

Advancing Equity and Opportunity for King County Immigrants and Refugees:

A Report from the King County Immigrant and Refugee Task Force

July 7, 2016



King County

Acknowledgements

The completion of this report would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of a number of individuals.

We would like to give a special thanks to the project team that guided and supported the work of the task force, and provided valuable input to this report, including King County staff Ericka Cox, Carmela Ennis, Kristina Logsdon, Cindy Domingo, and Mike Reed. Additional thanks go to Matias Valenzuela and Dwight Dively for timely and strategic advice.

Additionally, we would also like to thank the numerous cities, organizations, and individuals who hosted community conversations. Without the work of all of these organizations and individuals, and the hundreds of community members that participated, this report would not reflect the broad voices and perspectives of immigrants and refugees across King County.



Consultants facilitating the Task Force

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Ms. Gheisar, who led task force facilitation, has over 25 years of expertise and well-established relationships in the field of social justice with hands-on experience managing teams, leading strategic planning processes, forging networks, and implementing a vision and objectives. Ms. Gheisar has consistently delivered measurable outcomes utilizing a combination of managerial, strategic thinking, and planning experiences. At the Cross Cultural Health Program Ms. Gheisar worked with many coalitions of immigrant communities to identify barriers to health care access and worked over a period of seven years with many community representatives to implement solutions addressing these barriers. Ms. Gheisar's entire career has been focused on fighting poverty and the impacts of poverty on local and global communities. She is deeply passionate about bringing communities of color together to build a more powerful and unified voice.

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Ms. McClung, who supported Ms. Gheisar with task force facilitation, and led planning, research and writing, is a skilled project manager, researcher and writer with more than 15 years of experience working on social justice issues with a focus on gender and marginalized groups. Ms. McClung has extensive experience in the global development, non-profit and philanthropy sectors, with subject area expertise in land tenure, gender, access to justice, and conflict transformation. Ms. McClung has seasoned strategy and program development, research and evaluation, project management, training and capacity building, and communications skills.

Task Force members would particularly like to acknowledge:

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- Emma Catague, Filipino Community Center
- Enique Espinosa, Alexia Klatt and Ramiro Reyes, Immigrant and Refugee Community Conversations Team of El Centro de la Raza
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- Coalition for Refugees from Burma
- Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition
- Eritrean Community in Seattle and the Vicinity
- The Ethiopia Community Center
- Fuerte, Federal Way High School
- Kent Cultural Diversity Initiative Group
- Oromo Cultural Center
- Para los Niños, Burien
- Rajana Society
- Refugee Women's Alliance
- Renton Housing Authority
- Trusted Advocates Association in White Center
- White Center Community Development Association

July 7, 2016

Metropolitan King County Council
516 Third Ave., Suite 1200
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dow Constantine
King County Executive
401 Fifth Ave., Suite 800
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear King County Council and Executive Constantine:

The King County immigrant and refugee task force is pleased to convey its report and recommendations in response to its charge in Ordinance 18085 on recommendations for the formation of a Commission and effective ways of engaging the immigrant and refugee communities to establish lasting and trusting relationships with County offices and programs.

The task force met over a period of nine months starting in October 2015. The task force worked together in many meetings and retreats, divided into three sub-groups and worked on developing recommendations within these sub-groups, and held more than 20 community meetings where we heard the feedback and input of over 500 members of immigrant and refugee communities. The attached report reflects the process and the recommendations of this task force with the full consensus of the group.

We recommend the County move forward with the formation of a Commission that can strengthen the County's ability to address the complex challenges of providing effective services to immigrant and refugee communities. We also recommend that the County establish an Office of Immigrants and Refugees, which can act as a convening place and a central hub of activities, services and dialogue about needed services. The focus of the Commission and the Office is to be heavily externally directed in engaging directly with the communities, building a hands-on relationship with immigrants and refugees, be their voice to county government, and be the voice of county government to them. The immigrant and refugee community is diverse and complex, and it will require an ongoing, up-close effort to come to know the intricacies of the different parts of the community and how to respond to them specifically. This Office and the Commission will demonstrate the continued commitment of the County to social justice, equity and inclusion. The incredible diversity within the immigrant and refugee communities can only be fully addressed by a dedicated office that helps to establish trust and engagement and with the integration of communities who continue to help in building very attractive and vibrant neighborhoods, cities, and counties. There is no other office in the King County government currently taking on this role and scope of work, though we see the need for close collaboration with the Office of Equity and Social Justice in order to mutually reinforce these distinct but related streams of work.

The task force's recommendations were partly based on the input of hundreds of individuals. We strongly urge distribution of the final task force report to the stakeholder community and recommend that we hold a public event hosted by the King County Council and Executive Constantine and the King County Immigrant and Refugee task force to report back on the findings and to announce the next steps of the plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the task force. We would be pleased to answer questions or to provide further information as you consider our recommendations.

Respectfully,

The King County immigrant and refugee task force

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Executive Summary

Background

From 2000 to 2010, King County gained more than 200,000 new residents, half of which were foreign-born. These new residents speak more than 170 languages, have lived and worked all over the world and add tremendous diversity to the local economy, political climate, and social fabric. Immigrants and refugees are important contributors to the economy, as they drive innovation, open small businesses, and add diversity and vibrancy to the region that attracts new people and businesses opportunities.

There is a tremendous amount of diversity among and between immigrant and refugee groups in King County. Immigrants and refugees arrive under very different circumstances, with different levels of wealth, health and education; and having vastly different migration and home country experiences. Although immigrant and refugee communities in King County are not monolithic in their experiences, challenges and needs, the County has recognized that these communities may face increased barriers to fully integrating into the community due to language, culture, and immigration status that present unique challenges to accessing the building blocks of opportunity.

The County's equity and social justice work recognizes that income, race, English proficiency and place are all determining factors in life outcomes in King County. The 2015 Determinants of Equity Report released by the County acknowledges that that limited English proficiency (LEP) populations and people of color are at a disadvantage compared with other populations in the County on nearly every indicator comprising the baseline for equity measurement. Over the past 25 years, King County has experienced a suburbanization of poverty, with much of the growth in poorer suburban and unincorporated populations being attributable to an influx of immigrants, refugees, and native-born people of color seeking more affordable housing than can be found in Seattle and the urban core.

In light of the County's equity and social justice vision, and its commitment to promoting a coordinated regional approach to successful immigrant and refugee integration, the County called for a task force to make recommendations on the thoughtful creation of an immigrant and refugee commission. The goal of recommendations is to achieve fair and just access to services and opportunities, resulting in the successful integration of immigrants and refugees as engaged, thriving members of the community.

Task Force Overview

On July 21, 2015, the Metropolitan King County Council approved Ordinance 18085 calling for a task force to make recommendations on the creation of a King County immigrant and refugee commission. The task force was appointed in September 2015, and was comprised of thirteen representatives from organizations and entities with deep roots in local immigrant and refugee communities, and significant expertise in issues facing these populations in King County. Task force members represented a range of sectors, experiences and perspectives reflecting the diversity of the communities, organizations (including faith-based), businesses and government agencies actively engaged with immigrants and refugees.

The task force met from October 2015 through June 2016, and was supported by a project team of County staff as well as two external consultants. The task force divided into thematic sub-groups to address major requirements outlined in the ordinance, and conducted community meetings to gather input on challenges faced by immigrants and refugees, and their thoughts on possible solutions. The Task Force Approach and Methodology section details how the task force addressed Ordinance 18085 requirements and suggestions.

Community Engagement

Over a period of six weeks from early March through mid-April 2016, task force members partnered with community-based organizations, service providers and government entities to host more than 20 community conversations with immigrants and refugees in the County. In total, 505 people participated in conversations that took place throughout the County.

What emerged from community conversations is a sense that immigrants and refugees are driven by the same things that motivate us all--the desire to be connected, engaged, healthy and successful. What also became clear through these conversations is that immigrants and refugees face unique barriers that can often place these building blocks of opportunity frustratingly out of reach, but are ready to share ideas about how those barriers can be overcome.

While the input is rich and spans a myriad of topics, some themes emerged in terms of the nature of common barriers that immigrant and refugee communities face, including:

- Discrimination
- Language and culture issues
- Difficulty understanding and navigating systems
- Insufficient resources, and invisibility of communities

The communities' ideas about how to address issues and set immigrants and refugees up for success were robust, but some common threads emerged that are worth noting, including improving:

- Inclusion and connection
- Representation

Call to Action

Considering community input and good practices culled from research on municipal approaches to immigrant and refugee integration, the task force concluded that the County is well poised to play a regional coordination role that could lead to significant positive advancements for immigrants and refugees, and ultimately all people in the region. While the local landscape is rich with community- and faith-based organizations, government entities, funders, and businesses engaged to varying degrees with immigrants and refugees, there is currently no organization working to convene, coordinate, and streamline efforts of all of these actors. This is a key function that should be filled, and the County is in a good position to do so.

Increasingly, local municipalities in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia are dedicating resources and considerable effort to integration of immigrants and refugees. While there is no single recipe for successful immigrant and refugee integration, there are common threads in the literature on good practices that point to significant advantages of establishing a fully formed office dedicated to successful integration, with an associated commission. The combination of an office with an associated commission may be optimal as the office provides a permanent platform for pursuing an integration policy agenda, improving County-wide services to immigrants and refugees, and coordinating (across levels of government, sectors, and within County government); and the commission provides structure for ongoing dialogue with communities and other stakeholders, and gives them a role in planning, decision-making, and monitoring.

Task Force Recommendations

The task force drew from expertise of its membership, research conducted by sub-groups, and on good practices for integration, as well as the information collected through community conversations to develop recommendations for the County. The task force recommends the formation of a King County office and commission focused on immigrant and refugee issues.

Commission-related recommendations

- **Mission** - The Commission works to enhance the integration of refugees and immigrants culturally, economically, and civically, in order to strengthen the communities where they live. The Commission works to empower refugees and immigrants to become part of the fabric of society, by having the tools they need to thrive and succeed while maintaining their own identities.
- **Membership** - The Commission should be made up of thirteen King County residents reflecting the diversity of ethnicities, professional backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and geographic areas that make up the fabric of our communities. Commission members should be immersed in one or more refugee/immigrant communities and be well versed on the issues. The task force provides detailed recommendations on the composition of the Commission.
- **Scope of Duties** - The Commission should act as a hub to align work of organizations serving and engaging refugee and immigrant populations and investing in the capacity of these organizations. Specific duties are recommended for the Commission's work with the County, immigrant and refugee communities, key stakeholders, and the public. The task force has provided suggestions for how to pursue collective action through working groups as a means of achieving the hub goal.
- **Honorarium** - The task force recommends that Commission members be compensated for their work at a level appropriate and typical for such bodies.
- **Appointment Process** - Commission members should be appointed through a combination of an open call for nominations, and targeted outreach to communities. Appointment decisions should be made by the County, with community input.
- **Terms** - Commission members should have three-year, staggered terms, with a two-term limit. Commission Chair should have the option to remove inactive or underperforming Commissioners after the first year of service.
- **Suburban and Unincorporated Areas** - Given the importance of place as a determinant of equity and the accelerated growth of immigrant and refugee populations outside of the City of Seattle, the County's immigrant and refugee integration agenda should include a specific focus on understanding and addressing challenges faced by communities living in suburban cities and unincorporated (UI) areas of the County. The task force provides recommendations for how a Commission, Office, and other facets of the County can address place-based challenges.
- **Annual Work Plan** - The task force recommends that a Commission develop an annual work plan informed by community input, and performs regular outreach to media, government, and communities to share information about Commission priorities and progress.

Office-related recommendations

Although the task force’s mandate specified that recommendations should focus on the creation of a Commission, the task force feels strongly that the scope of needs, the complexity of the landscape, and prevailing good practices all point to the benefit of a standalone office with an associated Commission.

While the standalone office with a Commission is the task force’s clear recommendation in order to adequately address needs and pursue coordination of integration efforts, the task force recognizes that practical constraints may necessitate a phased approach to creating an office. As such, the task force presents three options for near-term County action and estimates resources for each option.

Option 1 - Standalone office with associated Commission. The standalone office would require a Director and three additional staff members, and is estimated to cost \$540,000 in the first year. This model would provide the needed staffing, visibility, and infrastructure to support the hub approach, plan and advance a coordinated integration agenda throughout the County government, and incorporate LEP proviso report recommendations for enhanced coordination on engaging LEP communities.

Option 2 - Commission supported by two staff housed within another County office, department or agency. This model includes staffing with a Strategic Advisor and Coordinator, is estimated to cost \$245,000 in the first year, would provide bare bones staffing to support the hub approach, and may provide sufficient capacity to address ad hoc integration efforts and LEP outreach.

Option 3 - Commission supported by a single staff member housed within another office, department or agency. This model includes staffing with a Strategic Advisor only, is estimated to cost \$160,000 in the first year, and would limit the Commission’s ability to serve as a hub for collective action, but would provide adequate staffing to support the Commission in a more limited advisory role to the County on immigrant and refugee issues.

