, lack access to adequate public services from the government (National Immigration Forum, 2018). Many of these vulnerable groups are faced with challenges related to poverty and inequality. There is a disconnect between immigrants and access to social benefits. Many lower skilled and undocumented immigrants experience higher rates of poor health and limited access to health

services (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, n.d.). Having limited access to both legal and health services, and not being able to hold employment due to their lack of legal status, leads to immigrants feeling that they do not belong or cannot contribute to their community (Ngo, 2009).

Due to fear of enforcement of immigration laws, many immigrants distrust the government and steer away from receiving public services. During the Clinton, Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations, many mass ICE raids occurred throughout the United States (Wolf, 2019), leading to fear and distrust among undocumented families. In addition, in April 2018, the Trump Administration announced the zero-tolerance policy in which immigrants, including asylum seekers, trying to cross the border illegally would be detained and criminally prosecuted (Drozdowski & Chong, 2018). The immigration controversy escalated significantly during the Trump Administration because of the president's efforts to increase the deportation of undocumented immigrants (National Immigration Law Center, 2019a). While federal policies focused on reducing immigration, some states and cities responded to this by enacting laws to protect and support immigrants. State-level immigration programs and policies have significantly increased in the last two decades, from nearly zero in 2000 to a high of 490 in 2012 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

Immigrants have limited ways of gaining legal status in the U.S., as there are limits on how many immigrants can come into the country legally. Currently, immigrants from a single country can not exceed 7% of the total number of people entering the U.S. each fiscal year. This quota prevents any immigrant group from dominating immigration flows in the country (American Immigration Council, 2021c). As a result, the waiting list for documentation can take many years and lead to immigrants immigrating to the U.S. illegally. The cause for leaving their country of origin can be due to poverty, labor standards, quality of life, gangs, drugs, and fleeing

to protect their children. Immigrants can be categorized into three groups: asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. Individuals forcibly displaced from their country of origin because of war, persecution, or violence are considered refugees. Individuals seeking international protection from dangers in their country but whose claim for refugee status has not been approved is considered an asylum seeker. Lastly, a migrant is someone who made the conscious decision to leave their country of origin with the intention of settling there (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, n.d.).

While the U.S. makes an effort to limit the number of undocumented immigrants, there are benefits to allowing this population to enter the country. Undocumented immigrants increase the job force, pay taxes, and contribute to the economy through their expenditures. Many perform essential roles in jobs where citizens may find the roles undesirable, wages are lower, or employers may not insist on legal statuses, such as agriculture, construction, hospitality, and food processing industries. From 2014 to 2019, 73% of undocumented immigrants ages 18 to 65 were employed, similar to the rate of non-citizen legal residents and U.S. citizens (The White House, 2021). It is estimated that undocumented immigrants contribute about \$11.74 billion to local and state economies each year; however, many are not eligible for state or federal benefits that are funded through their tax dollars (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 2017). Many noncitizens do not qualify for major federal health care and public benefits programs such as Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program. Those that become eligible often face a five-year or longer waiting period before gaining access to the programs (Healthcare.gov, n.d.). Overall, undocumented immigrants support the economy by paying federal and state taxes along with taxes on goods they buy. Their contributions to society have led to more robust economic growth.

Cities' Responses to Immigration Integration

Immigrants are drawn to cities in search of a better quality of life and more opportunities (Charles & Guna, 2017). Today, cities are faced with new political, economic, and social challenges spurred by the growth of immigrant populations. As a result, local and regional governments play a crucial role in immigration issues, such as access to public services, cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, and integration of immigrant populations into the larger community (Ray, 2003). Cities are working on creating government programs, plans, and policies that are more inclusive for immigrants. In the past two decades, cities worldwide have worked on building relationships with marginalized groups, such as displaced persons, on enhancing their involvement in programs and policies that directly affect them (The International Rescue Committee, 2018).

The Creation of City Immigration Affairs Offices

Typically, immigrant social services are provided through non-profit organizations and public-private partnerships, but city governments are beginning to develop their own immigration affairs offices. The first office was established in New York City in 1986 and now has about 50 full-time staff (Graauw, 2015). Other offices have been created more recently, with fewer staff and resources. Most offices are located in bigger cities with continuous migration histories or cities with newer immigration trends (Graauw, 2015).

These offices inform immigrant communities about their eligibility for government benefits, promote inclusive policies within the city government, and offer immigrant assistance programs that lead to economic, civic, and linguistic integration. The success of these offices relies on all sectors to be engaged in building an inclusive community. City staff and officials must partner, collaborate, and build trust with local non-profits, immigrant advocacy

organizations, business organizations, and religious institutions to have an effective program (Graauw, 2015).

The Welcoming Network

An example of cities making their communities more welcoming and inclusive of immigrants is through Welcoming America's Welcoming Network. Currently, over 250 local governments and non-profits have joined the Welcoming Network, which focuses on building a more welcoming and inclusive community in the United States (Welcoming America, n.d.). Not only does this function as a network, but also a movement in which communities work towards engaging residents of all backgrounds, perspectives, and identities. Any local government or non-profit worldwide is welcome to be a part of this movement, as long as they work on immigrant inclusion issues. Welcoming America serves as a tool for many city governments to create a welcoming, inclusive place for immigrants. A Welcoming City must have inclusive policies, practices, and norms that allow all people, including immigrants, to live and thrive there (Welcoming America, n.d.).

