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AUSTIN: WELCOMING CITY INITIATIVE
FINAL REPORT

A PRODUCT OF:

THE CITY OF AUSTIN COMMISSION ON IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

SPONSORED BY:

THE CITY OF AUSTIN DEPARTMENTS OF
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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TRAVIS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS SERVICE, RESEARCH &
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THE IMMIGRANT SERVICES NETWORK OF AUSTIN
CAPITAL METRO
AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
CARITAS OF AUSTIN

RELEASED SEPTEMBER 2015

PARTNERS

The Austin: Welcoming City initiative was the product of a year-long collaboration with multiple community partners:

The City of Austin's Commission on Immigrant Affairs was the sponsor and owner of the Austin: Welcoming City Initiative. The Commission Chair and a small working group of Commissioners provided the strategic guidance, logistical coordination, and decision-making for the initiative, and conducted the implementation of input processes with most stakeholder groups.

The City of Austin's Economic Development Department served as the sponsoring City of Austin department. In addition to a financial sponsorship of $3,000 and hosting the Austin: Welcoming City web page, Economic Development staff consulted and assisted with project planning, and conducted the implementation of input processes among business community stakeholders.

The City of Austin's Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department provided a financial sponsorship of $10,000.

The Travis County Department of Health and Human Services & Veterans Service, Research & Planning Division served as a technical assistance and consultation partner. Research & Planning staff provided general planning support; assisted Commission leadership with design of the public participation plan and strategies; created survey, focus group, and interview tools; analyzed results; and documented results in the final report.

The Immigrant Services Network of Austin served as an implementation partner for input processes in the immigrant resident stakeholder group.

Capital Metro served as a marketing partner by donating space for pro-bono Welcoming City advertising on city buses during the months of October-December 2014.

The Austin Independent School District served as an implementation partner by promoting the initiative and sharing surveys through their school networks and newsletters.

Caritas of Austin served as the fiscal agent for the Austin: Welcoming City Initiative.

Collaborators: The following organizations participated in the Austin: Welcoming City Initiative by hosting focus groups:

- Asociacion de Empresarios Mexicanos
- Austin Community Foundation
- Austin Independent School District
- Caritas of Austin
- Chinese American Semiconductor Professional Association
- Eurocircle
- Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce
- The Indus Entrepreneurs Austin
- SafePlace
- SAIVA
- The SEED Adult and Family Learning Community
- The University of Texas at Austin International Office

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In September 2013, the Austin City Council issued a proclamation declaring Austin "a welcoming city for international newcomers," formalizing the City of Austin's commitment to being a welcoming, immigrant-friendly community. In the same year, the City of Austin launched the International Welcome Program and became one of the first 14 municipalities in the country to officially become a Welcoming Cities and Counties Affiliate through Welcoming America.

The City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs took on the goal of developing a shared definition of and vision for Austin as a Welcoming City, in alignment not only with the 2013 Council proclamation, but also with the City's vision as the most livable city in the country and with Imagine Austin's vision that our city's greatest asset is its people. The Austin: Welcoming City Initiative was embarked upon as a starting point in that process.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE AUSTIN: WELCOMING CITY INITIATIVE?

The Austin: Welcoming City Initiative's aim was to give Austin residents the opportunity to share their perceptions of Austin's inclusion of immigrants and to inform and define what "welcoming" means in the context of our community, through a series of public input processes. We hoped to collaboratively develop that definition by gathering the diverse perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of Austin residents across a variety of stakeholder groups.

WHAT DID WE WANT TO LEARN?

We sought to answer the following key questions:

- What are residents' perceptions of Austin's inclusion of immigrants, both in general and across specific areas of community life?
- What can Austin do to be more welcoming towards immigrants?
- Within specific stakeholder groups, in what ways are Austinites working to include immigrants, what sector-specific barriers exist for the inclusion of immigrants, what impacts do stakeholders experience, and what solutions do they recommend?

WHAT DID WE WANT TO USE THE INFORMATION TO DO?

We wanted to analyze and publish the results of the public input process in a final report, to be made available to the public in August 2015. This report will summarize participants' current perceptions of Austin, conditions that impact Austin's relative degree of welcome and inclusion of immigrants, and stakeholder recommendations for how Austin can be a more welcoming city. The Commission on Immigrant Affairs intends to use the results as the framework for specific recommendations to Austin City Council. We hope that other local leaders, influencers, advocates, policy makers, and decision makers will also use the results to consider how they can bring their individual agencies and organizations into closer alignment with a vision of Austin as a welcoming city for immigrants.

HOW DID WE GATHER THE INFORMATION?

We identified six key stakeholder groups to target, and developed appropriate, participatory, public input techniques for each group. Techniques were selected based on stakeholder group type and resources available, given that implementation largely relied on volunteers and pro-bono or in-kind efforts.

	Online Surveys	Focus Groups	Welcoming City Summit	Individual Interviews
Immigrant Residents	✓	✓		
General Public	✓			
Service Providers	✓	✓*	✓*	
Businesses	✓	✓		
Funders (philanthropic and public)	✓	✓		
Elected Officials				✓

Service providers were initially targeted through a summit. Due to an inclement weather closure at the facility, the participation component of the summit was cancelled and later replaced by a focus group.

The input tools were tailored to match the group targeted:

Online surveys offered an economical and widely accessible input tool for broad inclusion. Four surveys were created to capture input from service providers, businesses, funders, and the general public (the general public survey was made available in English and Spanish). Eight core questions were asked across all stakeholder groups, with additional customized sector-specific questions, and questions to collect de-identified demographic or/and organizational information for each group.

The *Austin: Welcoming City Summit* featured an agenda of informational speakers, panel discussions, and a public input session. The event was broadly publicized but in particular targeted service providers, and was intended as the primary vehicle for service provider input. An inclement weather closure at the facility on second day of the event caused the input session to be cancelled, resulting in no input gathered at this event. (A focus group for service providers was later scheduled in its place.)