Community feedback recommendation

The task force recognizes that it may take some time to consider the recommendations in this report and to determine concrete next steps. However, it is important for the County to keep communities informed about what results from their input. The task force strongly recommends that the County develops a plan for sharing this report with community members, organizations, and agencies that were involved in community conversations, and stays in contact with these stakeholders as future planning around recommendations unfolds.

Background

From 2000 to 2010, King County gained more than 200,000 new residents, half of which were foreign-born. These new residents speak more than 170 languages, have lived and worked all over the world and add tremendous diversity to the local economy, political climate, and social fabric.

The County embarked on a concerted campaign in 2008 to advance equity and social justice, detailing challenges and barriers to access and opportunity that prevent some residents from achieving their full potential. The County has also taken a number of specific steps in recent years to express that immigrants and refugees are welcome and are an important element of our region’s economic, political, and cultural success. Although immigrant and refugee communities in King County are not monolithic in their experiences, challenges and needs, the County has recognized

that these communities may face increased barriers to fully integrating into the community due to language, culture, and immigration status that present unique challenges to accessing the building blocks of opportunity.

Context for Immigrants and Refugees

We are living in challenging times. At the global level, the migration of refugees into Europe, the hardening of receiving country immigration policies, and rising xenophobia dominate news headlines. In the U.S., politicized national-level dialogue links immigration to terrorism, giving voice and power to extreme views and proposals that would single out and exclude groups of immigrants and refugees based on religion and country of origin. As a result, immigrants and refugees live everyday under the shadow of negative rhetoric and the fear that it will manifest into policies that directly and negatively target them, or at its worst, give rise to violence against their communities and houses of worship.

Against this backdrop, it is helpful to examine the particularities of immigrant and refugee communities in King County. Immigrant and refugee identities are often seen as monolithic, but there is a tremendous amount of diversity among and between immigrant and refugee groups in King County. Immigrants and refugees arrive under very different circumstances, with different levels of wealth, health, and education; and having vastly different migration and home country experiences. Refugees and asylees often experience persecution and other forms of trauma at the hands of their home country governments that can contribute to persistent mistrust of government. In the United States, this mistrust can extend to consulates representing their home country government and municipal governments in their new home area.

Upon arrival, refugees and immigrants have access to a variety of supports and services. Additionally, there are significant differences between the experiences and challenges faced by newcomers settling into established immigrant communities in the County (Chinese, for instance) and those arriving into smaller and newer communities (like Iraqis). There are also generational differences within groups—the challenges faced by first generation immigrants differ from those of their children and grandchildren. Finally, there are tensions (some originating in the home country), mistrusts, and dimensions of competition between and within groups that add complexity to the landscape.

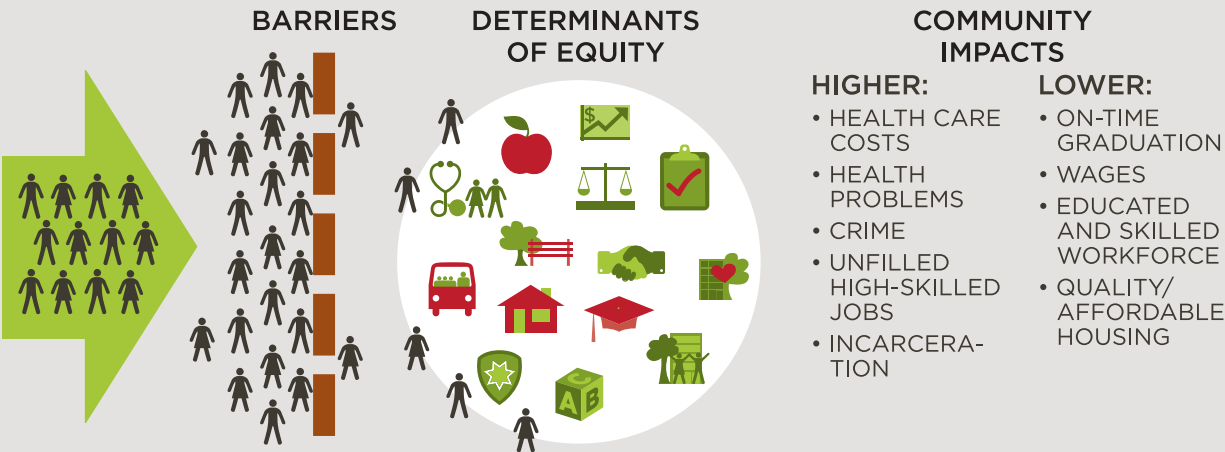
It is also important to acknowledge the critical role immigrants and refugees play in building vibrant communities all around King County. Immigrants and refugees make significant contributions at every social and economic stratum in the County from CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, to academic leaders, doctors, lawyers, and small business leaders.

There is abundant evidence that foreign-born populations are considerable contributors to the local economy. In 2013, 19.6% of all business owners and 31.7% of “Main Street” business owners—owners of businesses in the retail, accommodation, and food services, and neighborhood services sectors—in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metropolitan area were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americas Society/Council of the Americas. Foreign-born populations make up a large share of the workforce and student population, contribute billions to economic output in the state, and pay state and property taxes. Focusing resources on integration makes fiscal sense because removing barriers and increasing opportunities for immigrants and refugees can unlock innovation and entrepreneurialism to everyone’s benefit.

At the same time, some immigrants and refugees can experience intense marginalization that leaves them isolated and largely invisible. It is particularly important to understand the intersections of identities that can lead to experiences of multiple layers of marginalization. For example, immigrants and refugees who identify as LGBTQ can experience challenges with acceptance from their own families and communities, in addition to the marginalization they experience as immigrants. Poverty, disability, gender, illiteracy, limited English proficiency, and lack of education

INEQUITIES HURT EVERYONE.

WHEN PEOPLE LACK ACCESS TO THE DETERMINANTS OF EQUITY, THEY LACK OPPORTUNITY. THE RESULTING INEQUITIES IMPACT THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.



KING COUNTY IS FOCUSING ON REMOVING BARRIERS AND INCREASING ACCESS, SO ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO THRIVE.



WE ARE ALL BETTER OFF WHEN ALL OF US ARE BETTER OFF.

Graphic courtesy of: King County Office of Equity and Social Justice

all add further layers of marginalization and barriers to an individual's visibility, acceptance, and ability to access opportunity in mainstream society. Furthermore, immigrants and refugees of color often experience additional layers of racism, profiling, and marginalization. For instance, in community conversations, Latino and East African groups shared experiences of police profiling, and racial discrimination in housing and employment.

The recommendations of this task force build on the County's commitments to equity and social justice, and are aimed at strengthening the County's ability to understand and respond to these complexities by unifying our communities, building trust and strong bridges between the County and communities, and supporting all members of immigrant and refugee communities to thrive and contribute.



Known Challenges for Immigrants and Refugees in King County

King County has engaged in multiple efforts over the years to gather information from—and engage with—immigrant and refugee communities on solutions to address issues. The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) working group conducted outreach to understand language-related barriers to accessing county services, and found that, while language and service access were important, communities were also interested in deeper engagement with County government, a stake in decision-making that affects their lives, and support to integrate economically, civically, and culturally.

Focus group discussions the County conducted with immigrant and refugee populations as part of the King County strategic planning process revealed common issues for these communities in accessing affordable housing, living wage jobs, and reliable public transportation. Similarly, the 2015 Determinants of Equity Report released by the County acknowledges that LEP populations and people of color are at a disadvantage compared with other populations in the County on nearly every indicator comprising the baseline for equity measurement.

Additionally, County research indicates that place, alongside income and race, can play a determining factor in life outcomes. Over the past 25 years, King County has experienced a suburbanization of poverty, with much of the growth in poorer suburban and unincorporated populations being attributable to an influx of immigrants, refugees, and native-born people of color seeking more affordable housing than can be found in Seattle and the urban core. As housing costs continue to skyrocket in Seattle, this trend is likely to continue.

Despite the fact that the majority of the County's poor now live outside the City of Seattle, a disproportionate per capita share of investments in place-based services in the County go to organizations in Seattle, demonstrating a mismatch between needs and funding streams.

There are a number of additional challenges that are acknowledged by County staff and were reinforced through comments provided to the task force by the community. In particular, inaccuracy and aggregation of data are problematic for immigrant and refugee communities. For example, the Determinants of Equity Report uses data aggregated by broad race/ethnicity categories.¹ This obscures significant differences between groups in these

¹ The most widely available data, including the national census and the American Community Survey, aggregate data using these broad categories.

broad categories. For example, Asian populations fare well in the aggregate on a number of determinants of equity like educational attainment, household income, etc., but Southeast Asian populations (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong) in Washington State fare far worse on these measures with higher school drop-out rates, lower representation in four-year higher education institutions, and higher rates of household poverty according to the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. East Africans are similarly impacted when they are aggregated into the Black race/ethnicity category without distinguishing their countries of origin.

Furthermore, there are indications that undercounting adversely impacts some immigrant and refugee communities. Somali community meeting participants stated that they believe that their population outnumbers other East African groups. Inaccurate, outdated, or overly aggregated data can have real impacts for communities as population numbers can determine availability of translated materials, funding levels for community-based organizations, and other tangible resources.

Immigrant and refugee communities also made it clear to County staff and to the task force that they are weary of being tapped for information, giving their time repeatedly to respond to requests, but rarely hearing back from the County about the results. During community meetings, immigrant and refugee communities emphasized that regular feedback loops are critical to keeping communities engaged with the County and to building trust between the communities and the County.

Rationale for Immigrant and Refugee Task Force

In light of the County’s equity and social justice vision, and its commitment to promoting a coordinated regional approach to successful immigrant and refugee integration, the County called for a task force to make recommendations on the thoughtful creation of an immigrant and refugee Commission. The goal is to achieve fair and just access to services and opportunities, resulting in successful integration of immigrants and refugees as engaged, thriving members of the community.

“You shared with us the data that, we are outnumbered by the other East African community, (Ethiopian population) in King County, I disagree! Somalis have the highest population among East Africans in King County as evident in the Seattle Public Schools.”

~Community Conversation Participant

“Before I respond to this question, I will like to know what the County will do with this data that they are collecting from this focus group. As community we are very concerned about folks coming into our communities to collect data but never come back with any solutions”

~Community Conversation Participant

Task Force Approach and Methodology

Overview

On July 21, 2015, the Metropolitan King County Council approved an ordinance (Ordinance 18085) calling for a task force to make recommendations on the creation of a King County immigrant and refugee Commission.

The task force was comprised of thirteen representatives from organizations and entities with deep roots in local immigrant and refugee communities, and significant expertise in issues facing these populations in King County. The task force members represented a range of sectors, experiences and perspectives reflecting the diversity of the communities, organizations (including faith-based), businesses and government agencies actively engaged with immigrants and refugees.

The task force was supported by an internal project team consisting of King County Executive and King County Council staff, as well as two external consultants hired to facilitate the task force and provide research and writing support.

Mandate

As required in the ordinance, the task force was responsible for delivering recommendations, informed by community input, to the County Executive and the Council by May 31, 2016 (extended to July 7, 2016) on the creation of an immigrant and refugee Commission as described below. The table below outlines how the task force addressed requirements and suggestions from Ordinance 18085.

Table 1. Ordinance 18085 Requirements, Corresponding Actions, and Where to Find in Report

Ordinance Requirements/Suggestions	Corresponding Actions	Where to Find in Report
The King County executive is directed to convene a task force to develop a final report with recommendations on the creation of an immigrant and refugee commission.	Task force was convened by September 2015, and this report provides recommendations on the creation of an immigrant and refugee commission.	N/A
The report shall include recommendations on the Commission’s membership, mission, and scope of duties.	The task force recommendations section provides detailed recommendations on composition of the Commission, appointment process, mission, scope of duties, annual work planning, and other key considerations.	p. 28-38

<p>The report may consider recommendations on the Commission’s alignment with other regional and local efforts, and relationship with the County’s Office of Equity and Social Justice. This may include consideration of regional and local resources available to immigrants and refugees, including, but not limited to, services by community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, local governments, and other government entities such as consulates.</p>	<p>A sub-group of the task force focused on alignment, researching organizations serving immigrant and refugee populations.</p> <p>Their work resulted in a recommendation that the County serve as a hub for collective action to fill a significant gap in the landscape.</p> <p>Task force considered relationship with Office of Equity and Social Justice, resulting in recommendations for close coordination with immigrant and refugee office and commission.</p>	<p>Resources consulted list & Appendix D</p> <p>p. 29-30</p> <p>p. 36-38</p>
<p>The report may consider an evaluation of how the County’s current provision of services addresses immigrant and refugee resident needs and helps to move low-income immigrant and refugee populations towards economic success, what gaps currently exist in the provision of County services for immigrants and refugees that create barriers to success, and a commission’s potential role in addressing gaps.</p>	<p>The task force used community meetings to get input directly from immigrant and refugee communities on issues and gaps.</p> <p>The key issues identified through community meetings informed the task force’s recommendations on the development of working groups for collective action to tackle the top four issues.</p>	<p>p. 16-24</p> <p>p. 29-30</p>
<p>The task force should consult with County agencies to learn how different agencies address equity and social justice in the delivery of their services to immigrants and refugees.</p>	<p>The task force consulted with the Office of Equity and Social Justice, the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget, and the Department of Community and Human Services.</p>	<p>Resources consulted list</p>
<p>The report may consider how needs of immigrant and refugee populations differ in high density urban areas, lower density suburban areas, and lowest density rural unincorporated areas and develop recommendation for how a commission can address those differences within the commission’s mission and scope of duties.</p>	<p>A sub-group of the task force focused on suburban and unincorporated areas, researching challenges for immigrant and refugee populations there.</p> <p>Their work resulted in specific recommendations for these areas, and fed into broader commission-related recommendations (for representation of areas on the Commission and for meetings to be held in those areas).</p>	<p>Resources consulted list & Appendix D</p> <p>p. 30-33</p>

The report should also consider the contents of the 2014 Budget Proviso Report: Limited English Proficiency Proviso Response Report (2014-RPT0092) submitted by the office of performance, strategy and budget and make recommendations on the role of the commission in implementing the recommendations of the proviso report.	The task force received the report at its first meeting. The task force has made a number of recommendations for how the Office and Commission can address Proviso report recommendations, including the need for concerted, meaningful community engagement, coordination of County efforts and outreach, and investing in capacity of community-based organizations.	p. 28-38
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Appointing the Task Force

By September 2015, thirteen task force members had been selected for appointment by the King County Executive's office. The task force membership was expanded beyond the cap set in the ordinance (twelve) to ensure representation of all major immigrant and refugee communities in the county, and to achieve the geographic, sector, and organization mix mandated in the ordinance.