Sanctuary Cities

Over the past several years, there has been an increase in sanctuary cities. While there is no legal definition, a "sanctuary city" may refer to "a jurisdiction that has adopted a policy limiting the degree to which local and state law enforcement officers may assist in federal immigration enforcement" (National Immigration Law Center, 2018, para. 1). Law enforcement officers in sanctuary cities do not ask or report the legal status of people and refuse to detain undocumented immigrants that commit low-level offenses (Franklin County Law Library, n.d.). This does not comply with the federal government as ICE would get custody of the immigrant being held in jail and, if undocumented, could be deported. While sanctuary cities do not comply

with federal law, local and state law enforcement continue to enforce criminal laws against immigrants who have committed crimes (American Immigration Council, 2020). As of March of 2021, there are currently 11 states and 181 cities and counties listed as sanctuary jurisdictions in the U.S. (Vaughan & Griffith, 2021).

In 2017, the Trump Administration issued an executive order to withhold federal funding from sanctuary cities because they did not comply with federal laws (Murdza, 2021). This was blocked by most courts and eventually appealed to the Supreme Court (Rosenberg, 2017). However, the Biden Administration declined to defend the appeal. The Justice Department ordered agencies to resume grants that were denied during the previous policy enforcement (The Center for Migration Studies, n.d.).

Best Practices

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the nation's largest and oldest non-profit that aims to help city leaders build a better community (Gambetta & Gedrimaite, 2010). In 2010, the NLC published a list of best practices for immigrant integration into communities. These best practices are used to benchmark eight city governments that have developed a strategy for immigration integration. Its Center for Research and Innovation researches key topics important to cities, such as immigration integration, and provides opportunities for city leaders to connect with other stakeholders and learn about innovative approaches to the issues. For example, part of NLC's research group, known as the Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration program, released the following best practices to promote the inclusion of immigrants in cities across the U.S. (Gambetta & Gedrimaite, 2010):

1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.
2. Partner with state governments.

3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.
4. Engage the host community.
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.
6. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.
8. Eliminate language barriers.

These best practices were created because there is an absence of a national immigration integration policy in the U.S. Therefore, it is the responsibility of cities to work on implementing immigrant integration programs that will fully integrate immigrants into their communities. The following eight selected cities were evaluated against these best practices to see how their immigrant programs serve their immigrant population.

Table 1: Foreign-Born Population of the Eight Selected Cities

State	City	Total Population	Immigrant Population
California	San Jose	1,019,911	38.90%
California	San Francisco	874,787	34.30%
Oregon	Portland	652,503	13.50%
Washington	Seattle	725,210	18.70%
Texas	Dallas	1,327,234	24.30%
Texas	San Antonio	1,484,014	13.80%
California	San Diego	1,403,977	25.40%
California	Chula Vista	267,636	31.60%

Source: New American Economy, 2021

LITERATURE REVIEW

The U.S. currently has more than 40 million immigrants, which is a greater number than any other country in the world. The undocumented population rose from 3.5 million in 1990 to over 11 million today (Anderson, 2012). The historically high wave of immigration has created profound changes in the U.S.'s urban, suburban, and rural makeup. Although many Americans believe that immigration is a good thing, the majority believe that illegal immigration is a significant threat to the country that must be controlled (Felter, Renwick, & Cheatham, 2021). While some believe undocumented immigrants can benefit the economy, others believe it hurts the economy by driving wages down and creating unemployment among native workers. However, national surveys have found that about three-quarters of adults agree that immigrants mostly fill jobs citizens do not want (Cornelius, 2005).

In the last three decades, illegal immigration has become an important policy and political issue in the U.S., causing many debates at the state and local levels. While immigration policy is generally a product of federal decision-making, local governments are adapting their immigrant-related policies and programs to deal with immigrant populations. Municipalities are an essential part of the American federal system of government, as they tackle some of the nation's major challenges (Bulkeley et al., 2016).

Perceptions of Immigrants

As some cities have adopted policies to exclude undocumented immigrants, others have established policies that are in support of undocumented immigrants (Walker & Leitner, 2011). Huo, Dovidio, Jimenez, and Schildkraut (2018) examined how regional-level welcoming and unwelcoming immigrant policies influence intergroup relations in communities. The study tested Caucasian participants, and found that when immigration is stable, welcoming policies in the

state led to more positive attitudes toward immigration, particularly among Latino immigrants. In contrast, the second study among Latinos found that when immigration is stable, unwelcoming policies led to more positive attitudes toward immigrants. Other research has found that unwelcoming attitudes towards immigrants allow Latinos to share identities with immigrants, such as the feeling of being discriminated against (Cortland et al., 2017). In this same study, Asians' attitudes toward immigration were not affected by the information. These studies show that local conditions can affect the residents' attitudes towards immigrants in their community.

The Challenges

Nguyen and Gill (2016) investigated how local immigration enforcement programs, such as 287g, impacted communities and local law enforcement officers. A study in North Carolina, which has had one of the most significant increases in immigrant and Latino populations since 1990 (Nguyen & Gill, 2016), found that 287g led to increased fear of law enforcement among the immigrant population. Not only were immigrants scared of being deported, but many were discouraged from contacting the police in their time of need or crimes. If immigrants did not report crimes, they were at a greater risk of victimization and not being served correctly by the local police department. Other immigrants reported that they did not leave their houses or drive around places for fear of getting stopped and arrested by a police officer (Nguyen & Gill, 2016).

Welcoming Cities

Although the United States is a country primarily shaped by immigration, there is no federal law that promotes immigrants' cultural, economic, or civic integration into communities (Goździak & Bump, 2008). Many local governments have adopted their own immigrant-related policies that focus on welcoming newcomers and providing them with immigrant-related services. Many cities, counties, and organizations throughout the U.S have begun to participate

in America's Welcoming Cities Network, a platform created by a national organization that seeks to promote immigrant integration plans, policies, and practices (Huang & Liu, 2018). McDaniel, Rodriguez, and Wang (2019) examined three cities -Chicago, Nashville, and Dayton - to see how they have implemented immigrant integration initiatives and policies. Each city reported that immigration and refugee integration work was already being done prior to the initiative, such as English language and assimilation programs in schools (Singer, Hardwick, & Brettell, 2008). However, there is little communication between organizations working on these efforts. According to Suro, Wilson, and Singer (2011), many localities new to immigration integration lack institutional processes and the infrastructure to provide it.