Focus groups provided an intimate setting for small group discussion. Focus groups were the primary vehicle for immigrant residents' input, and were hosted through member agencies of the Immigrant Services Network of Austin, often facilitated on site at service provider locations by agency staff in the primary language of the participants. Focus groups were also hosted for the business, funder, and service provider stakeholder groups. A total of 18 focus groups were held (11 immigrant resident groups, four business groups, two funder groups, and one service provider group).

Individual interviews were used to collect input from elected officials. Because of the time and labor intensive nature of this input method, this method was only used for this stakeholder group.

WHO PARTICIPATED?

A total of 766 responses were collected and analyzed for this report, combined from online surveys (543 responses), focus groups (215 participants), and in-person interviews (8 participants).

By stakeholder group, participation was as follows:

- *Immigrant Residents*: 149 focus group participants.
- *General Public:* 449 survey respondents (51 of whom self-identified that they were not a U.S. citizen at birth).
- *Service Providers*: 9 focus group participants and 38 survey respondents.
- *Businesses*: 43 focus group participants and 38 survey respondents.
- *Funders*: 12 focus group participants and 18 survey respondents.
- *Elected Officials:* 8 local elected officials were interviewed (3 Travis County Commissioners and 5 Austin City Council members).

Immigrant residents may also have been included among business, funder, and service provider participants (and likely were included in those groups, based on the content of some narrative responses). However these participants were not specifically asked about their nativity status, because their participation was sought primarily a representative of their organization or company to speak to organizational practices, not as an individual community member to speak to their personal experience as an immigrant or non-immigrant.

We prioritized inclusion as a key value in this process. We also prioritized the protection of anonymity in participation, and all questions were optional, so as to better engage populations for whom disclosure of identifying or sensitive information could have a chilling effect on participation. Therefore no attempt was made to restrict, track, or identify participation across any of the input tools. As a result, duplication in participation across various input tools was possible, and acknowledged by the researchers as a potential limitation in the precision of results; however this decision was consistent with the spirit and goals of the initiative and the intended use of the results.

HOW WELCOMING IS AUSTIN TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS?

In focus groups, surveys, and interviews, the first question asked was, **"How welcoming do you think the greater Austin community is towards immigrants?"** This section of the report addresses only the general responses to this first broad question. (Follow-up questions were asked around how welcoming Austin is in specific issue areas; for those topical explorations, please see the issue area sections of this report.)

RATINGS SUMMARY

Not Welcoming		Somewhat Welcoming		Welcoming
1		2	2.2	3

Not Welcoming 16%	Somewhat Welcoming 52%	Welcoming 33%
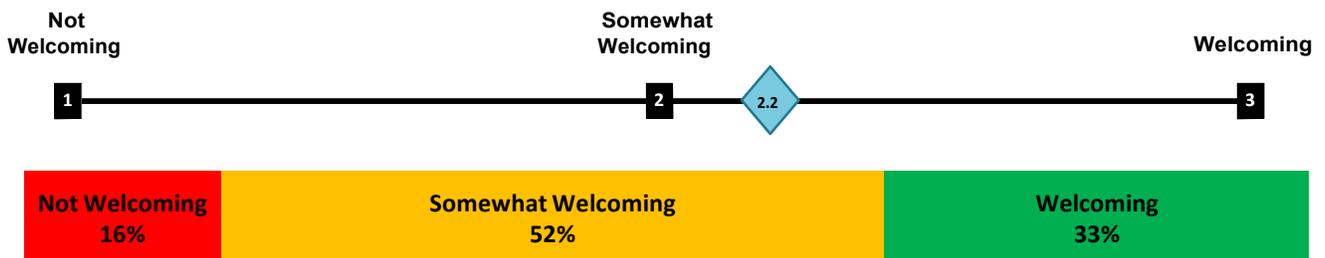
Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Over half of the combined survey responses to this question indicated that Austin was "somewhat welcoming" towards immigrants. One-third categorized Austin as "welcoming," and the remaining 16% rated Austin as "not welcoming."

IMMIGRANT VOICES

The immigrant focus groups were asked to discuss their thoughts on how welcoming Austin is generally towards immigrants. This was the first question asked of the groups, so initial responses tended to be very general in nature. The overall themes resulting from the responses included the following:

The most commonly discussed theme was that **Austin is friendly and welcoming towards immigrants.** This sentiment was mentioned in different ways across 10 focus groups. Five of these groups specifically discussed the belief that Austin is a safe city for immigrants, which contributes to the sense of welcoming.

- *I am very welcomed and very happy. Where I come from, I never slept, but here I can sleep.*
- *I think for a new immigrant Austin is a great place to start.*
- *What I like, I really like, is that you are who you are and can do anything. It is not important if you are a citizen or not.*
- *People in Austin seem very open minded and accepting of other cultures.*
- *I came to Austin thirteen years ago with nothing. At HEB, I was buying groceries for my family. A man asked to help, and paid for all my groceries. Benevolent people, good treatment by public, good support for my children.*
- *Yes, it is a city that promotes diversity and not just among Hispanics.*

Two groups explored the idea that **Austin is more welcoming to some immigrants than others**. This conditional preference may relate to country of origin, documentation status, or income level.

- *It you are rich, there is good welcome. If you are poor, there isn't.*

- *It all depends on the person that arrives and where they arrive to.*
- *In general, very welcoming, but it may depend on what country a person is from.*
- *There is more discrimination against immigrants of Hispanic origin. We are treated more harshly.*
- *I don't state that I'm undocumented but if I did the reaction would be different. I stick to saying I'm "international."*

Better in Austin than other cities: Four groups discussed ways in which Austin is more welcoming to immigrants than are many other different cities in the U.S.

- *It is more welcoming than other cities with a similar population and demographics. However, there's still room for improvement in terms of community integration.*
- *Yes, my experience has been in Arizona and South Carolina and there people live in fear.*
- *I think it's more welcoming than other cities. There are more people from different places and the political climate is better. Dallas is more segregated in my opinion.*

Several themes emerged among the immigrant focus group participants that were unique to immigrant stakeholders and that were not noted in other survey or focus group responses. These novel themes included the following:

In-group support or exclusion was discussed by 3 groups. Several immigrants reported that they have found support within the immigrant community, while others described feelings of rejection from their own or other immigrant groups.