Task Force Structure and Process

The task force began meeting in October 2015. The initial meeting focused on orienting the task force to their mandate outlined in the ordinance, familiarizing them with county government and available data on immigrant and refugee populations, and describing the process for hiring consulting support for the task force's work.

In November 2015 the task force met with the support of the newly hired consultants, and that meeting focused on laying the foundation for the task force's work, including discussion of the task force's vision for success, approach to achieving its mandate, and ways of working together.

The task force convened for a half-day retreat in early January to finalize a work plan, review preliminary research and resources identified by consultants, and begin working in sub-groups to focus on background research, consultations and community input to inform recommendations related to three main areas outlined in the ordinance, namely:

- Commission mission, membership and scope of duties
- Alignment and coordination with existing County programs and other efforts
- Differing experiences and needs of communities related to place (urban, suburban and unincorporated areas)

In late February the task force met to finalize the plan for conducting public meetings to gather input from communities to inform recommendations, and to begin discussion on sub-group research and preliminary recommendations.

From March through mid-April, task force members focused on community meetings, and reconvened in a meeting in late April to discuss input received from communities (which was compiled and analyzed by consultants). Sub-groups continued to meet and incorporated community input into refinement of their recommendations, which they presented at another half-day retreat in mid-May.

Following the May 2016 retreat, consultants began drafting the final report based on task force recommendations and incorporating community input and relevant research. The task force met again in mid-June to discuss a full draft of the report and identify gaps to be addressed to finalize the report.

Decision Making

The task force strove for consensus in decision-making. Where consensus was not possible, consultants facilitated meetings and discussions with individual members to come to negotiated agreement.

Vision, Framework and Core Principles

Task Force Vision

To develop recommendations for King County on the creation of an immigrant and refugee commission that works effectively to achieve fair and equitable access to county services for immigrant and refugee communities, and improved opportunities and outcomes for civic engagement.

Members of the task force see the commission as a hub and central connecting place for building direct relationships with immigrant and refugee communities and supporting the vision for social justice for immigrant and refugee communities in King County.

The task force approached its work using the county’s equity and social justice framework, recognizing that while immigrants and refugees have long been active contributors to the economic success of the region and the richness of its social fabric, barriers remain that prevent immigrant and refugee communities from reaching their full potential and equitably accessing opportunities. The task force was motivated by the desire to craft recommendations that will result in increasing equity, access, and opportunities for immigrants and refugees in King County.

Given this framework, the task force determined the following principles should guide their work and inform successful recommendations:

- Identification of concrete action steps to ensure resources for communities (funding funneled through the Commission to go to communities; empowerment of existing community-based organizations to ensure accessibility of services)
- Creation of a strong, agile Commission (not overly burdened by bureaucracy) that is focused on community outreach to effectively identify and address issues
- Strive for a Commission that leverages existing programs and funding, and advocates for increased resources for communities (consider partnering with programs and funds addressing issues critical to immigrants and refugees, but not effectively serving them)
- Commission should have the resources and authority to make recommendations a reality
- Ensure that the Commission is not Seattle-centric and takes into consideration needs for leadership development, civic education, development of organizing skills, etc. within communities

Overview of Sub-groups

In order to address the breadth of topics required and suggested in the ordinance outlining the task force’s mandate, the task force chose to pursue much of its work through three sub-groups. Sub-groups met separately from the larger task force from January through June 2016 to define tasks, divide up work, gather, and analyze information needed to inform sub-group recommendations relevant to their topics. Three sub-groups were formed to address the following broad topics from the ordinance:

1. The Alignment sub-group focused on King County's current efforts and alignment with other immigrant and refugee efforts.
2. The Unincorporated and Sub-urban Areas sub-group focused on the differing experiences and needs of immigrant and refugee communities in urban, suburban, and unincorporated areas.
3. The Commission Membership, Scope, and Power sub-group focused on defining the mission, membership, and scope of duties for Commission, as well as considering how to ensure the Commission could be most effectively situated and resourced to achieve its mission.

Appendix D provides more details on sub-group organization, focus, and information considered. In addition, the Resources Consulted list includes information on resources each sub-group used to feed into recommendations, alongside existing task force expertise and community input.

Facing Challenges: Understanding Barriers and Identifying Solutions Through Community Engagement

Community Conversations Overview

Over a period of six weeks from early March through mid-April 2016, task force members partnered with community-based organizations, service providers, and government entities to host more than 20 community conversations with immigrants and refugees in the County. In total, 505 people participated in conversations that took place throughout the County.

Process

Conversations were planned by task force members, with a deliberate goal of conducting 20 meetings attended by 15-25 people in locations spread throughout the County, but focused on areas with the greatest concentrations of immigrants and refugees. Each meeting was intended to target a single language group to simplify interpretation and translation, and to keep costs down. Task force members were encouraged to reach out to community-based organizations and service providers who are trusted by immigrants and refugees and deeply connected to communities to leverage their outreach capabilities and encourage candor by participants. Organizations hosting conversations were able to receive reimbursement from the County to cover their costs (staff time, translation costs, refreshments, etc.).

The task force agreed on a small set of open-ended questions to pose during community conversations that were designed to surface:

- Unmet needs, concerns, and barriers
- Ingredients for success and civic engagement
- Ideas and solutions for improving services and lives

At the request of the Juvenile Justice Equity Steering Committee, two additional questions were added part-way through the process to gather information from communities on whether they perceived that their youth were disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system, and if so, what they thought could be done to prevent the

problem and to help families once they have contact with the system. These additional questions were discussed at nine community conversations and the data has been incorporated into findings in this report and shared with the Juvenile Justice Equity Steering Committee.

The consultants and County project team provided the task force with presentation materials, facilitation guides, note-taking templates and instructions, and sign-in sheets to support their meetings and to strive for consistency in data collection. Notes were translated into English and sent to consultants along with sign-in sheets so that information from meetings could be processed and analyzed. Consultants began providing high-level summary analyses of community input to the task force in late April so that the task force could weave input into their sub-group work and development of recommendations for this report.

Locations and Communities Reached

The task force attempted to organize conversations in such a way as to reach out in different geographic locations throughout the County and with different immigrant and refugee groups, as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 2. Immigrant and Refugee Language and Ethnic Groups/Constituents Reached

Location	Number of Conversations Held in Each Location	Number of Participants in Each Location	Immigrant and Refugee Language Groups/ Constituents Reached
Auburn	1	17	Spanish
Bellevue	3	57	Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Polish, Japanese, Indian, Russian, Service Providers, High School Students
Burien	1	27	Spanish
Federal Way	1	14	High School Students
Kent	2	50	Ethnic community-based organizations, Non-profit Service Providers, Community Members, Colleges, Government, Kent School District, Faith-based Organizations, Service Clubs, Foundations; High School Students from Burma, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Congo
Kirkland	1	18	Korean
Renton	2	39	Oromo; Russian spoken by Russians, Ukrainian and Central Asian groups
South Seattle	7	176	Spanish, Somali, Tigrinya, Amharic, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Service Providers

Location	Number of Conversations Held in Each Location	Number of Participants in Each Location	Immigrant and Refugee Language Groups/ Constituents Reached
SeaTac	1	22	Somali, Arabic, French, Spanish, Burmese, Nepali, Tigrinya, Persian, Kiswahili
Tukwila	1	35	East African languages, Arabic
White Center	1	17	Khmer, Vietnamese, Tagalog
Various/phone interviews		33	Hmong
Totals	21	505	

Findings from Community Conversations

Overview

What emerged from community conversations is a sense that immigrants and refugees are driven by the same things that motivate us all--the desire to be connected, engaged, healthy and successful. What also became clear through these conversations is that immigrants and refugees face unique barriers that can often place these building blocks of opportunity frustratingly out of reach. This section provides a high-level summary of key issues and solutions that surfaced through the task force's outreach to communities and informed recommendations that appear throughout this report.

Issues

Discussions with communities resulted in rich information about issues and challenges that keep immigrants and refugees from thriving. While the input spans a myriad of topics, some themes emerged in terms of the nature of common barriers that immigrant and refugee communities face.

Discrimination

Communities shared that they experience discrimination in housing, employment, and schools, as well as more acute forms of discrimination like Islamophobia, hate speech/crimes, police racism and profiling, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

“The police need to meet our community to see that we are a hard-working people that respect the law. We are not criminals.”

~Community Conversation Participant

Language and culture issues

One of the most significant barriers to accessing services across sectors is the lack of language and culture competency of services providers. Language and cultural barriers also have an effect on community awareness of available services, their ability to effectively engage with service providers, their ability to advocate for themselves and to manage their mental and physical health, and their ability to connect with the larger community.

“To participate in this community, you need to speak English.”

~Community Conversation Participant

Difficulty understanding and navigating systems

As newcomers, immigrants and refugees face challenges of understanding an unfamiliar governmental and social services landscape, figuring out what is available and where to go for what they need, and marshaling the resources (often with the help of children or other family members with English proficiency) to engage with the appropriate agency or organization to access support. On top of this general challenge, community input highlighted a lack of awareness of the services provided by the County (versus a city), and what services the County is responsible for providing in unincorporated areas where the County serves as local government.

“We need someone who supports us, who can advise us, who can orient us, so that we know the steps we have to take.”

~Community Conversation Participant

Insufficient resources and invisibility of communities

Community-based organizations with the credibility, language, and cultural competency to serve and engage immigrant and refugee communities are chronically under-resourced. Community input signaled a need to increase the capacity of trusted community-based organizations to expand services, develop leadership, and engage in advocacy. Input also demonstrated that communities feel there are not enough resources directed to addressing integration issues, and that there is low visibility of immigrant and refugee communities and priorities in politics and the broader community.

“We know they [community-based organizations] are small and they are not powerful. But King County must know we are not happy and we do not receive the support we need in a culturally- supportive manner.”

~Community Conversation Participant

The following table provides a summary overview of community input by topic/issue area.