In the process of establishing their welcoming initiative, each studied city had policy entrepreneurs from all sectors of the community to help create a policy window of opportunity. This cross-section integration of local, state, and national connections was crucial to the program's success. Each city was able to build connections with various community organizations, government offices, and community foundations. The study showed that this is an integral part of policy formation and implementation. Whether political, economic, cultural, or social, all sectors influence one another and are all key to immigrant integration. Cities that welcome immigrants not only will experience social and economic dividends, but will also prosper under a new era of immigration reform (McDaniel, Rodriguez, & Wang, 2019).

The Need for National Immigrant Integration Policy

The U.S. welcomes thousands of newcomers every year, yet it lacks a national immigrant integration policy. Scholars such as de Graauw and Bloemraad (2017) point out that supporting and investing in the integration of immigrants is critical to American society as this contributes to the nation's economy, diversity, and political health. Providing immigrants opportunities to

learn English and a pathway to citizenship will allow them to improve their professional and educational journeys. A collaboration with non-governmental entities and the support of business, education, faith-based and philanthropic institutions is needed to build an integration infrastructure. De Graauw and Bloemraad (2017) explain that the federal government should create a national immigrant affairs office with a dedicated staff and funding to develop, coordinate, and oversee immigrant integration and departments across all government levels. In addition, advisory boards from all levels of government, the private sector, and immigrant communities from across the country would be needed to provide advice and guidance on integration best practices. Integrating immigrants into society ultimately will build secure and cohesive communities across the country.

METHODOLOGY

Type of Analysis

The standards-based method (Sylvia & Sylvia, 2012) was used for this report to compare eight selected city governments' immigrant integration programs against a list of best practices from the National League of Cities, to evaluate which best practices each city has accomplished thus far. The cities analyzed in the report include San Jose, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Dallas, San Antonio, San Diego, and Chula Vista. For the purpose of this report, these selected cities were benchmarked against the City of San Jose. San Jose was chosen as the benchmark because it successfully achieved all eight best practices and was the first major city in California to formally begin its comprehensive, multi-sector plan for immigration integration.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from city governments' websites, staff reports, and existing literature from scholarly databases. Informational interviews were conducted with city program staff to collect program details not displayed on their websites.

IRB Exclusion

This research met the requirement for Institutional Review Board (IRB) exclusion. Data used for this analysis did not involve interaction with human subjects or include individually identifiable private information. This project relied solely on public information, which was compared across various cities included in the analysis.

FINDINGS

The research conducted identified how selected city governments in California, Texas, Oregon, and Arizona implement immigration integration programs. Data was gathered through municipal websites and conversations with all cities except Chula Vista and Portland.

City of San Jose

As of 2021, immigrants comprise more than 40% of San Jose’s population (New American Economy, 2021). While these residents contribute to the workforce participation and tax contributions to the city's economy, many immigrants struggle with access to services, economic opportunity, and education. The City of San Jose is continuously working on building a more inclusive environment that integrates all residents, regardless of legal immigration status. As a result, the City of San Jose is used as the benchmark against other cities’ immigration integration programs. Table 2 lists what NLC best practices the City of San Jose has achieved, and Table 3 provides the City’s demographic information.

Table 2: City of San Jose Best Practices in Immigrant Integration

City of San Jose			
			Best Practice Achieved
Best Practice	Yes	No	In Process
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.	X		
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.	X		
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	X		
4. Partner with state governments.	X		
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	X		
6. Engage the host community.	X		
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.	X		
8. Eliminate language barriers.	X		

Source: *National League of Cities, 2010*

Table 3: City of San Jose Demographic Data

Total Population (2021)	1,019,911
Foreign-Born Population (2021)	40%
Undocumented Share of Immigrants %	21%
Budget Allocated to this Purpose/Program	\$ 1,780,000

Source: New American Economy, 2021.; City of San Jose, 2021b; City of San Jose, 2021c

Best Practice #1

According to the NLC, local governments play a significant role in developing a national strategy for immigrant integration (Gambetta & Gedrimaite, 2010). In 2016, the San Jose Office of Immigrant Affairs released its first 3-year Welcoming San Jose Plan for Civic, Economic, Linguistic, and Social Integration. This plan involved local government, community members, businesses, and education partners that worked towards developing best practices and solutions to create a more welcoming environment in San Jose (City of San Jose, 2016b). The five key focus areas for San Jose’s immigrant community were the following (City of San Jose, 2016b):

1. Leadership and Communications
2. Access and Engagement
3. Education
4. Economic Opportunity
5. Safe, Healthy, and Connected Communities

The plan included monthly Steering Committee meetings to ensure that city officials represented immigrants’ voices and provided input on the strategies. Upon completing the program in 2019, the City audited the plan to see how effective it was and where they could improve in future plans. Following this, 11 key community partners and 134 representatives

from 47 different community groups participated in a 6-month community engagement process to create an improved plan for the next three years (San Jose Spotlight, 2021). As a result, San Jose released the following 3-year plan known as the Welcoming San Jose Plan for 2021-2024, which focused on the following pillars (City of San Jose, 2021b):

1. Leadership and Communications
2. Access and Engagement
3. Educational and Economic Opportunity
4. Safe Communities

The new plan continues to work on welcoming actions, programs, and policies with the help of all sectors and consists of 23 essential strategies to serve San Jose’s immigrant communities.