- *Here we are a group and we can make a group here in Austin for other immigrants.*
- *Sometimes the rejection is felt more from people of my own race than from people from here.*
- *It hurts when Hispanic leaders try to separate themselves from undocumented people, heartbreaking and rude. We don't have enough resources to get our cause out.*

Finally, broad positive and negative reflections were shared about **changes in the city** and the resulting impact upon how welcoming Austin is or is not towards immigrants. Some participants felt Austin had improved in this area over time, and others felt the city had changed for the worse.

- *Conditions now are better than they were 30 years ago. There are more immigrants with good resources that are improving the situation.*
- *Now Austin wants to feel like a welcoming city because it is convenient, so more investments are made.*
- *Now, it's not so great, the last couple of years. Before it was really great.*

TOP THEMES AND RESULTS FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Out of 531 survey respondents who answered this question, 166 (31%) provided narrative comments to explain their ratings. This question was also answered in all focus groups (business, funder, and service provider), as well as all interviews with elected officials. The following top themes emerged, presented below grouped by rating.[1]

Additionally, many responses provided comments that were unrelated to the survey question, expressed concerns with survey methodology, or that researchers could not understand. Grouped together, there were 33 such comments (20% of narrative responses).

———————————————

[1] Percentages and response counts refer to survey data unless otherwise noted. All percentages refer to the frequency with which those themes appeared in the 166 narrative responses (not in total survey responses). Focus group and interview quotations were combined with survey responses in order to provide richness of content and theme exploration.

WELCOMING

Austin is a welcoming city: 26% of narrative responses contained themes related to Austin being a welcoming city. Focus group participants and elected officials also shared comments that fit into many of the following themes.

- *Friendly city*: Perceptions that Austinites are generally friendly towards immigrants.
    - *Austin is very welcoming; has numerous international groups and global councils provide community inclusiveness and diverse opportunities. (Business)*
    - *Friendly and appreciative of the talents of immigrants and efforts to help them assimilate. (Public)*
    - *The vast majority of people in Austin are not from here, whether from another part of the U.S. or another country. I think there is great openness for newly arrived people to join in, and interest in what the experience and ideas they bring. (Public)*

- *Better in Austin:* Perceptions that Austin is more welcoming towards immigrants than are other places in the U.S.
    - *Austin is one of the most welcoming cities in the U.S. They do everything to welcome people to the city and feel that they are at home even when they are not. (Business)*
    - *Better than most of Texas. (Funder)*
    - *Austin, compared to other large cities in Texas, has a more natural blend of immigrants throughout, which in my opinion says the city it is very welcoming. (Public)*
    - *More so than other TX cities Austin seems to welcome and accept immigrants whether legal or not. (Public)*

- *Good service options for immigrants:* Services exist for immigrants, and specific local organizations are serving immigrants well.
    - *Lots of great service providers. (Public)*
    - *I think that there are more services for immigrants in Austin than any other city I have resided in. (Public)*
    - *Good mix of a variety of people and business that caters to different nationalities due to the university and international companies. (Public)*

SOMEWHAT WELCOMING

The degree of welcome depends upon a variety of factors: 19% of narrative responses contained the following top themes:

- *Conditional immigrant preference:* Certain immigrants are more welcomed or preferred depending on immigration status, citizenship status, education and skill level, country of origin, English language ability, etc.
    - *Austin is more welcoming for some immigrants than others, for example, those in high-tech fields, business entrepreneurs, and those who possibly already speak English, as opposed to those perceived to be low resource. (Elected Official)*
    - *I think Austin is welcoming to those that have skills and training, but not so much to those who are not here legally or not educated. (Public)*
    - *Extremely prone to welcoming immigrants, and providing as much help as they need, if the immigrants come here legally. If not, they seem to disappear into the masses, and miss the advantages of legals. (Public)*
    - *Dependent on where immigrants are from and who's doing the welcoming. (Public)*
    - *I feel like immigrants that have money are treated well. I think underrepresented groups may*

face issues such as police discrimination and discrimination in housing. (Public)

- **Variation across systems:** Variations in immigrant opportunity are dependent upon non-immigration-related factors, such as region or neighborhood, issue area, differences across and within sectors or service provision systems, affordability, etc.
    - *It depends on which Austin you are talking about. The job sector is very welcoming and cognizant of how important it is for us to be an international city from a competitive international perspective, while from the perspective of the predominant Anglo monolingual culture we really have work to do. (Elected Official)*
    - *Interesting question because welcoming relative to what? Compared to other cities, perhaps so, but our own community may feel more isolated than, say, in Houston. We are trying but troubled. (Elected Official)*
    - *My unit is more welcoming than the large organization that I work for. Some parts of the community are welcoming while others are less. (Provider)*
    - *I think certain parts of town are more welcoming than others, because Austin is still a pretty segregated city (racially and income-wise). (Public)*
    - *While in general I think the Austin attitude is welcoming, I think our affordability is a huge issue when the entire picture is analyzed. (Public)*

NOT WELCOMING

Austin is not welcoming towards immigrants: 16% of narrative responses contained the following top themes:

- **Unfriendly city:** Perceptions that Austinites are negative towards immigrants, treat them poorly, or devalue them.
    - *Austin puts on a good show of being welcoming but once the newness fades then the city is much less open to new people. There is a culture of nostalgia for what the town used to be but that often means a dislike of anyone new. (Public)*
    - *While the city's official policy is "welcoming," the population at large is split on that notion — probably a majority join in the idea, but there is also a smaller hard core of anti-immigrant sentiment that occasionally flares into public opposition. (Public)*
    - *Deporting 19 people a week and breaking up families is not welcoming. (Public)*

- **Exclusion from engagement:** Immigrants are excluded from participating in the same opportunities as non-immigrants due to personal or structural bias (such as racism, classism, segregation, discrimination, etc.).
    - *Although Austin maintains a liberal facade, the city continues to be segregated among racial and class lines. This is a reflection of the prejudice that continues to thrive in our city. As long as that prejudice is present, immigrants will continue to have to tip toe around people who are racially and economically privileged in this city. (Public)*
    - *I have never seen so much hatred towards the other. Whether the other is religion, race, gender, socioeconomic status or your definition of the other you can see the city and populace alienate people. I've seen it by city representatives, TV news, and especially radio. (Public)*