Table 3. Summary of Issues Shared by Communities

Issues Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
Housing and homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of affordable/low income housing, need for rent control (particularly in South King County), need for increased rental assistance, and improved Section 8 assistance • Discrimination in housing, issues with landlords (undocumented people feel particularly vulnerable to abusive landlords due to fear of being reported), language barriers, lack of advocacy support and legal aid • Issues with substandard housing and code violations -- -people don't know where to turn for assistance and are afraid to report due to fear of landlord retaliation • Increasing homelessness problem, insufficient shelters, need for crisis intervention, prevention and reintegration programs • Need for pathways/supports to home ownership so that immigrants and refugees are investing in their futures; opportunities for ownership regardless of status and specific supports for people who face status related barriers • Increase Muslim housing options • Utilities assistance

Issues Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
Employment and small business needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity and access for minority businesses • Need for living wage jobs -- focus should be on building economic self-sufficiency so communities have capacity and feel they are contributing • Need staffing agency for immigrants and refugees to support their access to jobs and to help navigate employment application process and systems • Issues with jobs not being close to where people live; long and expensive commutes • Issues with applicability of educational and professional credentials in US job market; inability to apply home country experience in US market • Need for employment supports like job placement, training, internships, apprenticeships, mentoring, and training/workshops on how to get government jobs • Need for small business supports like loans, investments, and capacity-building for business owners • Investment in immigrant and refugee businesses like capacity building and interest free loans
Barriers to accessing services and insufficient investment in immigrants and refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequitable and insufficient funding for services, need for culturally- appropriate services in South King County in particular • Language and cultural barriers to accessing services -- lack of materials in multiple languages; lack of cultural competency of agencies; lack of understanding of unique needs and challenges • Lack of awareness in communities of available services (and lack of information coming to communities in accessible and appropriate ways), changes in services • Lack of awareness and barriers create burden for young people in supporting elderly -- research services, explain, fill out forms, translate, etc. • Lack of coordination, gaps and eligibility issues for services • Need for one place to go for services – hub that has basic information, language competency and is accessibility (in right place, staffed, open appropriate hours) • Need support to navigate systems, mentorship, and counseling

Issues Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
<p>Criminal justice, youth engagement and community safety</p> <p><i>(Inclusion of additional questions focused on disproportionality in the youth criminal justice system led to an elevated ranking of this group of issues. However, the task force agreed that the issues are pressing and should remain in the top four for focus by the new Commission working groups. This judgment call was made in recognition of the fact that, while disproportionality and profiling issues do not impact every immigrant and refugee community, they contribute to increased marginalization and vulnerabilities of people of color and lower-income segments of the immigrant and refugee population, and require special focus.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues with profiling and racism in police force, especially targeting young men -- immigrants confused or misidentified by police, searching bags of kids of color, King County sheriff arresting youth because of who they hang out with • Communities don't trust police and feel police hold negative stereotypes of Latino and E African communities in particular • Police should be directed not to report people to or collaborate with Im-migrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) -- people don't call the police because they fear being reported to ICE and ending up in Tacoma detention center • Need for improved policing, more coordination between police and communities, and cultural competency of police and justice system; need training for police on de-escalation and respect for communities • Need for addressing hate crimes, hate speech and particularly issues of Islamophobia • Issues with youth violence, addiction, and interaction with criminal justice system, and need for prevention, rehabilitation and post-incarceration rein-tegration programs for youth • School-to-prison pipeline • Address bullying in schools • Recreation, after school programs, social and emotional supports for youth (language and culture appropriate) • Parenting support, family counseling services that are appropriate for low-income families and respectful of culture • Need funding and good services in communities of color, not just in white neighborhoods; change funding to focus on prevention, not prisons • Harmonize and co-locate youth programming to give youth a single place to meet needs like GED, technical training, job placement, leadership, civic engagement, mentoring, and connection to resources -- consider placing at schools so there is a continuum for youth reaching 18 and beyond; need summer job program for youth in S King County • Need for education on criminal justice system rights for parents and youth, support for understanding and navigating the system, advocating for kids • Diversion programs to reduce arrests, give second chances • Need access to legal aid • Need culturally-appropriate domestic violence information and services, info on protections in multiple languages, and supports that last long enough to reestablish self-sufficiency and security • Issues with safety in neighborhoods, schools, and issues with unclean streets, graffiti and trash

Issues Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
Health, mental health and nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for increased availability of language and culture appropriate health services, including rehabilitation to address chemical dependency • Affordable health and dental care that is accessible to communities where they live • Increased mental health supports/services, including for PTSD, generational issues, depression and anxiety • Need for increased awareness of mental health services and strategies for addressing cultural stigmas regarding mental health • Education on US health system, insurance, etc. so that immigrants and refugees understand services, rights and responsibilities • Supports for family health care providers • Support for people with disabilities • Affordable, healthy and culturally-appropriate food available to communities and increased cultural competency in food banks; reverse recently added requirements for accessing food bank services; extend period for receiving food stamps to give families time to adjust to new circumstances (new job, child reaching 18 but still living at home, etc.)
School, education and childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and cultural competency in schools, need for more bilingual programs and schools, more representation of immigrants and refugees in teacher workforce, language-appropriate tutoring and parental support, and culturally-appropriate school food options (halal) • Remedies for discrimination in schools; better education for communities of color • Better and increased supports for refugee and immigrant students to navigate school requirements to graduate or obtain GED if aging out of system • Welcome immigrant/refugees into PTA systems, support engagement of parents in schools • Increase school bus service to areas where immigrant and refugee families live • Universal pre-K and access to ESL classes regardless of income or status; improved ESL and ELL; explore ways to keep kids in general classroom with language support (removing kids reduces ability to integrate into school community/increases marginalization) • Accessible, affordable, appropriate (language and culture) childcare • Support for college students (scholarships and grants), vocational and technical training for youth after high school

Issues Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
Transportation, parking and roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of parking • Lack of free parking and street parking, fees for parking on MLK and Rainier • Issues with affordability, accessibility and supports for transportation; issues with availability and frequency of bus service in suburban and rural areas (workers must take multiple buses at unreasonable hours to get to work), and difficulty of finding direct routes between suburban areas • Lack of transportation to job centers • Need for more Park-and-Rides • Lack of sidewalks along roadways in some areas and lack of crosswalks presenting safety issues for students walking to school in suburban areas • Potholes • Poor lighting of roadways - safety issue for students • Need transportation for elderly
Parks, recreation, and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about safety of parks and marijuana smoking in public parks • Cleanliness of parks • Availability of parks and facilities for community use, particularly elderly and youth; free gym access for refugee youth

Solutions

Communities were also asked to share ideas about how to address issues and set immigrants and refugees up for success. The table below provides a summary overview of solutions shared through community input. Some common threads emerged that are worth noting.

Inclusion and connection

Communities shared that they are looking for help to understand and connect to each other, the broader community, and political processes. Communities want to be included, have their voices heard, and engage in meaningful ways economically, socially, and politically.

“Invite us. If we’re not invited, how are we going to participate?”

~Community Conversation Participant

Representation

As much as communities are ready to put effort into engaging, they want that effort to be reciprocated so that pathways of power and influence are open to immigrants and refugees. Immigrants and refugees want to see themselves reflected in elected bodies and government workforces, and want the voice and capacity to identify their challenges and come up with solutions.

“The County has to be inclusive and innovative. They should hire folks that are reflective of the demographics they are serving.”

~Community Conversation Participant

Table 4. Summary of Solutions Suggested by Communities

Top Solutions Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
Investing in immigrant and refugee communities, integration, and civic engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in community-based organizations (funding, capacity building, leadership development) because they know how to serve immigrant and refugee communities and have appropriate language and cultural resources. community-based organizations need to be able to deliver culturally-appropriate services (mental health, chemical dependency, and domestic violence, for example) and engage in advocacy for communities • Need for citizenship, and civic, voting, and cultural integration education and support • Civic engagement programs and trainings, and translated election and candidate information • Move beyond basic needs to help communities take next steps, such as life skills training, ESL, rights awareness, home ownership, and education on other cultures • Help communities connect within and between communities, and with mainstream for increased understanding, collaboration, and unity • Need for workshops and education in communities on integration, political system, civic engagement, community resources, and volunteering • Dedicate specific resources to immigrant and refugee communities to support them in addressing problems and developing solutions • community-based organization funding and capacity development to enable service delivery, facilities expansion, and capacity for advocacy • Leadership development • Programs to increase youth awareness of own culture, language, and history (classes teaching native languages, history and cultural appreciation; history of immigrants and communities of color in US; integration of this material into school system more broadly) • Need awareness raising for mainstream about immigrant and refugee communities to reduce negative stereotypes and improve outreach and relations

Top Solutions Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
Increasing government responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be included, engaged, welcomed, invited, and respected • Want better, more meaningful connections to government. Officials and County staff should be more present in communities and should attend community meetings and events. County at all levels should intentionally seek community voices/input • Lack of representation of communities in government workforce, and decision-making bodies like Council; need to increase visibility of immigrant and refugee issues and communities in policy arena • Improve government to meet needs – cultural competency, flexibility, seeking input and taking action, appropriate outreach through established channels (community-based organizations, ethnic broadcasters, community newspapers/newsletters) • Develop training program for new County staff on immigrant and refugee issues, communities, and cultures • Foster more opportunities to attend city council meetings • Create a central database of translators and interpreters across the County, share with community-based organizations; increase contracting these services with community-based organizations • Develop research capacity on immigrant and refugee issues and communities of color • Improve data on immigrant and refugee communities -- particularly issues with undercounting and lack of disaggregation

Top Solutions Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
Addressing issues related to immigration status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for immigration reform to allow undocumented people to come out of shadows, afford them protections, and reduce fears of deportation • Undocumented people face barriers without SSN, so there is need for a creative solution (like a municipal ID) that will help with access to services regardless of immigration status • Need to review programs that tie eligibility to immigration status (health insurance was specifically noted) to weigh costs of exclusion and possible workarounds • Undocumented people need citizenship pathways for adults and college tracks for youth • Raise awareness of the naturalization fee waiver program introduced by the Obama administration to ensure high application costs don't deter eligible long term residents from becoming citizens • Refugees arrive in the U.S. owing the government money for airfare costs -- assistance should be provided to help them repay this debt and/or advocacy with the government to reduce or eliminate repayment for low-income debtors • Refugees face specific housing issues, including being settled into unaffordable or inappropriate housing, making housing unsustainable. Settlement programs should be reviewed to ensure quality and suitability of housing. • Refugees and asylum seekers face homelessness vulnerabilities but are not visible in system or accessing services (not counted as they aren't technically homeless -- staying with friends, doubling up with other families, etc.). Need to raise visibility of issue and work with homelessness service providers to strategize appropriate outreach and programs for insecure populations. • Resettlement programs and services should be evaluated and reformed to address gaps and coordination issues • Research and address inequities in pay and access to jobs/internships for people without US citizenship through employer education and advocacy • Review services and programs to reduce barriers to access for asylum seekers

Top Solutions Identified by Communities (in order of frequency, highest to lowest)	Summary of Community Input
King County task force and commission input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities not convinced government is committed and will take action on their issues • Selection process for Commission should be transparent, and open to community input (suggested communities elect Commission members) • Communities should feel they are consulted and adequately represented by Commission • Communities need to be heard and part of the process, need information on criteria for selecting members • Concerned about the fact that they weren't consulted on task force membership, and want better understanding of how information gathered in task force process will be used

Limitations of Community Data

The information collected through community conversations is inherently limited, and the resulting analysis should be viewed with these limitations in mind. Firstly, the number of people who participated in community conversations is too small to be able to extrapolate findings to the full immigrant and refugee population in King County. Secondly, because participants were not randomly selected, but were instead invited by community-based organizations and service providers to conversations, it is likely that outreach favored immigrants and refugees actively engaged with community organizations or currently seeking services from providers hosting meetings. Finally, although task force members strove for a good geographic and demographic reach for conversations, the locations of meetings and the language groups represented highlights a strong bias towards voices from South Seattle and South King County, under representation of voices from unincorporated areas, and no representation of voices from Central and Northern parts of Seattle and King County. As such, the findings presented here cannot be taken as representative of the full spectrum of immigrant and refugee voices in the County, nor can they be taken as representative of any particular group or location.

As a result of these and other data challenges noted in this report, the task force has made a number of recommendations geared towards collecting timely, disaggregated data on immigrant and refugee communities, and engaging in regular outreach and dialogue with communities. Improved data, regular input, and feedback loops to communities should begin to make data transparent and more useful for decision-making on immigrant and refugee issues.

Call to Action

Case Statement

Community input demonstrates complex challenges to be sure, but the County is well poised to play a regional coordination role that could lead to significant positive advancements for immigrants and refugees and ultimately all

people in the region. While the local landscape is rich with community- and faith-based organizations, government entities, funders and businesses engaged to varying degrees with immigrants and refugees, there is currently no organization working to convene, coordinate, and streamline efforts of all of these actors. This is a key function that should be filled, and the County is in a good position to do so.

There are a number of reasons that it makes sense for the County to step into a convening role to benefit immigrant and refugee populations. The current national-level political climate is not conducive to development of a coherent set of immigration policies that will lead to improved integration and better outcomes for immigrants and refugees. Political gridlock and vitriolic rhetoric on immigrants and refugees make it clear that local governments must find their own way.

Increasingly, local municipalities in the United States², Canada, Europe and Australia are dedicating resources and considerable effort to integration of immigrants and refugees. Some municipalities have long been destinations for immigrants and refugees, and their integration efforts are often focused on equity and social justice outcomes, as well as civic engagement to level the playing field for these populations and better weave them into decision-making. Other municipalities are focusing on integration as a means of easing tensions between newcomers and native populations, particularly in places where in-migration is a relatively new phenomenon. And some municipalities are actively seeking to attract newcomers, recognizing that immigrants and refugees can make significant contributions to economic revitalization efforts.