Best Practice #2

The City of San Jose established its Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) in 2015 under the City Manager’s Office (City of San Jose, n.d.a). From 2017 to 2020, the OIA “delivered language access training to nearly 200 staff, facilitated the submission of 397 naturalization applications, ...and trained 1,300 volunteers who have responded 24/7 to nearly 200 alerts of immigration enforcement activity” (City of San Jose, 2021a, p. 383). In 2020, the OIA became part of the new Office of Racial Equity with three employees (City of San Jose, 2021c). The team is responsible for implementing Welcoming San Jose 2.0 and making San Jose a more inclusive place for immigrants (Maciel, Camarena, & Shannon, 2021).

Best Practice #3

The City of San Jose has worked closely with community-based organizations, businesses, and other local jurisdictions to create and implement its Welcoming Plan (City of San Jose, 2021b). The OIA also works closely with counterparts in Santa Clara County, particularly the Office of Immigrant Relations. Both have similar immigration integration goals, but one focuses on the county while the other on the city. Currently, not all Bay Area cities have an established immigration affairs office. However, each city has at least one person responsible for immigration integration goals and is in contact with other local municipalities in the area for ideas and advice (C. Cambises, personal communication, January 14, 2022).

Best Practice #4

OIA partners with the Department of Social Services to administer refugee assistance programs (C. Cambises, personal communication, January 14, 2022). In addition, San Jose's Immigrant Affairs website offers resources to Afghani refugees by providing congressional contacts for those who need help with evacuation requests. Legal assistance non-profits are also listed on their website (City of San Jose, n.d.b). The OIA is constantly staying updated on policies that directly affect immigrant communities and advocating for this group (C. Cambises, personal communication, January 14, 2022).

Best Practice #5

The City of San Jose addresses local challenges by participating in the Rapid Response Network, which aims to protect families from immigration enforcement and provide immediate support in response to ICE raids or other attacks against immigrant community members (City of San Jose, n.d.c). The network is a collaboration of several organizations, including South Bay

Labor Council, CARAS, Diocese of San José, Sacred Heart Community Service, Pangea Legal Services, PACT, SOMOS Mayfair, LUNA, SIREN, Consulate of Mexico, Human Agenda, San Jose’s Office of Immigrant Affairs and Santa Clara County’s Office of Immigrant Relations (Sanchez, 2017). San Jose also combats anti-Asian hate crimes by collaborating with community stakeholders and introducing solutions to end such crimes (City of San Jose, n.d.d). In addition, the city provides a list of resources and training to the public on reporting and ending these harassments. Currently, council members are working on implementing new strategies that will combat misinformation and hate crimes targeting the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. This implementation involves support from “the County of Santa Clara, County Hate Crimes Task Force, partner organizations, and the community” (Maciel, Camarena, & Shannon, 2021, p. 2).

Best Practice #6

San Jose engages with the community as it relies heavily on community-based organizations that focus on immigrant-based needs. While the Immigrant Affairs Office does not offer direct programs through the City, they have created relationships with local non-profits that have played a critical role in promoting pro-immigrant policies and practices in San Jose. Immigrants state that they feel more comfortable receiving services from non-profits than the government, since it is a safe place for them (C. Cambises, personal communication, January 14, 2022). The OIA is involved by attending events hosted by these organizations and building trust with immigrant communities. The following organizations that San Jose currently partners with are (City of San Jose, n.d.e)

- Asian Law Alliance
- Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

- Center for Employment Training (CET)
- Council on American-Islamic Relations
- International Institute of the Bay Area
- Pangea Legal Services
- PARS Equality Center
- Sacred Heart Community Service
- Services, and Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)

Best Practice #7

San Jose acknowledges immigrants' contributions to the economy through its partnership with New American Economy (NAE), a research organization that studies local immigration (New American Economy, n.d.c). The first study examined Santa Clara County and the City of San Jose. It determined that "in 2014, immigrants in Santa Clara County contributed an estimated \$77 billion to the county's economy through their consumption and tax contributions" (City of San Jose, 2016b, p. 5). San Jose's first Welcoming San Jose Plan displayed these results to show the public how immigrants are contributing to the economy (City of San Jose, 2016b). In 2018, NAE found that San Jose's immigrants "paid \$12.9 billion in federal taxes and \$5.3 billion in state and local taxes, leaving them with \$35.7 billion in spending power" (New American Economy, 2020, para. 2).

Best Practice #8

In 2018, the New American Economy found that more than 21% of immigrants living in San Jose had limited English language proficiency (New American Economy, 2016c). Of this group, the three top languages spoken aside from English were "Spanish (43.4%), Vietnamese

(22.6%), and Chinese (17.6%)” (New American Economy, 2020, para. 4). The City of San Jose has a language access policy “to ensure City employees make reasonable efforts to minimize barriers to accessing City programs or services for customers with limited English proficiency” (City of San Jose, 2016i, p. 1). Currently, San Jose has access to 14 contracted vendors for language interpretation, and more than 800 city employees have earned bilingual certification (Lauer, 2020). While the city succeeds in translating more common languages, they hope to add other less common languages to the list (C. Cambises, personal communication, January 14, 2022). The city is also working on dedicating full-time staff to translate during City Hall meetings which are vital to providing information and resources to communities that need it the most (Lauer, 2020).

City and County of San Francisco

Table 4: City and County of San Francisco Best Practices in Immigrant Integration

City and County of San Francisco			
Best Practice	Best Practice Achieved		
	Yes	No	In Process
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.	X		
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.	X		
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	X		
4. Partner with state governments.	X		
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	X		
6. Engage the host community.	X		
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.	X		
8. Eliminate language barriers.	X		

Source: National League of Cities, 2010

Table 5: City and County of San Francisco Demographic Data

Total Population (2021)	874,787
Foreign-Born Population (2021)	34%
Undocumented Share of Immigrants %	13.6%
Budget Allocated to this Purpose/Program	\$13,000,000

Source: New American Economy, 2021; Bay Area Census, n.d; R. Whipple, personal communication, January 26, 2022.

