

BENEFITS OF INTEGRATION

The potential benefits of successful immigrant integration to the broader society are significant:

- A vibrant, cohesive society shared and valued by established and newcomer residents of different experiences, histories, ethnicities, and backgrounds.
- Revitalization of declining communities through the contributions of immigrant families working in tandem with their native-born neighbors.
- Stronger communities with the ability to meet wide-ranging needs; address racial, ethnic, and economic diversity; and enrich the social and cultural fabric of our society.
- Increased productivity and a robust economy through an expanded base of workers, consumers, taxpayers, and entrepreneurs.
- Global competitiveness through a multi-lingual, multi-cultural workforce.
- A more vibrant democracy in which all groups are accepted as equal members of society with the opportunity—and responsibility—to engage and contribute to the common good.
- A more secure America where all members of society—regardless of race, national origin, or socio-economic status—live in dignity and equality.



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As part of the integration process, newcomers and receiving community members, over time, learn about and come to respect one another's cultures and traditions, both the similarities and the differences. They may incorporate aspects of the other's cultural practices into their own. The arts and humanities, cultural production and performance, and civic participation are important vehicles for social and cultural interaction and eventual integration.

• Civic participation and citizenship.

Civic participation and citizenship not only demonstrate immigrants' desire to become active community members but also provide an avenue for newcomers to increase their ability to shape community priorities. Opportunities for newcomers and established residents to participate together in community problem solving, leadership development, and democratic practice are vital to the integration process.

For their part, immigrants are responsible for learning about civic processes and engaging in the life of the broader community, from participating in their children's school to mobilizing new voters. Their civic involvement may begin with issues that affect them directly, but over time, it will encompass concerns that affect the broader community. The receiving community, on the other hand, bears responsibility for promoting citizenship, providing opportunities to participate in democracy, and ensuring the right to organize.

DVD *Watch the DVD* *Rain in a Dry Land:* *She Stopped Listening*

Losing control over a teenaged child can be terrifying for any parent, but the impact on a refugee family can be especially intense. Hear one single mother's feelings of powerlessness as she describes a late-night encounter with her defiant 13-year old daughter.

EVALUATING IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION EFFORTS

Like any evaluation, the evaluation of an immigrant integration effort should begin with the following basic questions:

- What are the goals of the immigrant integration effort?
- What are the goals of the evaluation?
- Which stakeholders need to be engaged in the design and implementation of the evaluation?
- What are the anticipated outputs and immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes?
- What are the indicators of the outputs and outcomes?
- What is the timeframe and resources for the evaluation, and to what extent can all the outcomes be realistically assessed and captured?
- What unique issues need to be considered (e.g., translation and interpretation, access to immigrant leaders and residents, confidentiality about immigration status)?
- What is the best combination of methodologies—quantitative and qualitative—for assessing and capturing the outputs and the outcomes?

Building in an evaluation component at the outset is worthwhile because (1) there is much to be learned about the process of immigrant integration and the conditions that facilitate or hinder it, and (2) it ensures that the evaluation will be aligned with the goals of the effort and conducted in a participatory and culturally responsive manner.

SOURCE:

United Way of America. 1996. *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*. Alexandria, VA: United Way of America.

In developing an evaluation, the “outputs” and “outcomes” should be clearly defined. Outputs are short-term measures of a program activity or strategy, such as the number of English classes taught, participants trained, or voters registered. A program’s outputs should lead to the desired outcomes.

Outcomes are the effects of a program activity or strategy, which can be measured in short, intermediate, and long term. Outcomes may relate to knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, behaviors, or conditions. The following sample outcomes can help grantmakers and other integration stakeholders begin to consider the goals of their immigrant integration efforts:

- Immigrants develop the capacity (e.g., English language proficiency and job skills) to improve their social and economic well-being.
- Immigrants have an extensive understanding of U.S. systems and institutions (e.g., education, economic, civic) and know how to access and navigate them.
- Immigrants participate in activities to help shape policies that affect the communities in which they live (e.g., neighborhood redevelopment).
- Immigrants receive high-quality services (e.g., health care and education) that are responsive to their needs.
- Immigrants work alongside receiving community members to improve their communities and the systems that affect their lives.
- Receiving community members and immigrants feel a sense of belonging to and security about the community in which they all live.
- Receiving community members value the contributions of immigrants and do not discriminate against them.

- Receiving community members and immigrants engage in ongoing cultural and social exchange.

- Laws and policies that support immigrant integration, including providing equal treatment and opportunity, are put into place.

To assess these indicators, a mixed-method design combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches is recommended. Funders should note that a full-scale evaluation of an immigrant integration effort can consume substantial time and resources because the change process not only takes a long time, but it is complex and constantly evolving.

Although multi-year evaluations are preferable, they are not always possible. Therefore, the “Promising Practices in Immigrant Integration” section of this toolkit offers preliminary indicators for each of the pathways to integration, e.g., language acquisition, education, and civic participation. These preliminary indicators may be more feasible to measure and document, depending on the timeframe and resources for the evaluation.

Note that indicators can be separated into immediate or intermediate outcomes, depending on the starting point of the immigrant integration effort and the anticipated sequence of activities that will lead to immigrant integration. They can also be separated to determine change at the individual, organizational, or communitywide levels.

The immigrant integration change process is neither linear nor sequential. Therefore, any effort to evaluate progress toward immigrant integration should analyze and document the dynamic two-way interaction between the immigrant community and the receiving society.