While there is no single recipe for successful immigrant and refugee integration, there are common threads in the literature on good practices that point to significant advantages of establishing a fully formed office dedicated to successful integration. After examining 63 different city-level immigrant integration efforts in the U.S., a December 2015 Americas Society/Council of the Americas and Welcoming America report concluded that an office embedded in local government can be significantly more effective than other entities like task forces, commissions, or welcoming offices on their own. This point is well illustrated in the report's case study on San Francisco, where an Immigrant Rights Commission (IRC) was established in 1997 to provide advice and policy recommendations to the mayor and county supervisors on immigrant issues. Although the IRC plays an important civic integration role and is a clearinghouse for immigrant and refugee issues, legislators and non-profit advocates acknowledge that the IRC lacks influence on local policymaking, making it insufficient for advancing an integration agenda within the city. Needing to signal a more serious commitment to integration, San Francisco established a standalone office in 2009 to oversee integration implementation and outreach to communities. Since then, the office has matured into a multi-faceted holistic integration effort handling policy development, grantmaking, and direct service provision.

Conventional thinking is that cities are at the center of migration-related innovation and integration policy development. The logic goes that cities and urban neighborhoods are where newcomers and native populations must learn to live, work, and play together. However, in the Seattle metropolitan area, with trends towards immigrants and refugees settling outside the city of Seattle, the locus of integration is increasingly found in suburban and unincorporated areas of King County. Other counties, like Santa Clara in California and Multnomah in Oregon, have dedicated resources to addressing immigrant and refugee integration. Santa Clara County consolidated various immigrant-related programs and initiatives under a standalone office in early 2015, recognizing the need for increased resources to improve integration services and generation of information critical to ongoing planning and policy development. Multnomah County developed MultCo Global, a project of the county's communication office to consolidate information about services and coordinate efforts of county departments to be responsive to community needs.

2 According to a December 2015 Americas Society/Council of the Americas and Welcoming America report, authored by the USC Center for the Study of Immigration Integration, there are 26 offices for immigrant integration in cities in the US, and another 37 municipal-level bodies (task forces, commissions, welcoming offices, etc.) focused on immigrant and refugee integration.

Overview of Good Municipal Practices in Integration

Despite the diversity of approaches taken by different municipalities, there are a number of common themes that emerged from the review of good practices (much of which dovetails with LEP report recommendations and other County learnings) that informed task force recommendations.

Commission/Office

- Orient government efforts around an integration³ agenda to enable greater focus on equity and social cohesion for immigrant and refugee communities and with mainstream society⁴
- Clearly articulate a commitment by the Council and Executive to an integration agenda and vision for how integration benefits everyone in King County (why a focus on integration makes economic sense in King County, and how integration contributes to achieving County's equity and social justice goals)
- Institutionalize the commitment with appropriate structure, resources, and planning/monitoring/accountability measures to help weather political transitions and shifting priorities
- Harmonize service delivery with civic engagement efforts to build towards a clear integration agenda, and to facilitate learning on what works well for engaging immigrant and refugee communities; put these into practice County-wide
- Create a mechanism for regular consultation with immigrant and refugee communities, and facilitation of meaningful involvement in planning and decision-making processes
- Combination of an office with associated commission may be optimal (this is a common, but not universal, model⁵) -- the office provides a permanent platform for pursuing an integration policy agenda, improving County-wide services to immigrants and refugees, and coordinating (across levels of government, sectors, and within County government); commission provides structure for ongoing dialogue with communities and other stakeholders, and gives them a role in planning, decision-making and monitoring
- Engage with a mix of stakeholders (e.g., academics, funders, community-based organizations, unions, and private sector) to build broad partnerships and increase resources for effective collective action
- Research capacity and ability to link with relevant efforts (national, regional, etc.) are important for gathering and analyzing data to inform integration agenda, tapping into available assistance (Welcoming America, New Americans Initiative), and learning from good practices in other municipalities. Where routine data collection is inadequate (outdated, inaccurate, inappropriately aggregated), it is useful to develop partnerships to enable appropriate data collection (think tanks, universities, etc.)

3 Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees define integration as “a dynamic, two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities.”

4 Cities of Migration highlights good practices from cities around the world on a variety of integration topics, see <http://citiesofmigration.ca/good-ideas-in-integration/>

5 Examples of cities with an office and commission (or similar body) include Seattle, Los Angeles, and Denver (among others). Santa Clara County has an office and is moving towards creating an associated commission to facilitate increased voice and agency of communities. In Seattle, the office serves as the focal point for City-wide planning, implementation and monitoring related to immigrant and refugee communities, while the commission provides input into plans and policies, monitors progress on relevant City goals, and works through subcommittees on priority issues (including regular coordination with other City commissions, and education and outreach efforts directed at City Council, City departments and agencies, and other local allies).

- Monitor impact of efforts and report back regularly to establish track record of efficacy; consider tracking immigrant and refugee progress over time to demonstrate impact of work and contributions to County goals
- Develop a fund that enables immigrant and refugee communities to identify pressing issues, design suitable solutions, and seek grants to support their projects and organizations
- Create a one-stop shop (virtual, physical, or a combination) that addresses practical needs and advances integration goals -- consider language, cultural competency, and accessibility for various groups⁶

Broader County Efforts

- Examine County hiring practices and outreach to evaluate options for increasing representation of immigrant and refugees amongst County workforce, and consider creating an immigrant and refugee employee resource group to make the County more welcoming for immigrant and refugee employees⁷
- Consider creating a municipal ID⁸ card to alleviate ID/SSN-related barriers, and work with banks, libraries, and government departments to mainstream use of ID to access services

Task Force Recommendations

The task force drew from the expertise of its membership, research conducted by sub-groups and on good practices for integration, as well as the information collected through community conversations to develop recommendations for the County. This section of the report covers detailed task force recommendations for formation of an office and commission focused on immigrant and refugee issues. The first part of this section addresses ordinance mandates regarding recommendations on a Commission, and the second part outlines the task force's rationale for recommending an Office, along with estimated resources required.

Commission Recommendations

Mission

The Commission works to enhance the integration of refugees and immigrants culturally, economically, and civically, in order to strengthen the communities where they live. The Commission works to empower refugees and immigrants to become part of the fabric of society, by having the tools they need to thrive and succeed while maintaining their own identities.

6 Examples of one-stop shop options include a Welcome Center or Family Service Center that provides information on available services and civic engagement (suggested in City of Kent conversation with Iraqi community leaders, and by Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition in 2005 report to King County), or a web portal for newly arrived people with practical guides and resources (see Ontario's settlement.org site or Multnomah County's MultCo Global site).

7 Multnomah County created an Employee Resource Group for immigrants and refugees to create a supportive network for employees adjusting to the County work place.

8 New York City, New Haven, Los Angeles, and New Jersey have all implemented a city or municipal ID program to address barriers for undocumented people. Additional cities, like Phoenix, are currently exploring this option.

Scope of Duties and Annual Work Plan

The Commission should act as a hub to align work of organizations serving and engaging refugee and immigrant populations and investing in the capacity of these organizations. To achieve this goal, they should perform the following duties:

- Assist and advise the County Executive, County Council, offices of assessor, sheriff, prosecuting attorney, and elections, and all other departments and divisions on issues, programs, policies, and legislation impacting immigrant and refugee communities
- Promote civic participation and government representation (including working to encourage hiring in County government, and representation on boards, commissions, and elected offices), by immigrant and refugee community members
- Promote naturalization as a path toward civic and economic integration
- Run programs to enhance integration, naturalization, and English Language Learning
- Collaborate with all levels of government to ensure effective outreach to and engagement of immigrant communities and refugee communities and advise on County’s role with other government entities
- Work with ESJ office to develop and review core principles on equity as they relate to immigrant and refugee communities in the context of King County policies and operations
- Assist with the development and implementation of King County policies and regulations protecting and impacting immigrant and refugee communities
- Evaluate County programs and services from the perspective of immigrant and refugee communities
- Increase public awareness of immigrants and refugees and their contributions to our community
- Plan for the establishment of an Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs
- Help develop and/or review County plans to ensure that the interests of immigrants and refugees are given high priority

A Hub for Collective Action

Our recommendation is that the Immigrant and Refugee Commission and Office act as a hub gathering all critical players together to achieve greater impact. This recommendation aligns with the County’s commitment to “being a leader in building regional partnerships and promoting a coordinated, regional approach to address the needs of this county’s immigrant and refugee residents, consistent with the county’s vision for a strategic plan for equity and social justice.”⁹ This kind of collective action approach will help to address complex issues that stretch across municipal and sector boundaries in our region.

The task force Alignment sub-group’s research revealed that there is no organization currently playing a coordinating role, and this is a significant gap in the landscape. There is a mosaic of organizations and programs serving immigrants and refugees, but they are currently operating without the benefit of a connective hub to exchange ideas, explore opportunities for developing shared goals and strategies, and collectively working towards stronger immigrant and

⁹ King County Ordinance 18085, creating immigrant and refugee task force.

refugee communities. This disconnection contributes to a lack of visibility of immigrant and refugee communities and stymies achievement of impact and social change.

Major components of a hub:

Bringing key stakeholders together can help to elevate issues, streamline and strengthen efforts, and bring more resources to bear for the benefit of immigrant and refugee communities. Learning from the collective impact approach the County is taking through the Communities of Opportunity initiative, a hub should be a focal point for connecting a broad group of stakeholders to develop shared strategies and solutions to the most pressing issues affecting immigrant and refugee communities.

One possible way to organize the hub work is for the Commission to convene working groups focused on the top issues surfaced through community input. Initially, working groups would be organized to focus on the top four issues identified through task force community conversations, namely housing and homelessness, employment and small business, barriers to accessing services, and criminal justice and safety.¹⁰ Subsequent working groups will be convened to respond to top issues identified through the Commission's annual community outreach efforts.

These working groups can be as large as 15-20 members each and should include members from key funders, businesses, community-based organizations, residents, policy and advocacy groups and government offices serving immigrant and refugee communities. The goal for these working groups is to build a shared County-wide strategy under the leadership of the commission to address each of the top issue areas identified by communities.

Formation of the working groups and facilitation of their work should build on available good practices for how change happens in communities,¹¹ and should emphasize:

1. A common agenda. That means coming together to collectively define the problem and create a shared vision to solve it.
2. A shared approach to measurement. That means agreeing to track progress in the same way, which allows for continuous improvement.
3. Fostering mutually reinforcing activities. That means coordinating collective efforts to maximize the end result. All groups are working to address the needs in our communities and believe that together we will be stronger.
4. Encouraging continuous communication. That means building trust and relationships among all participants.
5. A strong backbone. That means having a team (Commission members and staff) dedicated to orchestrating the working groups.

Focus on Differing Needs in Suburban Cities and Unincorporated Areas

Given the importance of place as a determinant of equity and the accelerated growth of immigrant and refugee populations outside of the City of Seattle, the County's immigrant and refugee integration agenda should include a specific focus on understanding and addressing challenges faced by communities living in suburban

¹⁰ See Findings from Community Conversations section for explanation for inclusion of criminal justice and safety as a top issue of focus.

¹¹ The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation may be a good resource for good practices, pragmatic tools, and detailed case studies to inform planning and formation of working groups.

cities and unincorporated (UI) areas of the County.¹² The sub-group focused on these areas developed a number of specific recommendations for how the Commission can work with the County to uncover issues and create solutions.

Introduction

In measuring its success in creating policies that increase equity and social justice, King County should closely scrutinize its approach to suburban cities and unincorporated areas. In some instances, one could assert that King County has historically under-invested in programs, services, and economic development that could significantly increase opportunities and transform outcomes for immigrant and refugee populations. This lack of investment disproportionately impacts those residing in suburban areas where there are sometimes fewer options for services, and in unincorporated areas where the County serves as the local government. Although it is not County policy, in certain unincorporated areas there is a perception that this under-investment could be driven by a desire to force annexation. Regardless, when there has been under-investment in programs, services, and economic development for immigrants and refugees living in suburban cities and unincorporated areas, it contravenes the County's equity and social justice initiative since a significant portion of economically disadvantaged immigrants and refugees live in these communities.

The services provided by King County can be categorized as regional (e.g., public transportation and healthcare, emergency medical services, wastewater treatment, law enforcement through the King County Sheriff's Office, courts and legal services, the county jail, records and elections, parks and facilities); subregional (e.g., animal control services in suburban cities); and local (e.g., building permits, roads and local parks, land-use regulation, and law enforcement services in unincorporated areas).¹³

King County's population is estimated to be 2,017,250 (1,765,200 reside in King County cities, and 252,050 reside in unincorporated areas).¹⁴

A higher percentage of immigrants and refugees reside in suburban cities and unincorporated areas.¹⁵ Based on the US Census, we know that the highest refugee populations reside in South King County. A large percentage of people who speak another language at home reside in Kent, Federal Way, Tukwila, SeaTac, Skyway, and White Center.¹⁶ Larger concentrations of immigrants and refugees residing in the areas listed can often obscure the reality of these populations, particularly residents who reside in rural areas of the County. These populations may face increased marginalization.

12 Suburban cities are defined as the cities in King County, including rural cities, with the exclusion of Seattle. King County includes 38 suburban cities. Unincorporated areas are those areas outside of a city and under King County's jurisdiction; e.g., Skyway, White Center, etc.

13 The State Growth Management Act and the regionally adopted Countywide Planning Policies stipulate that counties are the appropriate providers of regional services and of local services to the Rural Area. For their part, cities are the appropriate providers of local urban services to all areas within the designated urban growth boundary. This logical split of government services is in part a reflection of the greater taxing authority afforded to cities by the State Legislature.

