



MAYOR CRANLEY'S TASK FORCE ON IMMIGRATION REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognizing the strong economic and social contributions immigrants bring to municipalities, on July 24, 2014, Mayor John Cranley launched a Task Force on Immigration with the goal of making Cincinnati “the most immigrant-friendly city in the United States”. Mayor Cranley is one of only two U.S. mayors publically stating that they want their city to be the most immigrant-friendly.

The Mayor’s Task Force on Immigration (Task Force) – comprised of a broad coalition of interests including representatives of business, labor, faith, and service organizations – was charged with drafting a report recommending ways in which the City of Cincinnati can fulfill this goal. Mayor Cranley appointed E. Thomas Fernandez and Raj Chundur as co-chairs of the coalition.

The Task Force is broken into five subcommittees, with two co-chairs per committee. These divisions include:

- (1) Education and Talent Retention
- (2) Rights and Safety
- (3) Economic Development
- (4) International Attractiveness
- (5) Resources and Development

Each subcommittee spent eight months researching, conducting best practice surveys, brainstorming, formulating and revising their recommendations. While these groups operated mostly autonomously, not surprisingly, several of the recommendations they produced do overlap.

The following is a general overview of the recommendations:

SHORT TERM GOALS (within two years)

Creation of Center for New Cincinnatians

- The Task Force proposes the creation of a center that will enable and support effective communication channels, including technology platforms for information sharing and presentations. This center will not only link immigrants to services, but will also connect the larger community within Cincinnati and beyond. The center will initially be an online website or portal with the ultimate goal being to create a physical center. Other cities such as Pittsburgh and Chicago have created a physical space for this same purpose, and we are inspired by their success. The Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber will facilitate the creation and management of the Center for New Cincinnatians.



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Creation of Online Immigrant Center

- The Task Force proposes launching a one-stop, online immigration center that will connect the region's local immigration service providers. The Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber will facilitate the creation of the website.

Creation of Mayor's Advisory Council

- The Task Force recommends identifying and convening leaders from immigrant communities, along with local leaders, to work as a mayoral advisory group toward the common goal of making our City more welcoming.

Collect Useful Meta-Data

- It is recommended that the City's Center for New Cincinnatians should collect and process immigrant data to construct useful digital/print materials for the public and for decision makers so as to strengthen our growth in diversity and talent for economic development purposes.

Amplify Media Messaging Outside Region

- The Task Force recommends the City and Center for New Cincinnatians work to provide immigrant leaders and businesses in Cincinnati with clear, consistent language and data in order to reduce the perpetuation of myths and help build positive perceptions of the benefits of immigrants in our region.

Increase Acquisition of H1B Visas

- The Task Force also recommends the creation of a training program that could assist area companies in need of highly skilled talent (e.g. in STEM disciplines) to make it possible to successfully navigate the visa process and thereby increase the region's talent pool.

Cultural Sensitivity Training for Police

- The Task Force encourages the CPD to examine requiring cultural and sensitivity competency training for every police officer on how best to engage immigrant communities. Cultural training should be specific to the demographic composition of each district. The Task Force encourages the CPD to tailor the training around valuing diversity, acquiring cultural knowledge, and providing conduct self-assessments when working with immigrant communities.

Strengthen Commitment to Punish Legal Rights Violations

- The Task Force recommends the City support programs and initiatives to assist under-represented minorities in cases where their safety and rights have been violated, in collaboration with the Cincinnati Police Department.



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Execute Inclusive Community Engagement for Immigrants

- The Task Force recommends the City of Cincinnati, in partnership with local media firms, produce digital and print media to inform Cincinnati's international audience about what the City is doing to engage immigrants. Content generated by these community engagement activities, with special emphasis on social enterprises component, can be formatted in a variety of ways to capture the attention of the City's international audience.

The New Cincinnati of the Year Awards

- The purpose of this proposed award is to recognize the contributions immigrants make to the City of Cincinnati. Immigrants are vital to the economic growth, cultural fabric and creative vision of the City. To recognize these contributions, the Center would like to confer annual New Cincinnati of the Year Awards on individuals who have made outstanding and sustained contributions in fields vital to the City's interests such as the sciences, arts, sports, business, philanthropy, health, technology, community and law.