Table 4 lists what NLC best practices the City and County of San Francisco have achieved, and Table 5 provides the City’s demographic information. San Francisco created the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) in 2009 to promote inclusive policies and provide programs to improve the lives of vulnerable and underserved immigrants (Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs, n.d.). Similar to San Jose, OCEIA has excelled in all best practices; however, San Francisco differs from San Jose in addressing local demographics, issues, and challenges, such as voter rights. For example, in 2016, San Francisco voters passed Proposition N, which granted non-citizen parents and guardians of children under the age of 19 the right to vote in the City’s school board election (Sarlin, 2018). Typically, only U.S. citizens can vote in federal and state elections; however, San Francisco became the first city in California to allow non-citizens and permanent residents this opportunity if requirements were met. Originally this was to end in 2020, however, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors made it permanent in 2022 (Stavely, 2022). Additionally, in 2020, San Francisco became the first major city to allow non-citizens to serve on city advisory boards and commissions after 54% of voters approved Proposition C (Hom, 2020).

Although local non-profits offer the vast majority of programs regarding immigration integration, the City and County of San Francisco have two programs directly run by OCEIA.

The DreamSF Fellowship was created in 2015 after the creation of DACA. This program is open to immigrant students and aspiring professionals who want hands-on experience in immigration law, community outreach, and advocacy. To participate, fellows must be 18 years or older, have immigrant experience, and be interested in working with immigrant communities. Since the start of the program, there have been more than 140 fellows (San Francisco Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs, n.d).

Another program run directly by the OCEIA is the Community Ambassador Program, which began in 2010 in response to cultural tensions and increased violence in specific San Francisco neighborhoods (City and County of San Francisco, n.d.a). This community safety program helps create a peaceful community through non-law enforcement safety and prevents violence. Community ambassador positions are open to all people regardless of legal status. Still, most work in diverse neighborhoods “that are low-income, experiencing homelessness, speak a language other than English, older adults, and more” (City and County of San Francisco, n.d.a, para. 3). The current team of ambassadors speaks more than eight languages and consists of immigrants, formerly unhoused or those getting back into the workforce (City and County of San Francisco, n.d.a). In addition, as part of the program, Ambassadors are provided training in various topics, such as professional development, cultural diversity, harassment prevention, and mental illness management, to name a few (City and County of San Francisco, n.d.a).

City of Portland

Table 6: City of Portland Best Practices in Immigrant Integration

City of Portland			
Best Practice	Best Practice Achieved		
	Yes	No	In Process
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.	X		
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.		X	
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	X		
4. Partner with state governments.	X		
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	X		
6. Engage the host community.	X		
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.	X		
8. Eliminate language barriers.	X		

Source: National League of Cities, 2010

Table 7: City of Portland Demographic Data

Total Population (2020)	652,503
Foreign-Born Population	13.5%
Undocumented Share of Immigrants %	21.0%
Budget Allocated to this Purpose/Program	\$218,152

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2021; City of Portland, n.d.c.; City of Portland, n.d.d.;

City of Portland, n.d.e.

Table 6 lists which NLC best practices the City of Portland has achieved, and Table 7 provides the City's demographic information. The City of Portland is home to one of Oregon's largest refugee and immigrant populations, with 13.5% foreign-born residents (City of Portland, n.d.a). The findings in Table 6 show that Portland has achieved all best practices except establishing an immigrant affairs office. However, it has developed the Immigrant and Refugee Program under the Office of Community and Civic Life (City of Portland, n.d.a). This program was created to engage immigrant communities and to prioritize any issues they may face. It also

aims to build pathways for immigrants and refugees to engage in city decisions, advocate for their rights, and support immigrant integration (City of Portland, n.d.a). It is the city's priority to meet the needs of this group through policies, budget priorities, programs, and services.

A way in which Portland differs from the benchmark is through its New Portlanders Policy Commission, which was created in 2016 to integrate refugee and immigrant voices into the city’s decision-making and policies (City of Portland, n.d.b). This group is involved in providing the city with recommendations for improving immigrant integration, policies, and practices. This commission currently has 25 active members from different backgrounds who “provide knowledge in resettlement and integration, community organizing and advocacy, civic engagement, education, public safety, and health” (City of Portland, n.d.b, para. 4).

City of Seattle

Table 8: City of Seattle Best Practices in Immigrant Integration

City of Seattle			
	Best Practice Achieved		
Best Practice	Yes	No	In Process
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.	X		
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.	X		
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	X		
4. Partner with state governments.	X		
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	X		
6. Engage the host community.	X		
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.		X	
8. Eliminate language barriers.	X		

Source: National League of Cities, 2010

Table 9: City of Seattle Demographic Data

Total Population (2021)	725,210
Foreign-Born Population (2021)	19%
Undocumented Share of Immigrants %	27.0%
Budget Allocated to this Purpose/Program	\$ 3,864,854

Source: New American Economy, 2021; City of Seattle, n.d.d.; City of Seattle, n.d.e.

Table 8 lists what NLC best practices the City of Seattle has achieved, and Table 9 provides the city’s demographic information. The findings in Table 8 show that all best practices except for recognizing immigrant contributions to the economy were accomplished (L. Arai, personal communication, November 18, 2021).

The City of Seattle established its Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) in 2012 to build a stronger relationship between the city and immigrant and refugee communities (City of Seattle, n.d.a). It also has an Immigrant and Refugee Commission that was created in 2007 to advise the city council and the mayor on matters that relate to the immigrant and refugee communities, while supporting the city’s goal of immigration integration (City of Seattle, n.d.a). This is comprised of 15 members appointed by the mayor and city council for a one or two-year term.