14 2015-2016 King County Proposed Biennial Budget, Background: Readers Guide to King County Budget Book, King County at a Glance Population Statistics (updated September 2014), p. 14.

15 See King County's Equity and Social Justice map of Percent Foreign Born in Appendix B.

16 South King County's Changing Demographics, Chandler Felt Presentation to King County Office of Performance Strategy, and Budget, September 14, 2014.

We also know that the foreign-born population in King County has increased more than five times faster than the native-born population.¹⁷ This trend is driven by lower housing costs and the desire to live in close proximity to family and cultural groups. Because of this population shift, resettlement agencies like World Relief Seattle and Jewish Family Service have moved to Kent and other areas of South King County.

Recommendations

Suburban Cities

- The Commission should advocate for the county to act as a regional partner with cities to investigate the need for increased investment in the development of neighborhood centers/meeting hubs for youth and families, with an emphasis on serving the needs of immigrant and refugee populations
- At least two Commission meetings should be held in suburban areas annually; these meetings should include site visits and informational sessions with residents
- The Commission should advocate for the County to work with regional partners, including cities, service providers, and the Sound Cities Association, to create a strategic plan for addressing immigrant and refugee issues in suburban cities
- The Commission should investigate whether immigrants and refugees are able to adequately access County services in suburban areas (i.e. district court, public health clinics, parks, transit) and advocate for opening a language and culturally-responsive satellite office in a suburban city if it is determined that a satellite office would help to increase access; e.g., Equity and Social Justice or other service office used by a large percentage of immigrants and refugees

Unincorporated Areas

- The Commission should encourage the county to collaborate with business to increase economic opportunities for immigrants and refugees from UI areas to have access to living wage jobs
- At least two Commission meetings should be held in UI areas annually; these meetings should include site visits and informational sessions with residents
- The Commission should make recommendations to the County on how to increase communication with residents, businesses and service providers in the UI areas to encourage better coordination, outreach and service to meet the needs of immigrant and refugee communities in these areas
- The Commission should advocate for the County to gather and share data specific to immigrant and refugees in UI areas and to disaggregate the data so the Commission can determine unmet needs; e.g., is there a higher number of substandard houses, is there a higher concentration of income gaps, etc. (this data is necessary to understand intersections between place-based challenges for immigrants and refugees)
- The Commission should investigate whether immigrants and refugees are able to adequately access county services in suburban areas (i.e. district court, public health clinics, parks, transit) and advocate for a language and culturally-responsive satellite office in a UI area if it is determined that a satellite office would help to increase access; e.g., Equity and Social Justice or other service office used by a large percentage of immigrants and refugees
- The Commission should advocate for the County to develop a plan for addressing immigrant and refugee issues in UI areas

17 A Spike in King County's Foreign-born Populations, The Seattle Times, October 5, 2015.

- The Commission should ask the county to authorize a national review to determine promising strategies employed by government to successfully integrate immigrants and refugees residing in UI areas of counties throughout the U.S.

Suburban Cities and Unincorporated Areas

- In order for the Commission to determine how needs of immigrants and refugees are being met in suburban and UI areas, it should advocate for the county to share a comprehensive assessment of the amount of resources that are invested in these areas; e.g., levy dollars, human services funds, economic development dollars, etc.
- The Commission should be closely guided by data (e.g., poverty rates, unemployment, the education opportunity gap, income, etc.) to promote the equitable distribution of funds to immigrant and refugee communities in suburban cities and UI areas
- The Commission should work with the King County Department of Community and Human Services to gain an understanding of how the County is responding to the needs of immigrants and refugees in UI/suburban areas and what percentage of the veterans and human services levy, Mental Illness and Drug Dependency, and Best Starts for Kids is invested in immigrant and refugees in UI/suburban areas; the Commission should advocate for an equitable proportion of investments go to emerging Ethnic Community Based Organizations (Ecommunity-based organizations)
- The Commission should participate in the County’s budgeting process to ensure that any changes to the budget have proportionately positive impacts on immigrants and refugees in the UI/suburban areas

Components of Annual Work Plan

The Commission’s annual work plan should include:

- On an annual basis the Commission should hold two large community briefings to solicit input from community on top priorities, progress towards goals, and evaluation of their work and role
- Produce an annual report that is available on the website, distributed widely, shared with media (to highlight progress towards goals), and with community members at the annual community conversations and briefings
- Provide briefings to press and policymakers in our cities, county and state on an annual basis to make sure that the Commission’s lessons learned, processes and progress towards goals are shared with the public and policy makers
- Commissioners should be accessible to the community through email and electronic inquiry form on the website. Each commissioner should have a public webpage with a photo and bio and “need help” and “share your ideas” tabs. Responses to public inquiries should receive a response within one week. This could be achieved by providing each commissioner with an honorarium (see below) and staff support to help with this communication
- Each commissioner should participate in at least one community event and provide a report to the Commission on the community strengths, challenges, and needs. This will facilitate direct contact with the affected communities by creating a liaison in various communities and soliciting on-going feedback in order to better serve diverse community needs
- Provide guidance and support the County on developing a plan and budget for establishing an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs
- Hold annual diversity event (fun event of integration and cultural humility)

Honorarium

The task force recommends that Commission members be compensated, at a level appropriate and typical for such bodies, for their efforts in responding to community inquiries, and attending monthly working group meetings, Commission meetings, and other committee meetings. The task force is making this recommendation because the type of leaders who will be sought for the Commission are often over-worked and asked to serve on many committees and task forces. Recognizing and compensating them for their time and contributions would be an important step towards building equity.

Commission Membership Composition, Appointment Process, and Terms

Membership Composition

The Commission should be made up of 13 King County residents reflecting the diversity of ethnicities, professional backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and geographic areas that make up the fabric of our communities.

Commission members should be immersed in one or more refugee/immigrant communities and be well versed on the issues. The composition of the Commission shall include:

- At least six members should be from unincorporated areas and sub-urban areas of King County
- At least two organizations representing immigrant issues and two organizations representing refugee issues. Of these, at least one of the immigrant organizations and one of the refugee organizations shall be small, local, community-based organizations
- At least one member shall represent a faith-based organization
- Strong consideration should be given to someone who is currently or once worked in King County government
- Consideration should be given to personal experiences as a refugee and asylee (not limited by status), as this is very beneficial to the work of the Commission. The Commission shall aim for having several members with these life experiences
- Gender diversity is highly critical. We recommend 50% women on this Commission
- Socioeconomic status diversity should also be considered in the composition of the Commission, as new arrivals and low-income communities often experience the most challenges
- It is very important that the composition of the Commission reflects the ethnic and racial diversity of our communities

Membership should also be open to four non-voting Ex Officio members. These Ex Officio members should be leaders and stakeholders that add value to the Commission and raise its visibility and capacity through their expertise, relationships, and networks. These individuals should be representatives of local government, businesses, and philanthropy.

Appointment Process

Commission members should be appointed through a combination of an open call for nominations, and targeted outreach to communities.

Call for nominations

- Begin with an open call for nominations and publicize widely through community-based organizations with expertise and focus on immigrant and refugee communities, community leaders and experts; reach out to community members who participated in the community conversations; post on the County's immigrant and refugee task force website; and other existing channels
- Self-nominations should be accepted
- Organizations and communities should also be able to nominate individuals

Specific targeted outreach to communities - King County Council and Executive should reach out to community-based organizations, leaders and stakeholders representing these communities, to encourage nominations.

Application process - Candidates should submit their applications along with a required form that outlines the person's qualifications, and describes the nomination and selection process. Finalists should be required to present three letters of recommendation, one from government and two from immigrant and refugee community members, and ten endorsement signatures from members of the community.

Selection decision - King County Executive, with the help of a committee of immigrant and refugee community leaders, should select the most qualified candidates and ensure the composition of the Commission meets membership goals. Communities should have an opportunity to provide input on the final, proposed slate, which the Executive should present for Council approval.

Terms

Commission members should have three-year, staggered terms, with a two-term limit (each member can potentially serve four to six years total). Staggered terms are recommended to ensure continuity of mission and vision and to build organizational history and memory. A system for staggered terms, like the one that follows, should be developed so that no more than half of the Commission members are up for replacement all at once. The Commission Chair should have the option of removing members after the first year of service if they do not actively participate on the Commission, and do not attend an adequate number of meetings.

Table 5. Staggered Commission Terms

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Position 1	Commission Member #1-three year term		Commission Member #1-three year term			
Position 2	Commission Member #2-three year term		Commission Member #2-three year term			
Position 3	Commission Member #3-three year term		Commission Member #3-three year term			
Position 4	Commission Member #4-three year term		Commission Member #4-three year term			
Position 5	Commission Member #5-two year term		Commission Member #5-three year term			
Position 6	Commission Member #6-two year term		Commission Member #6-three year term			
Position 7	Commission Member #7-two year term		Commission Member #7-three year term			
Position 8	Commission Member #8-two year term		Commission Member #8-three year term			
Position 9	Commission Member #9- one year term		Commission Member #9-three year term			
Position 10	Commission Member #10- one year term	Commission Member #10-three year term				
Position 11	Commission Member #11- one year term	Commission Member #11-three year term				
Position 12	Commission Member #12- one year term	Commission Member #12-three year term				
Position 13	Commission Member #13- one year term	Commission Member #13-three year term				

Office Rationale and Resource Needs

Although the task force’s mandate specified that recommendations should focus on the creation of a Commission, the task force feels strongly that the scope of needs, the complexity of the landscape, and prevailing good practices all point to the benefit of a standalone office with an associated Commission.

The task force feels very strongly that King County should establish an office that can play a pivotal role in building deeper trusting relationships with immigrant and refugee communities, and planning, organizing, and convening for collective action to benefit communities and advance the County’s equity and social justice efforts. The task force considered the benefits and challenges of recommending a standalone office as compared with placing dedicated staffing within an existing office/department (like the Office of Equity and Social Justice) and concluded that a standalone office would be a much more effective solution for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the task force does not see any existing office or department in the County that is currently in place and addressing the full complexity and diverse needs of immigrant and refugee communities. However, the task force acknowledges that it will be very important for a new office to work closely with the Office of Equity and Social

Justice as their mission of continuing to systematically institutionalize equity and social justice across every program and department of the County will be critical to outreach to immigrant and refugee communities. In addition, the determinants of equity targeted by the ESJ office (e.g., community economic development, public safety, early childhood development, equity in county practices, affordable and quality housing, etc.) match the most critical issues for immigrants and refugees identified through community conversations.

Secondly, the task force feels that the scope of needs evidenced through community conversations and good practices research points to the need for an office with a focused mandate of pursuing a comprehensive integration agenda (as opposed to a broader equity and social justice agenda), and dedicated staffing with the skills, expertise and capacity needed to work on both inward-facing (e.g., mainstreaming immigrant and refugee integration throughout the County) and outward-facing (e.g., hub/collective action, and community engagement and capacity development) priorities. While the Office of Equity and Social Justice does focus on immigrant and refugee communities, this work is only part of an ambitious, multi-faceted agenda. The task force also observed that there are a number of other municipalities¹⁸ that have chosen to establish separate efforts focused on racial equity and social justice, and immigrant and refugee affairs, indicating that these issues are important but may require substantively different approaches.

The task force sees a great opportunity for collaboration with the Office of Equity and Social Justice as they work to prioritize actionable County-wide equity and social justice goals and strategies for how the County can most effectively advance equity within County government and in partnership with the community to improve access to the determinants of equity. The task force also acknowledges that the focus of the Office of Immigrants and Refugees will be heavily externally directed in engaging directly with the communities, building a hands-on relationship with immigrants and refugees, be their voice to County government, and be the voice of County government to them. A partnership between these two offices will be important.

Finally, a standalone office provides a clear signal to immigrant and refugee communities, and to mainstream communities, that King County welcomes newcomers and is committed to empowering everyone to reach their full potential.

While establishing a standalone office will require an upfront investment, it is assumed that this level of capacity will yield positive results over time in attracting other resources to focus on immigrant and refugee issues (through collective action efforts), and by building assets and capacities of immigrant and refugee communities to contribute fully to the local economy.

Additionally, the task force recommends that a standalone office be situated within the County structure in such a way that it has a direct relationship with the Executive, clear channels to the Council, is empowered with the ability to move policy effectively and efficiently, and has authority to work with offices, divisions, and departments throughout the County on mainstreaming immigrant and refugee integration (in much the same way that ESJ is being mainstreamed).

While the standalone office with a Commission is the task force's clear recommendation in order to adequately fulfill the mandate outlined above, the task force recognizes that practical constraints may necessitate a phased approach to creating an office. As such, the task force presents three options in descending order of preference for the near-term (Appendix A provides a detailed breakdown of staffing and budgeting for each model, and Appendix B outlines responsibilities for suggested staffing positions).