- **Immigrants are afraid:** Immigrants are afraid of law enforcement, immigration agencies, detention and deportation, and may live in the shadows as a result; also comments that were critical of law enforcement or immigration policies/practices that could create such fears.
    - *There are some things that we do that are discouraging, like the Sherriff's implementation of the secure communities initiative. (Funder)*
    - *I have witnessed instances where either the immigrant populations refrain from participating*
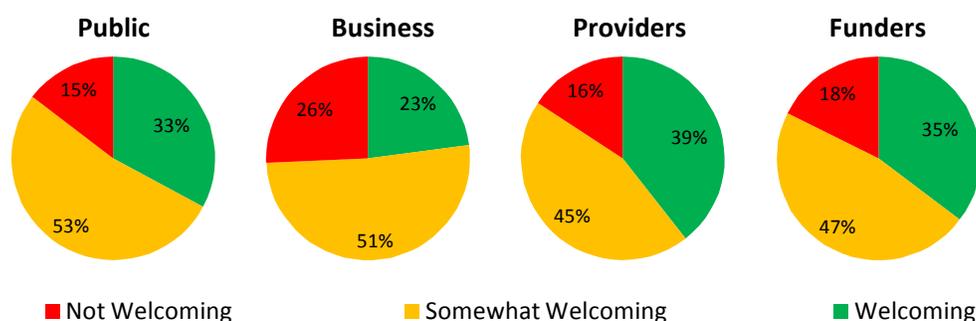
because of fear. As a community, we have failed to make them feel safe as we continue to demean and exclude them. (Public)

- o *Secure Communities (S-COMM) makes Austin an unwelcome, hostile and unsafe community for immigrants. (Public)*
- o *The state of Texas a whole is resistant to Mexican immigrants and while some of the Austin residents are open to having immigrants as fellow residents, legislature hasn't mirrored that sentiment. Things like Secure Communities and the requirement of an ID to vote are two examples of Austin not being welcoming to immigrants—again specifically non-white individuals from Mexico. (Public)*

- *Language access issues:* Language is a barrier for immigrants to be fully welcomed in Austin.
  - o *We are English only, for the most part. When we do have a second language, it is only Spanish. Contrast this with places like Miami and we seem so unsophisticated. (Business)*
  - o *Most frequently Spanish is the only non-English language posted. (Public)*
  - o *Not all service providers serve the Spanish speaking population. (Provider)*

"TOO WELCOMING"

"Too welcoming" was not a selection option for participants in responding to this question. However, upon analysis of a subset of results within the "welcoming" ratings, the category of "too welcoming" emerged to researchers from a cluster of related themes. 19% of narrative responses contained the following top themes related to the belief that **Austin is too welcoming towards immigrants**:

- *Too welcoming:* General perceptions that Austin is overly welcoming and already doing too much for immigrants.
  - o *Too welcoming. The number of immigrants arriving exceeds our ability to provide for their needs and assist in their integration into our society. (Public)*
  - o *Treated better than regular citizens! (Public)*
  - o *Too welcoming. Illegals get more benefits than Americans. They even protest down at the capital to get more. (Public)*
  - o *Too welcoming. Illegal immigrants damage the fabric of our society. Austin is too tolerant. (Public)*

- *"Legal" versus "illegal" distinction:* The respondent's opinion on whether immigrants should be welcomed depends on the legal or citizenship status of the immigrant.
  - o *...perhaps a little too welcoming. I believe they should go through the system that is in place to legally enter our country and obtain jobs. (Public)*
  - o *There is no distinction being made between legal and illegal immigrants. Declaring Austin a "sanctuary city" for illegals is ridiculous! (Public)*
  - o *If "Immigrants" means people who have followed the law and come here legally, Austin should welcome them. However, if "Immigrants" is politically correct for Illegal Aliens, then they have NO BUSINESS in our community. (Public)*

- *Unwanted city change:* Comments that indicate Austin is changing in a negative way and that immigrants contribute to that change.
  - o *Like Austin needs any more residents! (Public)*
  - o *Austinites seem to feel a sense of entitlement and don't want people moving here for selfish reasons. (Public)*
  - o *Residents born in Austin or in the state of Texas are often very proud, and sometimes may be vocal about new residents due to the city's growth rate. (Public)*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP DIFFERENCES

| Public | Business | Providers | Funders |

Public: Not Welcoming 15%, Somewhat Welcoming 53%, Welcoming 33%
Business: Not Welcoming 26%, Somewhat Welcoming 51%, Welcoming 23%
Providers: Not Welcoming 16%, Somewhat Welcoming 45%, Welcoming 39%
Funders: Not Welcoming 18%, Somewhat Welcoming 47%, Welcoming 35%

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming

Within all stakeholder groups, the respondents rating Austin as "somewhat welcoming" comprised the largest proportion (ranging from 45% to 53%). Business community members were slightly more likely to provide a "not welcoming" rating over a "welcoming" score, while the public, providers, and funders were more likely to rate Austin as "welcoming."

BARRIERS IDENTIFIED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Most stakeholder groups had the opportunity to share their perceptions about barriers that prevent Austin from being a welcoming city for immigrants. Different questions were asked of each group to yield an array of relevant comments tailored to each sector. The specific questions for each group are listed in the table below:

Stakeholder Group	Specific Question(s) Related to Barriers	Completion Rate for Barriers Question
Immigrants	What barriers have you faced as an immigrant in Austin?	9 of 11 focus groups
Service Providers	What barriers impact: • Your ability to serve immigrants? • Immigrants' ability to access your services?	1 of 1 focus groups Survey participants
Funders	What barriers impact your organization's ability to: • Fund programs/services that are specifically intended for immigrants? • Include the immigrant voice in grant-making or funding allocation decisions?	2 of 2 focus groups Survey participants
Businesses[2]	What barriers impact your ability to: • Employ immigrant individuals? • Develop immigrant customers as a market base? • Develop immigrant-owned businesses as partners?	0 of 4 focus groups Survey participants
Elected Officials	What are you hearing from the immigrants you represent? What barriers are you aware of that Austin immigrants face?	4 of 8 interviews

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[2] Due to an implementation error, the business focus groups were facilitated using materials from another stakeholder group; as a result, these barriers questions were not asked of business focus group participants. Results from the business focus groups for this question were not included in this analysis.