The City of Seattle’s Language Access Program differs from the benchmark because every department, by executive order, must have a language access liaison (L. Arai, personal communication, November 18, 2021). The OIRA works closely with city departments to ensure that information and services are accessible to all residents regardless of their proficiency in English (City of Seattle, n.d.b). The city also uses ethnic media to communicate with immigrants or refugees who do not speak English. The use of ethnic media allows them to share updates on the city’s departments and provide outreach to these communities via television, radio, online,

and in print (L. Arai, personal communication, November 18, 2021). Seattle's most common ethnic media audiences include Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and African-American communities (City of Seattle, n.d.c).

City of Dallas

Table 10: City of Dallas Best Practices in Immigrant Integration

City of Dallas			
Best Practice	Best Practice Achieved		
	Yes	No	In Process
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.	X		
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.	X		
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	X		
4. Partner with state governments.		X	
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	X		
6. Engage the host community.	X		
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.	X		
8. Eliminate language barriers.			X

Source: National League of Cities, 2010

Table 11: City of Dallas Demographic Data

Total Population (2021)	1,327,234
Foreign-Born Population (2021)	24%
Undocumented Share of Immigrants %	20.3%
Budget Allocated to this Purpose/Program	\$ 620,796

Source: New American Economy, 2021; New American Economy, n.d.a; City of Dallas, 2020

Table 10 lists what NLC best practices the City of Dallas has achieved, and Table 11 provides the city’s demographic information. The findings in Table 10 show that Dallas does not partner with the state government and that the city is in the process of eliminating language barriers.

The City of Dallas established the Office of Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs (WCIA) in 2017 to establish an inclusive community for the immigrant population in Dallas (City of Dallas, 2018). In creating this office, Dallas became the first Texan city to join the Welcoming America Network (City of Dallas, 2018). The WCIA strives to push for policies and programs that will ultimately support foreign-born residents in health, housing, and education, while working closely with local organizations, governance, and businesses.

Currently, the WCIA is in the process of hiring a language access coordinator in the hope of addressing one of its strategies of implementing and overseeing a city language access plan aiming to reduce language barriers within departments (C. Da Silva, personal communication, November 24, 2021; City of Dallas, 2018). Yet, they are eliminating language barriers by working with the Resilience Division to create a language map that helps users determine what languages are spoken within Dallas by zip code (City of Dallas, n.d.b). This map is beneficial to anyone who wants to do outreach in specific locations, and helps to determine what languages are primarily spoken in specific areas (C. Da Silva, personal communication, November 24, 2021).

As noted in Table 10's results, Dallas currently does not partner with the state government. In 2020, Republican Governor Greg Abbott confirmed that Texas would opt out of the refugee resettlement program (Aguilar, 2020). Abbott believed that it was the role of local governments and non-profits to opt into the resettlement program and dedicate their available resources to help refugees and immigrants already in Texas (Hansen, 2020). Since 2005 Texas has invested billions of dollars in border security (Chishti & Bolter, 2021). In 2021, Abbott announced that Texas would invest \$250 million from state funds to build its border wall since this was terminated by President Biden (Barragan, 2021). According to U.S. Customs and Border

Protection Immigration data, Texas has had more recent record high numbers of immigrants at the border (Barragan, 2021).

The City of Dallas differs from the benchmark city through the Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund, which assisted the immigrant community ineligible for COVID-19 relief plans (City of Dallas, n.d.a). A \$500,000 fund was created to distribute \$1,200 stipends to Dallas immigrant families severely impacted by the pandemic. As of today, 863 immigrant families have received a grant to alleviate the financial burdens caused by the pandemic (C. Da Silva, personal communication, November 24, 2021).

City of San Antonio

Table 12: City of San Antonio Best Practices in Immigrant Integration

City of San Antonio			
Best Practice	Best Practice Achieved		
	Yes	No	In Process
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.	X		
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.		X	
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	X		
4. Partner with state governments.		X	
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	X		
6. Engage the host community.	X		
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.	X		
8. Eliminate language barriers.	X		

Source: National League of Cities, 2010

Table 13: City of San Antonio Demographic Data

Total Population (2021)	1,484,014
Foreign-Born Population (2021)	13.8%
Undocumented Share of Immigrants %	28.2%
Budget Allocated to this Purpose/Program	unknown

Source: New American Economy, 2021; City of San Antonio, n.d.c

Table 12 lists what NLC best practices the City of San Antonio has achieved, and Table 13 provides the city's demographic information. Known for being a Welcoming City, the City of San Antonio accomplished all best practices except for partnering with state governments and having an established immigrant affairs office. As mentioned for the City of Dallas, the State of Texas currently does not participate in or support refugee resettlement. Although San Antonio does not have an immigrant affairs office, the City of San Antonio's Department of Human Services has personnel that work on providing immigrant services to the immigrants and refugees in the city.

In 2018, the City of San Antonio added its first Immigrant Community Liaison under the City Manager's Office to work with the community, non-profits, interfaith communities, and stakeholder groups to connect and coordinate the immigrant community to its services (City of San Antonio, n.d.a). In addition, with the help of Welcoming America, New American Economy, and the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, a strategic plan was created for the City of San Antonio to create a multi-sector immigration integration strategy (City of San Antonio, n.d.c). This plan outlined the city's barriers and made recommendations for the following areas: education, health services, legal services, city services and programs, civic engagement, workforce development, and entrepreneurship (City of San Antonio, n.d.c). According to the NAE Cities Index, San Antonio ranks first in Texan cities and 29th out of 100 large American cities for having successful policies that integrate immigrants into the economy and community (City of San Antonio, n.d.b).

Since 2019, San Antonio has seen an influx of immigrants and asylum seekers passing through the city. Due to this, the city created the Migrant Resource Center (MRC), which assists immigrant travelers with travel, shelter, meals, and other basic needs. Since 2019, MRC has

welcomed 32,343 immigrants, provided 85,471 meals, performed 2,600 medical assessments, and has provided over 22,000 beds to the traveling immigrants (City of San Antonio, n.d.b).