¹⁸ A few examples include Seattle, which has a Race and Social Justice Initiative as well as the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs; Minneapolis, which has an Equitable Solutions initiative as well as the Neighborhood and Community Relations department with a strong immigrant and refugee focus; Portland, Oregon has an Office of Equity and Human Rights as well as the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization focused on integration.

Option 1 - Standalone office with associated Commission. The standalone office would require a Director and three additional staff members, and is estimated to cost \$540,000 in the first year. This model would provide the needed staffing, visibility, and infrastructure to support the hub approach, plan and advance a coordinated integration agenda throughout the County government, and incorporate LEP proviso report¹⁹ recommendations for enhanced coordination on engaging LEP communities.

Option 2 - Commission supported by two staff housed within the King County Council office or King County Executive Office (Office of Equity and Social Justice may be the most appropriate home). This model includes staffing with a Strategic Advisor and Coordinator, and is estimated to cost \$245,000 in the first year. This model would provide bare bones staffing to support the hub approach, and may provide sufficient capacity to address ad hoc integration efforts and LEP outreach.

Option 3 - Commission supported by a single staff member housed within the King County Council office or King County Executive Office (Office of Equity and Social Justice may be the most appropriate home). This model includes staffing with a Strategic Advisor only, and is estimated to cost \$160,000 in the first year. This model would limit the Commission's ability to serve as a hub for collective action, but would provide adequate staffing to support the Commission in a more limited advisory role to the County on immigrant and refugee issues.

Recommendations for Continued Community Engagement and Value of Feedback Loops

The task force recognizes that it may take some time to consider the recommendations in this report and to determine concrete next steps. However, it is important for the County to keep communities informed about what results from their input. The task force strongly recommends that the County develops a plan for sharing this report with community members, organizations, and agencies that were involved in community conversations, and stays in contact with these stakeholders as future planning around recommendations unfolds.

Conclusion

Immigrants and refugees are not thriving in King County as much as they could. While immigrants and refugees make significant contributions to the vibrancy and strength of the County's economy and communities, many find pathways to opportunity, good health, economic security, and civic engagement blocked by barriers as a result of language, culture, race, and immigration status. These barriers keep immigrants and refugees from reaching their full potential and equitably engaging and contributing.

The immigrant and refugee task force urges King County to take action to overcome these barriers. The recommendations presented in this report are intended to help King County build on its equity and social justice work, ensuring a dedicated focus on integration of immigrants and refugees to improve access to opportunities, and pursuit of a collective action agenda. The task force sees King County as uniquely poised to play an urgently needed role to convene key stakeholders for collective action. The County is best suited to fill this gap in the landscape because of its regional leadership, and because immigrant and refugee populations and issues span the County.

Because of the tremendous diversity and complexity of challenges for immigrant and refugee communities, and because of the scope of needs, the task force urges King County to establish a standalone office and associated Commission to focus on immigrants and refugees. A Commission alone will be insufficient to move forward with a

¹⁹ See the 2014 Budget Proviso Report: Limited English Proficiency Proviso Response Report, available at http://kingcounty.gov/~media/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/2014/LEP-proviso-report_final-june-2014.ashx?la=en

County-wide integration agenda, and will be limited in its ability to convene stakeholders to define and implement collective action priorities. It is time for King County to take bold actions to improve outcomes for immigrants and refugees.

As we conclude our work, the task force urges King County to develop a plan for communicating outcomes of the task force with immigrant and refugee communities. Many individuals and organizations generously gave their time to share candidly about their experiences, challenges, and thoughts on solutions. They also clearly communicated the desire for a feedback loop so that they are aware of how their input was used, and the actions the County intends to take as a result.

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The sub-group also examined and adapted information on approaches to immigrant and refugee integration from:

- Philadelphia
- Boulder
- San Francisco
- Houston
- Santa Clara County
- Los Angeles

~ APPENDIX A ~

King County Immigrant and Refugee Models Projected Budget(s)

Option 1: An Office of Immigrant and Refugee Services (Director with three staff) and a Commission to support community engagement.

Type	Cost	Comments
Director	\$145,000	Annual salary of \$110,000 plus taxes and benefits
Strategic Advisor	\$130,000	Annual salary of \$95,000 plus taxes and benefits
Commission Administrator/ Coordinator	\$85,000	Annual salary of \$62,500 plus taxes and benefits
Outreach & Engagement Staff	\$85,000	Annual salary of \$62,500 plus taxes and benefits
Training	\$25,000	Funds to train staff and commissioners
Community Meetings and Engagement	\$20,000	Community outreach, includes materials, food, childcare, misc.
Commission Operating Funds	\$20,000	Stipends for 13 Commission members (\$50 per commissioner for one regular and one sub-committee meeting per month) and other operating expenses
Occupancy Cost and Overhead	\$30,000	Includes rent, workstations, office support, etc.
	\$540,000	

Option 2: A Commission representing the interests of immigrants and refugees, supported by one Strategic Advisor and one Coordinator, housed within another King County office.

Type	Cost	Comments
Strategic Advisor	\$130,000	Annual salary of \$95,000 plus taxes and benefits
Commission Administrator/ Coordinator	\$85,000	Annual salary of \$62,500 plus taxes and benefits
Community Meetings	\$10,000	Two meetings/year—includes materials, food, childcare, misc.
Commission Operating Funds	\$20,000	Stipends for 13 Commission members (\$50 per commissioner for one regular and one sub-committee meeting per month) and other operating expenses
	\$245,000	

Option 3: A Commission representing the interests of immigrants and refugees, supported by one Strategic Advisor, housed within another King County office.

Type	Cost	Comments
Strategic Advisor	\$130,000	Annual salary of \$95,000 plus taxes and benefits
Community Meetings	\$10,000	Two meetings/year—includes materials, food, childcare, misc.
Commission Operating Funds	\$20,000	Stipends for 13 Commission members (\$50 per commissioner for one regular and one sub-committee meeting per month) and other operating expenses
	\$160,000	

~ APPENDIX B ~

Suggested Staffing Roles for King County Immigrant and Refugee Models

Director

- Design and execute a multi-year plan to grow the office with an eye to innovation and best practices with input and feedback from immigrant and refugee communities about areas of greatest need
- Public face of the Office; attending national conferences, building alliances with cities and counties, coordinating efforts with the City of Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs
- Responsible for building lasting and trusting relationships between the Commission, communities, and the County
- Being an advocate and spokesperson on the issues, Commission's top priorities and community-led solutions with the media, policymakers, and other key stakeholders
- Responsible for the implementation of the office strategy as a public, private partnership
- Responsible for the hub strategy and implementation including outreach to engage leaders to form the working groups
- Build an Office based on the best practices of what has been implemented in other cities and counties. Assist the Commission to identify and analyze best practice from other similar efforts across the nation
- Build effective relationships with businesses and foundations that can support the future needs and plans of the Office
- Identify and make recommendation to the County for collaboration across sectors; e.g. universities, school districts, research institutions, businesses
- Liaise on behalf of the Office and Commission with representatives of local government, philanthropy, business, and other entities vital to the work of the Commission

Strategic Advisor

- Assist the Commission in development and execution of annual work plans
- Support the Commission to collaborate with King County agencies
- Responsible for supporting the Office and Commission to build lasting and trusting relationships between the Commission, communities, and the County
- Provide effective leadership on issues impacting immigrants and refugees. Ensure that policies and programs of the Office and Commission address existing and emerging needs of immigrant and refugee communities, and ensure the equitable inclusion of immigrants and refugees
- Assist the Commission to manage demographic and policy research aligned with the Commission's scope of work and annual work plans
- Assist the Commission in development of policy and legislative recommendations to the County Council and County agencies
- Assist the Commission in managing and advocating for disaggregated data to evaluate provision of services to immigrant and refugee communities

Outreach and Engagement Staff

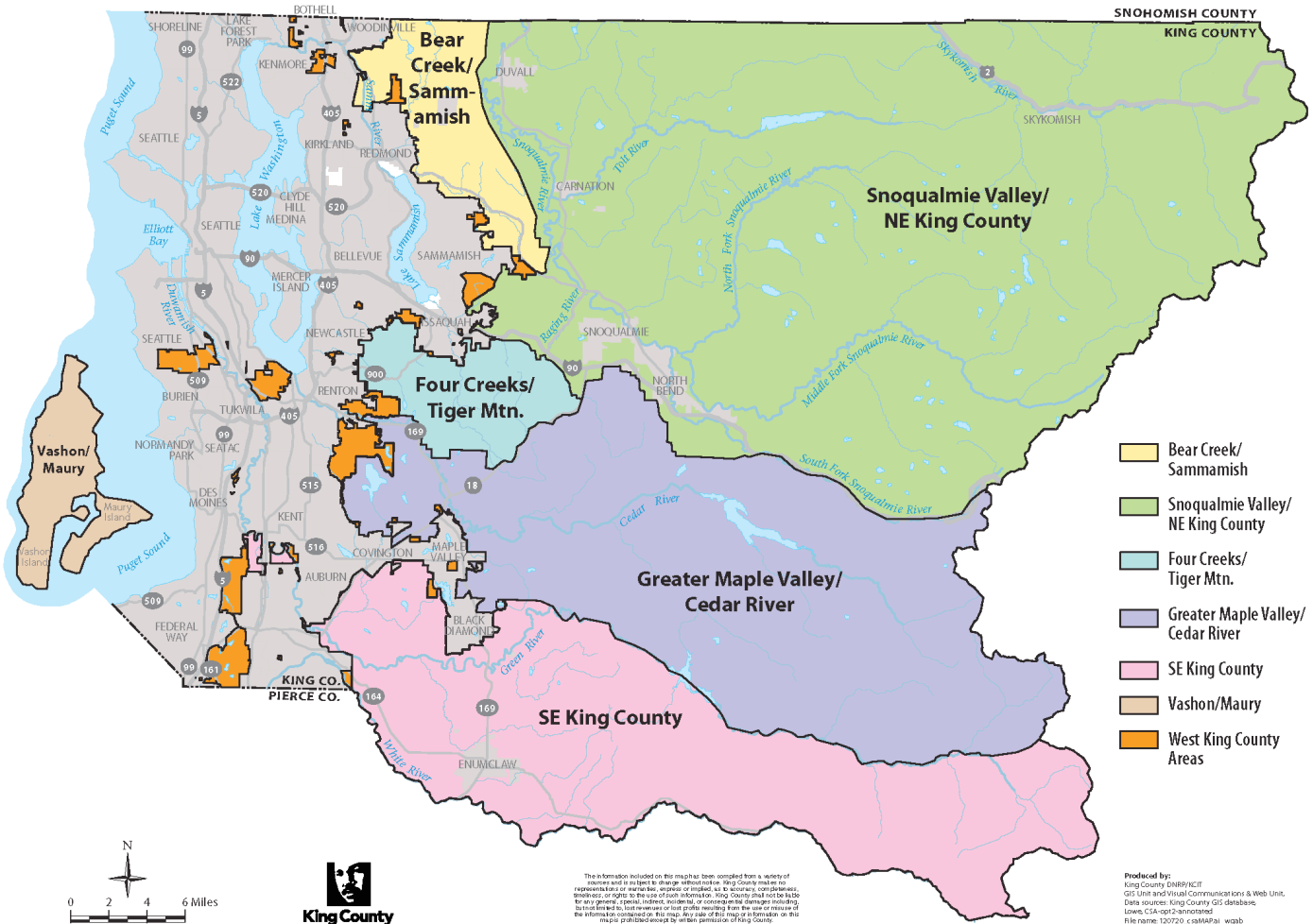
- Assist the Commission and its members with community outreach and engagement
- Coordinate translation and interpretation needs for the Commission
- Responsible for supporting the Office and Commission to build lasting and trusting relationships between the Commission, communities, and the County
- Coordinate the Commission's bi-annual community meetings, the process of receiving input from community members, and incorporation of this input into reports for Commission members and Office Director
- Responsible for the implementation of the hub model; support working groups and convening organizations working within each issue area identified as a top focus