Across all stakeholders, language, housing affordability, and transportation were repeatedly raised as barriers to Austin being a more welcoming city to immigrants. Immigrant participants also discussed cultural knowledge as a barrier. Many additional barriers were identified across stakeholders or within specific focus groups.

Language is a barrier to engagement and access. Five immigrant focus groups and 6 elected officials discussed this theme explicitly.

- *Language, which is huge when you are trying to find city services and access information. (Elected Official)*
- *A barrier is not having truly bilingual, culturally competent folks within an agency, staff and volunteers. We have trouble recruiting the staff and volunteers we need. (Provider)*
- *Language. We need to learn English. (Immigrant)*
- *When you don't know English it is a problem for the whole community. (Immigrant)*

Housing affordability and access as well as setting up housing-related services were discussed as barriers in 3 immigrant focus groups and by 2 elected officials.

- *It's really hard to look for housing because of the need for a co-signer or a credit check. I was not able to put my name on a lease because of my undocumented status and I felt this made me dependent on my roommate. (Immigrant)*
- *Housing is a barrier. There are health and safety issues when too many people live in an apartment. (Elected Official)*
- *Processes and paperwork are complex and confusing, such as getting a driver's license, social security number, setting up utilities. There are no clear instructions online or a car is needed. You get mixed messages and conflicting information. (Immigrant)*
- *Cost of living and expense (is a barrier). (Elected Official)*
- *As a social worker trying to connect resources, housing is a huge thing. Affordable housing. You can't access it without a social security number. (Provider)*

Public transportation challenges were brought up in 7 of the immigrant focus groups and by service providers.

- *Public transportation is better than many US cities. However, it can be difficult to use public transportation outside of the core area and a car is necessary. (Immigrant)*
- *Busses are terrible. There are not enough busses for the route. (Immigrant)*
- *Transportation for school or the public city bus is a barrier to getting a job. (Immigrant)*

Cultural knowledge barriers were also discussed in 3 immigrant focus groups.

- *Miss a job because the way you act in an interview, eye contact, handshakes… lose job or job opportunity because of cultural differences. (Immigrant)*
- *Cultural knowledge is a barrier. (Immigrant)*
- *There is a sense of us immigrants being welcome to live and work here, but there are few initiatives to integrate the immigrants in the community, educate them about local culture and benefit from their social capabilities. (Immigrant)*
- *Cultural issues. They want the immigrant to "acculturate." How do we adapt to them instead of them adapting to us? … For Hispanics, family is first and many people do not understand that. (Immigrant)*

Stakeholders across multiple groups (immigrants, service providers, funders, and elected officials) mentioned challenges related to **a lack of documentation:**

- *Undocumentation, being illegal. (Immigrant)*
- *As a survivor advocate, the biggest barriers are legal services and clients not having documentation to work. (Provider)*
- *It's uncomfortable … especially trying to figure out what type of documentation is suitable. I rather not put myself in that situation and I'm not sure of the law and I don't want to get anyone in trouble including myself. (Immigrant)*

Both funders and service providers raised concerns around **limited funds or restricted funds** available to serve immigrants:

- *The number one thing is competition for funds. The funding of services is inadequate to meet needs, period. So it becomes a fight, a literal fight, but also a competition across issues, across communities. (Funder)*
- *The scarcity of resources – the funding decisions we make are so widely open, they aren't open to one specific group of individuals…. It's the lack of resources, to be able to create an entire service model specific to the immigrant community – instead we create a service model for everyone. (Funder)*
- *I think the barrier is dollars. There are a lot of dollars that are restricted. (Funder)*
- *Capacity is an issue… Funding issues. That funding is restricted. (Provider)*

Some funders' and service providers' responses also indicated that **immigrants voices or input may not be informing decisions** related to the funding or services intended to target or include them:

- *How do we involve the community, any part of the community, in our decision making and in coming up with our plans? We in the government don't always have the best reputation for being inclusive…. How do we involve people who are influenced by decisions in making those decisions? (Funder)*
- *How in the world would you have the immigrant voice in decisions? (Funder)*
- *In order to be a welcoming agency it is important to have immigrants as part of the leadership team. Something we have struggled with was having clients be able to hold those positions, due to juggling jobs and family. (Provider)*
- *"Nothing for us without us" is a mantra we need to figure out. How to be better about it. (Funder)*

In focus groups, both service providers and immigrants mentioned the following:

- **Challenges accessing the Medical Access Program** and its low income eligibility ceiling requirements, as well as **limited affordable medical care options overall**, are barriers to receiving health care services.
- **Transfer of degrees or credentials** from one's home country is a barrier to immigrants, as is recertification in professional fields.
- **Long delays in getting documents and work permits** are an obstacle to success.
- **Reliance on a social security number** acts as a barrier to accessing systems and limits housing options for immigrants.

Lastly, **challenges connecting within Austin communities** keep some immigrants isolated.

- *Difficulties finding a community. There is no Korea town, no little Mexico, no Sierra Leone neighborhood. There is no particular part of town where immigrants can find their communities, so they have a hard time preserving their culture. Assimilation seems to be expected, and this can have its upsides and downsides. (Elected Official)*

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RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report focuses on the recommendations from surveys, focus groups, and interviews that were general, cross-issue area, or community-wide in nature. Topical recommendations were reported in each respective issue area section of this report.

Of 543 total survey respondents, 247 (46%) answered the question, **"What can Austin do to be more welcoming to immigrants?"** providing 255 recommendations that the researchers could interpret. Many respondents also shared recommendations throughout the rest of the surveys in response to other topic-specific questions (an additional 88 recommendations). In total, 343 recommendations were provided via surveys that researchers could interpret, 266 of which had a general (rather than issue area-specific) focus. Additionally, focus group and interview participants also provided recommendations in response to the same questions that survey participants were asked. From all those recommendations, researchers aggregated and identified 16 broad types of recommendations. The top recommendations, with their frequency counts, are detailed below.