City of San Diego

Table 14: City of San Diego Best Practices in Immigrant Integration

City of San Diego			
Best Practice	Best Practice Achieved		
	Yes	No	In Process
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.			X
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.	X		X
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	X		
4. Partner with state governments.	X		
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	X		
6. Engage the host community.	X		
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.	X		
8. Eliminate language barriers.			X

Source: National League of Cities, 2010

Table 15: City of San Diego Demographic Data

Total Population (2021)	1,403,977
Foreign-Born Population (2021)	25%
Undocumented Share of Immigrants %	12%
Budget Allocated to this Purpose/Program	\$0

Source: New American Economy, 2021; Migration Policy Institute, n.d.; R. Fernández, personal communication, November 26, 2021

Table 14 lists what NLC best practices the City of San Diego has achieved, and Table 15 provides the city’s demographic information. The findings in Table 14 show that San Diego is in the process of completing three best practices.

While the city has achieved most of the best practices, its priority is to develop a strategy for integrating immigrant policies, procedures, and programs (The City of San Diego, 2019). After a year of planning with multiple local organizations, residents, and steering communities,

the Welcoming San Diego Plan was introduced in 2019 to the City of San Diego. This strategic plan focuses on “economic opportunity, education, inclusive access, civic engagement, and safe communities” for immigrants (The City of San Diego, 2019, p. 2). This plan consists of 19 recommendations and suggestions in its strategic plan to create a more inclusive culture for immigrants. One recommendation is to create an office of immigrant affairs known as the Office for Immigrant Advancement (OIA). While the creation of the office is still in process, the position of an Immigrant Affairs Manager was created as part of the 5-year strategic plan. This person is responsible for implementing the Welcoming Plan and facilitating immigration integration services as immigrants, refugees, and newcomers comprise a quarter of San Diego’s population (Pfledderer, 2020).

San Diego is also in the process of improving its current language access policies by expanding its languages to more underreached populations that do not have representation (Pfledderer, 2020). This is particularly needed for frontline services provided to immigrant communities. Currently, the city aims to expand its language access policy to a city-wide initiative, as it is presently not followed by all departments (R. Fernández, personal communication, November 26, 2021).

San Diego differs from the benchmark as its location is adjacent to the Mexican border, and the city is exposed to many immigrants illegally entering the United States. To alleviate the overcrowding, the United States Department of Health and Human Services requested support from the County and City of San Diego to provide temporary shelter to the migrant children crossing. They offered 2,408 unaccompanied children food and shelter at the San Diego Convention Center (The City of San Diego, 2021). In addition, these asylum-seeking children

received “case management, medical care, educational programs, legal assistance and enrichment activities” (Donovan, 2021, para. 2).

City of Chula Vista

Table 16: City of Chula Vista Best Practices in Immigrant Integration

City of Chula Vista			
Best Practice	Best Practice Achieved		
	Yes	No	In Process
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.	X		
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.		X	
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	X		
4. Partner with state governments.	X		
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	X		
6. Engage the host community.	X		
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.		X	
8. Eliminate language barriers.	X		

Source: National League of Cities, 2010

Table 17: City of Chula Vista Demographic Data

Total Population (2021)	267,636
Foreign-Born Population (2021)	31.6%
Undocumented Share of Immigrants %	15.2%
Budget Allocated to this Purpose/Program	unknown

Source: New American Economy, 2021

Table 16 lists what NLC best practices the City of Chula Vista has achieved, and Table 17 provides the city’s demographic information. The findings in Table 16 show that the City of Chula Vista has accomplished all best practices except for having an immigrant affairs office and recognizing immigrant contributions to the economy. Although the city does not have a specific office for immigrant affairs, the city has established a Human Relations Commission that serves as an advisory board to make recommendations to the mayor, city manager, and city council to

make the city more diverse and welcoming for all. The Human Relations Commission was established in 2017, and the first goal was to complete all steps necessary to become a Certified Welcoming City (City of Chula Vista, 2019). In 2019, Chula Vista was the first city in the state of California to become a certified Welcoming City. The City of Chula Vista does not recognize immigrant contributions to the economy based on data online.

In 2019, the city approved the Welcoming Chula Vista Implementation Plan, which involved the collaboration of city, local non-profits, and public agencies. This plan is broken down into the following categories (City of Chula Vista, 2019):

- Government Leadership
- Equitable Access
- Civic Engagement
- Connected Communities
- Educational Partnerships
- Economic Development
- Safe Communities

ANALYSIS

The analysis compares selected cities’ immigrant integration programs, and determines which best practices have been accomplished, not accomplished, or are in the process of being accomplished. The cities are benchmarked against the City of San Jose’s immigration program, and differences between the two cities are discussed. The evaluation was primarily done through individual discussions with municipal staff and online research. Not all cities have a budget allocated for this program or purpose due to not having an established office of immigrant affairs. Table 18 below shows that establishing a mayoral board and immigrant affairs office is the least achieved goal among the selected cities. Budget constraints impact cities’ abilities to establish an office in many cases.

Table 18: Selected Cities Breakdown of Best Practices

All Selected Cities			
Best Practice	Yes	No	In Progress
1. Develop a nationwide strategy for immigrant integration.	7	0	1
2. Establish mayoral advisory boards and immigrant affairs offices.	4	3	1
3. Cooperate with municipal agencies.	8	0	0
4. Partner with state governments.	6	2	0
5. Address local demographics, issues, and challenges.	8	0	0
6. Engage the host community.	8	0	0
7. Recognize immigrant contributions to the economy.	6	2	0
8. Eliminate language barriers.	6	0	2

Source: National League of Cities, 2010

City of San Jose: The City of San Jose served as the benchmark to compare all cities’ immigration integration programs. While the City of San Francisco also has an established immigrant affairs office and has achieved all best practices, San Jose was the first major city in California to formally begin its multi-sector plan on immigrant integration. Of the selected cities,

San Jose has the largest immigrant population, third-largest undocumented immigrant population, and second-largest budget allocated for its immigrant integration program. In addition, San Jose has been successful in achieving all eight best practices, and has had a productive program since the Office of Immigrant Affairs was established in 2015.