English as a Second Language (ESL) Opportunities

- The Task Force recommends the City's Center for New Cincinnatians host ESL training/classes, as a robust ESL system will assist in eliminating language barriers for new immigrants. ESL services geared toward immigrant families will foster a welcoming effort through education and acculturation, and removing language barriers between immigrants and community members promotes greater understanding and tolerance of differences. Additionally, language classes allow individuals to become self-sufficient at a more rapid rate.

Financial Literacy

- Financial literacy education helps immigrant populations reach financial independence. The Task Force recommends the Center for New Cincinnatians provide Cincinnati's immigrant population with training regarding money management and savings, ultimately leading to families buying homes, investing in the community, and inspiring more families to migrate to the City and contribute to the overall economy.

Wage Enforcement

- The Task Force recommends the City of Cincinnati support an ordinance demonstrating this City's stance on protecting the rights of its immigrant population. Low-wage and immigrant workers are victims of wage theft when they are paid less than the minimum wage, shorted hours, forced to work off the clock, not paid overtime, or not paid at all. These are pervasive practices across many industries. Stolen wages result in economic hardship for workers and their families, and immigrants are often one of the most vulnerable and targeted populations.



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City Collaboration with Faith-Based Immigration Services

- Faith-based immigration service providers like Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati (MARCC) establish relations with immigrants. MARCC plans to issue ID cards for their constituents that will include a photo and address. The City should accept MARCC issued ID cards.

LONG TERM GOALS (within five years)

Increase Retention of International Graduates

- International students are currently completing STEM degrees at a much higher pace than native students. The Task Force recommends the City of Cincinnati collaborate with the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber's Diverse by Design program to increase hiring international students in the City. The Task Force recommends leveraging local business networks to attract more skilled immigrant talent already in the U.S.

Build the City's Brand by Engaging an International Audience

- The Task Force recommends hosting social enterprise conferences (TEDx or incubators) and sharing content through multiple channels to actively engage the international community. It is recommended that the City work with the tourism industry to promote these efforts.

Market Cincinnati as Preferred Location for Manufacturing

- The Task Force recommends leveraging the presence of global logistics companies to attract new businesses to the region. Working with the aforementioned businesses, REDI and international chambers, a marketing plan for this proposal can be created. The Task Force recommends extending City incentive programs to foreign companies to attract investment to the region.

Promotional and Public Relations Campaigns

- The Task Force recommends the creation of promotional and PR campaigns focusing on education, employment, business opportunities, as well as family-supportive structures and other civic and social issues that are specific to the City's immigrant population.

Increase Foreign Capital EB-5

- The Task Force recommends prudently increasing awareness and support for EB-5 investment in the City by reaching out to international students and foreign nationals in the region. The Task Force encourages collaboration with the Port Authority of Cincinnati to help investors achieve their goals and build an image of an immigrant-friendly city.



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Build Immigrant Community Data

- The Task Force recommends community engagement activities be paired with a content collection effort to spotlight our immigrants and/or build immigrant community data. The Committee recommends that information generated be used to promote the City's commitment to its immigrant population, empowering them to become community leaders and problem solvers.

Build Acceleration for Immigrant Owned Businesses

- The Task Force recommends active partnerships with existing accelerators to enable and support more immigrant entrepreneurs. It is further recommended that the City explore the creation of acceleration services that concentrate on immigrant-owned businesses.

Improve Identified Service Gaps

- The Task Force recommends that the City work on improving service gaps in community awareness and advocacy, employment and job readiness, housing, transportation and education in ways that are specific to the City's immigrant population.

Improve Workers' Rights Policies

- The Task Force recommends improving workers' rights policies by collaborating with local law enforcement and government agencies to enforce workplace standards that protect against violence, promote non-discriminatory policies, ensure health and safety and guard the rights of vulnerable workers.

This report serves merely as the beginning of many discussions about how the City of Cincinnati can work to increase the number of foreign-born nationals coming to Cincinnati. Co-Chairs Tom Fernandez and Raj Chundur would like to extend their appreciation to the many volunteers, organizations and community activists who spent months composing these findings. The Task Force co-chairs would like to specifically recognize and thank Dr. Regan Henry and Ms. Amy Corbin for their extraordinary efforts in the production of this report.