HOW CAN AUSTIN BE MORE   WELCOMING?

The top recommendations were as follows, arranged roughly in descending order of frequency to reflect a combined prioritization across stakeholder groups.[3]

1.   INCREASE RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR   IMMIGRANTS

Increase the number of specific programs, providers, and/or services in order to better meet the needs of the immigrant community.

> *Frequency:*
> - *31 survey recommendations, 12% of responses*
> - *5 immigrant focus groups*
> - *4 other stakeholder focus groups (service provider, funder, and business)*
> - *1 elected official interview*

Many survey respondents cited specific desired issue area investments as rationale for this recommendation, particularly around **health care, jobs, and education**.

However, **increasing the amount and affordability of housing** was the most frequently-cited single concern, discussed in over half (19) of survey comments in this category, as well as recurring across focus groups and interviews.

- *Better and affordable housing. (Immigrant)*
- *Start a program for subsidized housing, maybe by getting a representative to liaison between student and housing agencies so there is some direction for the students. (Immigrant)*
- *Create policies that allow for the construction of significantly more housing so that housing costs begin to level and hopefully decline. (Public)*
- *Explore ways to make housing more accessible and affordable. (Public)*
- *Invest in affordable housing. (Public)*
- *More affordable housing options in the central part of the city. (Public)*

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[3] This prioritization methodology averaged the rankings between (1) the aggregated theme frequency across all combined survey responses, and (2) the theme frequency across immigrant focus groups, as well as taking into account any particularly strong diversity of input evident across all or most stakeholder groups.

- *Build more housing! Overwhelmingly, the issue with Austin is that there aren't as many places to live as there are people who want to live here … We need lots and lots more housing if we are to welcome new people. Instead, we are sending a loud and clear message: we want you to live in Cedar Park or Hutto or Buda or Dripping Springs or anywhere but Austin. (Public)*
- *Affordable housing and mass transit are key to making Austin accessible and welcoming to immigrants and all citizens. Austin has to balance rapid high dollar development with keeping the city affordable for new comers. (Public)*

Additionally, about one-quarter of this category of survey responses discussed the need for **improvements or investments in transportation,** a sentiment echoed in immigrant focus groups as well.

- *Have better transportation. (Immigrant)*
- *Greater metropolitan transport. (Immigrant)*
- *Develop some actual public transport. Mobility exclusion is a real issue in this city. (Immigrant)*
- *More public transportation options. (Public)*
- *Public transportation that is widespread and accessible. (Public)*

Among immigrant focus group participants, a frequently requested resource was **English language education**:

- *Language. We need to learn English. (Immigrant)*
- *Focus on getting immigrants to speak English as the best route toward effective integration. (Immigrant)*
- *Free ESL classes. (Immigrant)*

Lastly, many comments in this area were more general in nature, recommending **overall increases in investments** for this population:

- *I think if there was funding tied specifically to this area, that's one way to be more welcoming. (Funder)*
- *We need to do better about cuts in services for those that can't come to speak at City Hall. (Elected Official)*
- *If there was a specific initiative to fund legal services for immigrants – that would speak volumes for us to be seen as a welcoming city…. If we were actively promoting a service specific for immigrants, that would make it very clear where we stand. (Funder)*
- *Funding the organizations that support them [immigrants] – job counseling, food banks, access to education and healthcare. (Funder)*
- *Our issue is capacity and outreach. We could do more with more funding. (Provider)*
- *Provide your public services with better resources to do outreach with immigrant communities, and look to improve the socioeconomic conditions of our most at-risk groups. (Public)*
- *Fund services/organizations that are located in communities that have high immigrant populations. (Provider)*

2. INCREASE LANGUAGE OR MULTI-LINGUAL ACCESS

Increase access to language-appropriate services including oral and written information.

Frequency:
- *20 recommendations, 8% of responses*
- *5 immigrant focus groups*
- *1 other stakeholder focus group (funder)*
- *1 elected official interview*

Recommendations related to language access were prominent in both immigrant focus group results and cross-stakeholder survey results. Many of these comments were general in nature, alluding to **an overall need for**

greater and more diverse language accessibility in service provision, both globally and within specific issue areas:

- *More interpretation and translation services. (Immigrant)*
- *Provide more language services. (Elected Official)*
- *Provide providers who speak their language. (Provider)*
- *Front line providers need to have better training in accessing language lines. (Provider)*
- *Provide better translation services and increase access to translation services. (Public)*
- *We need people on the police force who are multilingual to help translate for individuals who need their services. (Immigrant)*
- *More language training in community and schools. Spanish training for English speakers, English training for Spanish speakers! (Public)*
- *At a broader level, language access has to be a big deal. We've all tried, in the social services, to have as much bilingual staff as we can, which usually means English-Spanish. But with the growth in other diverse languages, that would be the single way we can become more accommodating – figuring out how we can let people speak their own language. (Funder)*

A subset of responses in this category focused more specifically on **multi-lingual access to municipal and public services**:

- *Have instructions online [for driver's license and social security number] in more languages. (Immigrant)*
- *Inclusiveness and access to information. In particular, things should be published in English and Spanish, and also in Vietnamese … Austin is an international city, and its government publications and street signs should reflect that. (Public)*
- *Meeting people where they are in terms of language skills is a must for every city department that interfaces with the public—library, parks, health, paying bills, using websites the city offers, social media, press releases, etc. If we want to be a well-respected international city, we really need to get the languages/communication moving in a big way. (Public)*
- *Signage could be in several languages. That would make our city more international and cosmopolitan. (Public)*
- *Provide information in multiple languages. Translate the City of Austin's website into Spanish. Provide more support for English Language Learners in elementary and high schools. (Public)*
- *Our city does not do a great job of welcoming people by using messaging in multiple languages. I'd like to see more city services and commercial business using Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean in signage and on websites. (Public)*

3. INCREASE CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Increase awareness within the Austin community about the specific needs and cultures of immigrants, including encouraging cross-cultural communication and dialogue.