Commission Administrator/Coordinator

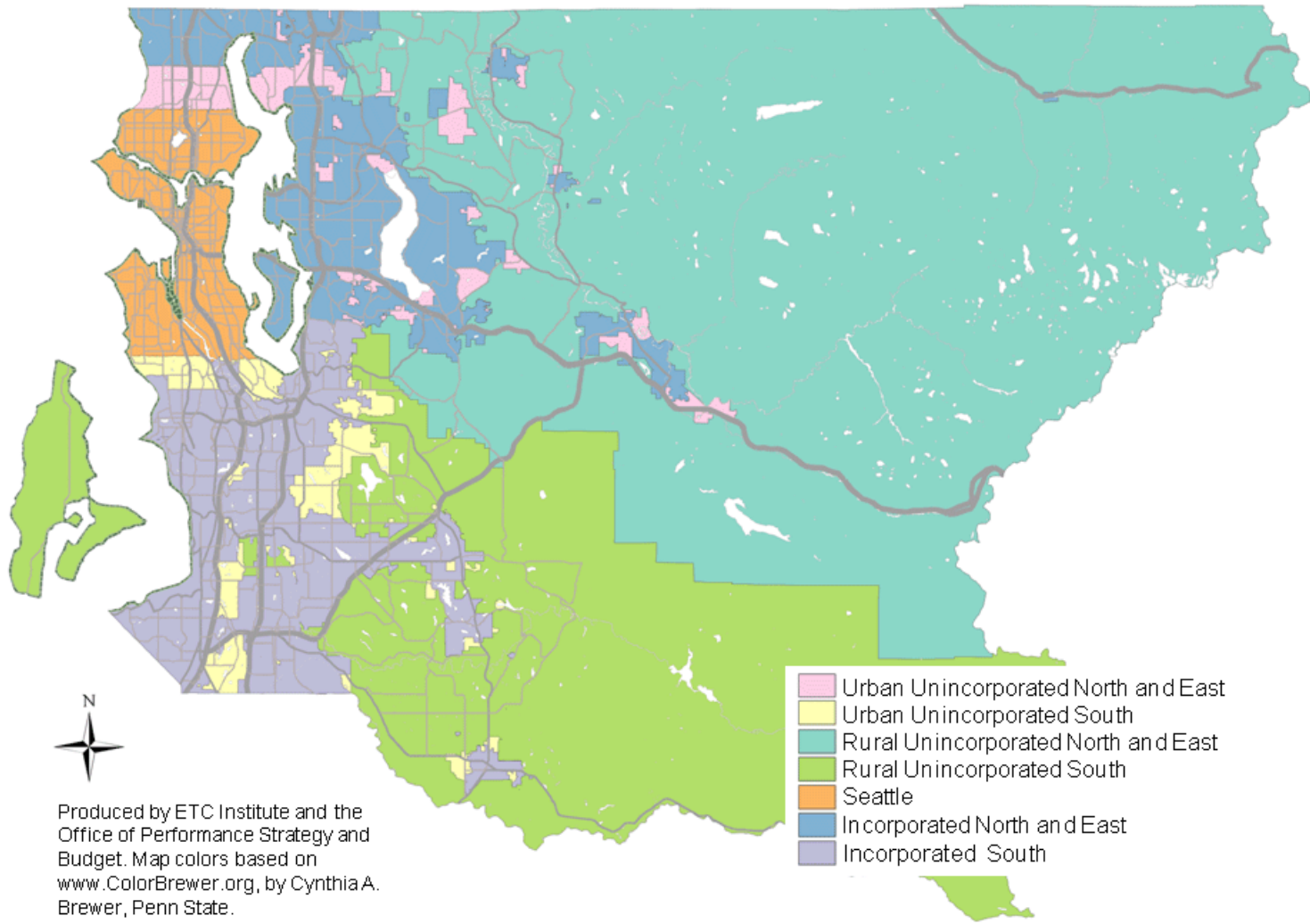
- Assist the Director and Commission members to return calls and respond to inquiries
- Staff the administration and operational needs of the Commission
- Manage the logistics of the Office and the Commission meetings
- Partner with the Outreach and Engagement Staff and manage the logistics of the public meetings of the Commission

~ APPENDIX C ~

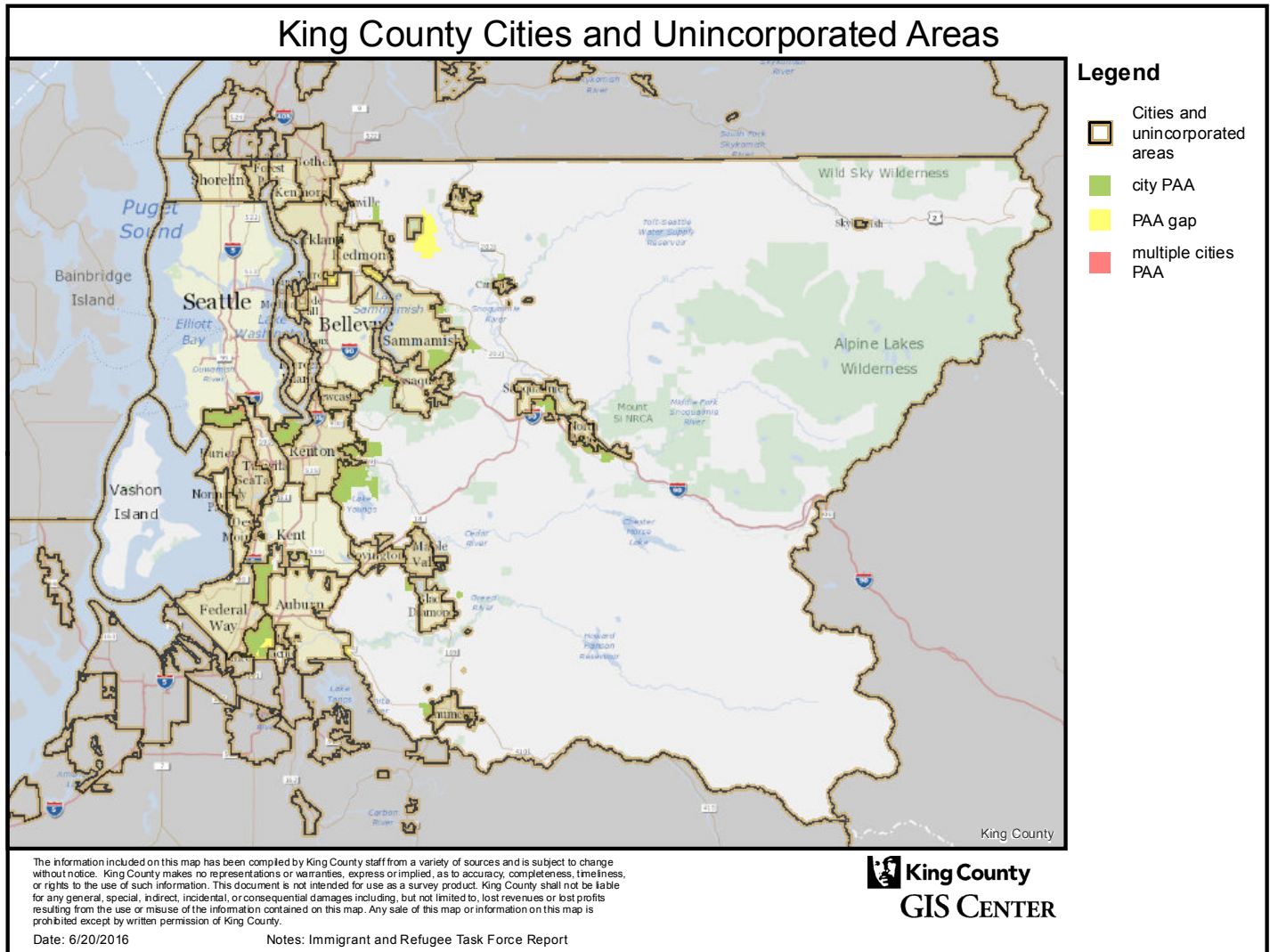
Unincorporated King County

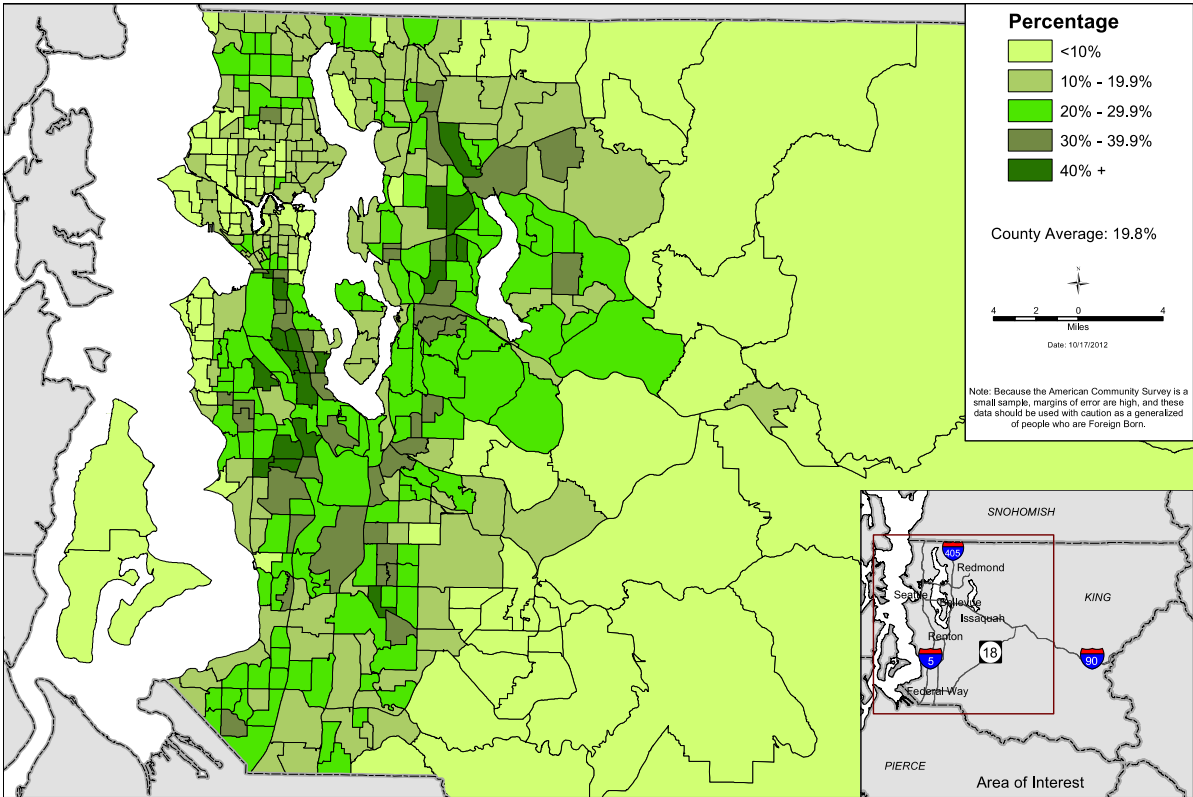


2012 King County Resident Survey Regions



Produced by ETC Institute and the Office of Performance Strategy and Budget. Map colors based on www.ColorBrewer.org, by Cynthia A. Brewer, Penn State.





~ APPENDIX D ~

King County Immigrant and Refugee Task Force Sub-group Details

Alignment

This sub-group focused on King County's current efforts and alignment with other immigrant and refugee efforts, starting with two key questions:

- How can King County best coordinate with and add value to other regional and local efforts focused on immigrant and refugee communities? This should take into consideration services of community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, local government and other government entities such as consulates.
- How should new King County efforts connect to the County Office of Equity and Social Justice?

The Alignment sub-group was chaired by Sameth, and other members were Lola, Joana, and Mengstab. Ericka Cox provided County staff support to this sub-group as needed.

This sub-group researched local- to state-level immigrant and refugee organizations and initiatives, including Seattle's office and commission, Washington State's office, and non-profit organizations like OneAmerica and El Centro de La Raza, among others. The group also researched related King County efforts (LEP Proviso report, Office of Equity and Social Justice, and the Communities of Opportunity initiative) and Seattle efforts out of the Seattle Police Department and Seattle Public Schools. The group also considered information on approaches taken by the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants in Canada. The Works Consulted section details resources considered by this sub-group.

Unincorporated and Suburban Areas

This sub-group focused on the differing experiences and needs of immigrant and refugee communities in urban, suburban, and unincorporated areas, including questions like:

- How do needs of immigrant and refugee communities differ in urban, suburban, and unincorporated areas of the County?
- How could a Commission help to address those differing needs?

The Unincorporated and Suburban Areas sub-group was chaired by Dinah, and other members were Michael, Lupita, and Denise. Bookda Gheisar supported this sub-group as needed.

This sub-group considered King County strategic planning documents; demographic data and maps; a number of plans, reports and profiles of suburban and unincorporated areas of the County; and articles and reports relevant to understanding issues and challenges for immigrant and refugee populations in different areas of King County, alongside community input to inform their recommendations. The Works Consulted section details resources considered by this sub-group.

Commission Membership, Scope, and Power

This sub-group focused on defining the mission, membership, and scope of duties for Commission, including questions like:

- Purpose/mission of a Commission – how would a Commission achieve specific goals or address specific issues?
- Commission membership
- Scope of duties
- How to ensure adequate power, effectiveness, and voice for the Commission?
- How can this Commission build on successes and best practices of other similar efforts nationally and internationally?

The Commission Membership, Scope, and Power sub-group was chaired by Alaric, and other members were Ahmed, Rich, Habtamu and Mahnaz. Margi McClung supported this sub-group as needed.

This sub-group researched integration approaches taken by U.S. and international municipalities, culling and adapting information from:

- Seattle
- Victoria, Australia
- Philadelphia
- Boulder
- San Francisco
- Houston
- Santa Clara County
- Los Angeles

In addition, the sub-group considered good practices in immigrant integration identified by the Hague Process on Refugees and Migration, and the National League of Cities, alongside community input to inform their recommendations. The Works Consulted section details resources considered by this sub-group.