While all best practices have been achieved, San Jose can improve its language access program. A recommendation is to follow a similar language access program to that of the City of Seattle. Having a language liaison appointed to each department in the city would benefit a city with such a significant immigrant population. This would allow staff from all departments to provide services to individuals with limited English proficiency. The city would be able to translate important information for every person regardless if they can speak, understand, write, or read English. It is important to start with emergency preparedness departments first, as communication is crucial for public safety during these events. Next, it is important to have online information translated into multiple languages as some limited English proficient individuals may be uncomfortable receiving services in person.

City and County of San Francisco: San Francisco has a smaller overall and foreign-born population, yet a larger budget for its immigration program than the benchmark city. Similar to San Jose, it successfully achieves all eight best practices; however, it differs in that non-citizens are allowed to vote for school board elections and to serve on city advisory boards. Having a larger budget has allowed San Francisco to offer the DreamSF Fellowship and Ambassador Program, which lets immigrants participate in leadership and professional development opportunities. San Francisco has a very successful immigrant integration program that other cities can appreciate.

City of Portland: The City of Portland has a smaller overall and foreign-born population compared to the benchmark city. The budget allocated for this purpose is also much lower than San Jose's. Portland achieved all best practices except having an immigrant affairs office. However, the city does have a policy commission for refugees and immigrants to be involved in the city's decision-making and policies. Commissions generally have fewer powers, staff, and resources than formal offices; however, it is an important stepping stone toward further institution-building. Having a larger budget for this purpose would allow this city to develop its own immigrant affairs office. This would allow the city to address local immigrant integration challenges, as well as improve communication between the immigrant community and local government.

City of Seattle: The City of Seattle has a smaller overall and foreign-born population than the benchmark city. The budget, however, is more than double that of San Jose's. It achieved all of NLC's best practices except for recognizing immigrant contributions to the economy. Immigrants contribute to the economy by paying billions in taxes and filling low-wage jobs that keep industries competitive. Like San Jose, Seattle should partner with the New American Economy to research how immigrants contribute to the economy. These results should then be shared with the public through public meetings, reports, and their immigration integration action plan.

City of Dallas: Dallas has a larger overall population yet a smaller foreign-born population than the benchmark city. The budget is significantly less than that of San Jose. In regards to achieving best practices, Dallas does not partner with the state government, as the state is not in support of the resettlement program. According to the NLC, cities should establish partnerships with the state government in immigration integration to clarify relationships between local and state law

enforcement agencies; however, this best practice will not be achieved during this time with Texas's current political climate.

The best practice of eliminating language barriers is in process as Dalla hires a language access coordinator. However, their language map is a great tool to help others determine which language is spoken in specific zip codes. This is a tool that other cities should incorporate into their integration plan so that outreach is given in the correct language, depending on location.

City of San Antonio: San Antonio has a larger population overall yet a smaller foreign-born population than the benchmark city. No budget was determined for this program or purpose since San Antonio does not have an immigrant affairs office. Immigrant services fall under the Human Services Department, which accounts for community centers and facilities, education, faith-based, financial and emergency assistance, news and media, early education and child-care, and senior services (City of San Antonio, n.d.d). Similar to the City of Dallas, a partnership with the state is not achievable at this time; however, cities with state opposition should consider starting an immigrant affairs office to help diffuse any local hostilities between native-born residents and immigrants. A recommendation is to encourage hiring additional people to support immigrant services and eventually to establish an immigrant-focused office. Endowments or fundraisers can be beneficial to fund immigration-related services.

City of San Diego: San Diego has a larger overall population yet a smaller foreign-born population than the benchmark city. Currently, three best practices are in progress: developing a strategy for immigration integration, establishing a mayoral board and immigration affairs office, and eliminating language barriers. As soon as this office is established, it will serve as a hub for immigrants and refugee-related issues and connect them to appropriate county and community resources.

City of Chula Vista: The City of Chula Vista has a small overall and foreign-born population compared to the benchmark city. There is no budget for this purpose or program for the City of Chula Vista, since there currently is no immigrant affairs office. Another best practice not achieved is recognizing immigrant contributions to the economy. More than a quarter of the population is foreign-born, and the city could benefit from developing an immigrant affairs office. This would provide the immigrant community with the appropriate resources and tools to succeed. Another recommendation is to partner with the New American Economy to recognize immigrants' contributions to the economy.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated how selected cities in California, Washington, Oregon, and Texas implement immigration integration programs at the city level, using metrics provided by the NLC. In addition, the City of San Jose served as a valuable benchmark to compare other municipalities against because of their early success in providing immigrant services.

In the absence of a national immigrant integration policy, NLC's best practices serve as a tool for cities to respond to immigration challenges and develop a program that allows immigrants to integrate into the community. Each city has a unique way of integrating immigrants, yet cities with an established office of immigrant affairs are more successful in accomplishing NLC's best practices. Unfortunately, budget constraints, lack of resources, and low staff may make it difficult for cities to implement an immigrant affairs office to carry out integration programs. However, for those cities that have or plan to create an integration program, it is crucial for immigrant organizations, non-profits, law enforcement, and the business sector to work together with the city to run a successful program. This collaboration enables the city and partners to learn about the needs of immigrant communities so that they can develop appropriate programs and initiatives that will integrate immigrants.

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