Frequency:
o *20 survey recommendations, 8% of responses*
o *2 immigrant focus groups*
o *2 other stakeholder focus groups (service provider, funder)*
o *4 elected official interviews*

Respondents who spoke to this theme approached it from a variety of perspectives. Some focused on the importance of **individual cultural competency, openness, and respect**:

- *It's important that I'm respectful of cultures I go into. (Elected Official)*
- *I think there needs to be cultural humility, where you look at another community and don't think it's*

beneath you. That is something we don't talk about enough. (Provider)

- *Integration happens over generations. The real problem with us is that we have a constant influx of new people, new immigrants, and new migrants …. You have to adjust to a new culture. So this welcoming is basically being open to the otherness of others. (Funder)*
- *Individually and corporately, learn more about history, culture, religions of those that are different from us. Our churches could be a great starting place for that. The best way to decrease prejudice is to make friends/neighbors with those who are "different" from us and to not pass down our prejudices to our children. (Public)*

Other comments emphasized the importance of **cultural exchange and promotion of diversity at the level of groups, neighborhoods, or through organized events**:

- *Austin needs to get neighborhoods that have different backgrounds to start talking to each other…. When people get to know their neighborhoods then the community can grow together and learn about each other. (Public)*
- *It's an issue for me [as someone who] comes from a city that appreciates diversity of culture…. Maybe we aren't as progressive as we say we are. We should collaborate to get different cultures out of their silos. (Elected Official)*
- *More community involvement events. Connect neighbors and encourage communication. (Public)*
- *Celebrate more cultural heritage events. The Wurstfest is a good example of a notable celebration of German heritage. Perhaps other festivals such as Polish-American, Italian-American, Chinese New Year, etc. would encourage immigrants to display pride and engage non-immigrants in a way to learn about the heritage of their fellow residents. It seems that East Coast cities, particularly in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic, do a better job of this. Look to those cities … for examples of ways to welcome and embrace immigrants. (Public)*
- *Have culturally appropriate free events that people can attend. (Public)*
- *Recognizing and honoring different cultures, and then getting to know the other cultures. Getting to know other cultures goes a long way on both sides. (Funder)*
- *It's important not to be segregated and to connect with others. (Elected Official)*

Lastly, a set of responses in this category considered **structural or systemic responses around cultural competence and diversity**:

- *Provide a more culturally robust health and human service and park system response. (Elected Official)*
- *A multicultural or diversity task force would be good. (Provider)*
- *Austin needs to do a better job of reaching out to Asian immigrants, culturally, linguistically. (Elected Official)*
- *We need a strong program for training community service providers on how to interact with people from other cultures. (Business)*
- *Promote the variety of cultures and experiences as an asset that ATX employers should take advantage of in order to bring about new ideas, innovation. (Immigrant)*

4. BE MORE WELCOMING, FRIENDLY, AND ACCEPTING

Comments in this category described a **non-specific recommendation to change residents' attitudes and interactions to become more generally welcoming to immigrants.**

Frequency:
- *25 survey recommendations, 9% of responses*
- *1 other stakeholder focus group (funder)*
- *0 immigrant focus groups or elected official interviews*

Most responses in this category offered general thoughts on **changing individual behaviors and attitudes**:

- *That is what will make a welcoming city …. Just being welcoming individually. If the city can foster that kind of community attitude. (Funder)*
- *Be less suspicious of people who are not just like you. (Public)*
- *Speak to us like humans. (Public)*
- *Be open to people from different cultures. (Public)*
- *Treat every human being equally regardless of their cultures, races, ethnics, class, genders. (Public)*
- *Treat all new residents the same no matter where they came from. (Public)*
- *Be open, willing and understanding. We were all immigrants at one point in our lives regarding the feelings of not belonging. (Public)*
- *Value the immigrant community as important contributors. (Provider)*
- *Encourage a tone of respect and civility toward all, regardless of whether their status is citizen or immigrant. Stop discriminating against those we think might be immigrants. (Public)*

Some comments offered suggestions for **changes or campaigns at the levels of systems or organizations**:

- *Policies that show people are valued and wanted in our community, as opposed to being seen as being a drain. (Funder)*
- *Racism—if there was ever a campaign to facilitate dialogue around those issues, that would be huge. (Provider)*
- *Starting with the local government, a welcoming attitude and being a safe haven for children and families. (Funder)*
- *Austin can be more welcoming towards ALL immigrants through a sincere effort to engage and relate with immigrants (documented and undocumented). (Public)*
- *There could be some good debate over how we've been pretty good about being permissive, being willing to serve, regardless of immigration status, but not being opposed is not the same thing as being welcoming—so we could look at how far on that continuum we want to land. (Funder)*

5. CHANGE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Change policies and practices that have local impacts for immigrants and immigration issues, in order to better meet the needs of local immigrants.

> *Frequency:*
> o *12 survey recommendations, 5% of responses*
> o *2 immigrant focus groups*
> o *2 other stakeholder focus groups (funder)*
> o *2 elected official interviews*

Many of these comments focused on **local public safety issues,** specifically changing practices related to local law enforcement's role in immigration enforcement and associated impacts on the local climate for immigrants:

- *End local law enforcement's participation with ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. (Public)*
- *Be welcoming of all immigrants and stand against SCOM [Secure Communities] policy. (Public)*
- *It would be nice if the Sheriff less vigorously engaged in deportations. (Elected Official)*
- *One big thing that stands out is to stop our relationship with Travis County with regards to the jail and how we use it. (Elected Official)*
- *One of the concrete things is to get the Sherriff to stop making things harder. That would change the dynamic in the community. There's so much mistrust, and they are looking at the police and associating law enforcement with government. If they don't trust law enforcement, they don't trust government— those two things are seen as one. That is the single biggest thing that can be done. If we can eliminate*

that mistrust, we can engage in other areas. (Funder)

Other comments focused on **immigration and documentation policies and practices in general**, and ways they could be improved at the local level:

- *The slow document process—a quicker turnaround for documents. (Immigrant)*
- *Help us get our papers as soon as possible. (Immigrant)*
- *Don't rely so heavily on social security number. Use passport instead for things like getting a phone. (Immigrant)*
- *It would be nice if they organized more naturalization services in Austin so that we do not have to go down to San Antonio several times in connection with obtaining U.S. citizenship. (Immigrant)*
- *Immigrants deserve a driver's license. (Public)*
- *Municipal ID cards. (Public)*

6. INCREASE ACCESS TO EXISTING SERVICES

Remove barriers or create new pathways for immigrants to access existing services.

Frequency:
- *11 survey recommendations, 4% of responses*
- *3 immigrant focus groups*
- *2 other stakeholder focus groups (funder, business)*
- *0 elected official interviews*

While some comments focused on specific service types, responses in this category more frequently addressed **broad issues of geographic and transportation accessibility, service outreach, reducing disproportionate impact, and improving service linkage.**

- *For new arrivals, we need more assistance in getting phone and initial housing. (Immigrant)*
- *My particular concern is the consideration of accessibility to resources and services such as health care, child care, and social security. Services should be available in the downtown area when possible, and when not, there should be ample public transit to their location. (Business)*
- *The university requires a social security number for payment of international scholars who receive research fellowships, and I am always struck by the difficulty of this requirement. Aside from the requirement itself, it is difficult for the scholars to get to the Social Security Administration Office …. It seems like this office should have a home in downtown Austin where it is more easily accessible to those visiting from outside the U.S., often without a personal car. (Business)*
- *We need to reach out to people where they are. (Elected Official)*
- *There should be equal outreach to all the immigrant communities. (Business)*

7. INCREASE IMMIGRANT AWARENESS

Increase immigrants' awareness of local resources and services so that they can access needed supports.

Frequency:
- *9 survey recommendations, 3% of responses*
- *5 immigrant focus groups*
- *3 other stakeholder focus groups (service provider, business)*
- *0 elected official interviews*

Much of the feedback in this category focused on **connecting immigrants with general information**:

- *You have to reach the communities to help them receive this information. (Immigrant)*

- *Offer all the information needed at the tourism office. (Immigrant)*
- *Place an information center with available resources at the driver's license office. (Immigrant)*
- *Do more to promote the resources available to support immigrants. (Immigrant)*
- *I wish there were more education and sharing of information. (Business)*
- *If you can do more promotion … so that when people arrive in Austin, they can get information they need to know. (Business)*
- *Setup information centers to give an overall idea from available health care facilities to jobs to child care info etc. (Public)*

Respondents also suggested more **targeted or specific information efforts on the part of formal organizations and local government:**

- *I like the idea of a central resource for questions about services immigrants can access, about eligibility criteria, etc. If there was a way to connect that with 2-1-1, that would be great and easily accessible … That would be helpful. (Provider)*
- *Providing information about immigrant associations and groups that can assist with legal and relocation questions. (Immigrant)*
- *The city government should develop formal partnerships with community groups (e.g. churches, neighborhood associations and local business leaders) to back proactive outreach efforts to the immigrant community. (Public)*
- *The government has laudable ideals towards immigrants; it just needs to be consistent with the application of those ideals, and work on better communication and outreach, because often the message (and any services/benefits available) doesn't seem to make it to the end user. (Public)*

8. RAISE COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Increase community awareness about immigrant issues through public education.

Frequency:
- *18 survey recommendations, 8% of responses*
- *1 immigrant focus groups*
- *1 other stakeholder focus group (funder)*
- *0 elected official interviews*

Most respondents who made this recommendation discussed **public education and awareness** quite broadly:

- *Educate people. For instance I get asked so often, do you pay taxes here? How come you're not a citizen already? (Immigrant)*
- *Share real stories. Make deliberate decisions to make the case publicly and frequently on how valuable it is for immigrants to contribute to everyone's well-being and improved futures. (Public)*
- *Find ways to educate the greater Austin community about the positive contributions made by immigrants to our community. (Provider)*
- *There should be an image campaign by the city about immigrants to counterbalance the hate rhetoric. (Funder)*

Some respondents offered more specific approaches in terms of the content or targets of such public awareness campaigns:

- *I think there should be funds for a communications program to educate public officials. (Funder)*
- *More cultural education in schools. More education about immigrants' role in the economy. (Public)*
- *If citizens are made aware of what they can do to help immigrants and refugees, I think a lot more people would step up and get involved. People aren't aware. (Public)*

- *Celebrate, promote and educate everyone about Austin's rich community! I'd love to see spots on TV about cultural events, or on the radio, or posters around town. When I was in the Bay Area everyone was literally immersed in the offerings everywhere they went. Austin is sadly so segregated ... different communities are isolated so far apart from each other. (Public)*
- *Not too long ago the mayor of Houston in a press conference talked about services and advocacy for immigrants. Something like that could go a long way. (Funder)*

9. EDUCATE AND TRAIN IMMIGRANTS

Educate and train immigrants to better understand the culture, laws, and norms of Austin and the U.S. so that they can be more successful.

> *Frequency:*
> o *11 survey recommendations, 4% of responses*
> o *1 immigrant focus group*
> o *1 other stakeholder focus group (provider)*
> o *1 elected official interview*

Comments in this category ranged from education around specific topics, to new arrival orientation, to assistance learning U.S. culture:

- *Teach us our rights and obligations. (Immigrants)*
- *There are lots of immigrant run businesses but we have a ways to go as far as … educating these small businesses on codes, ordinances, and compliance. (Elected Official)*
- *Provide orientation to newly-arrived immigrants to help them navigate Austin better, and to feel officially welcomed to our city. (Provider)*
- *There should be a program that would invite immigrants to learn more about the American culture.... It should not be only an economic relationship where immigrants come here to work and feel alienated most of the time. (Public)*
- *Make new law info simple and easy to find. Post neighborhood guidelines/best practices so that new people are aware of the standards for property care, loud noise curfews, etc. (Public)*
- *Have a multi-lingual newcomer resource guide on website, at health centers, at public school offices, and churches. (Funder)*

10. OTHER SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the above top recommendations, many respondents provided **additional, diverse recommendations to either improve conditions specifically for immigrants, or to improve Austin's general quality of life in a way that would positively impact immigrants**. Grouped together, there were 43 such recommendations (16% of responses).

Solutions spanned a wide range of topics, including (in no particular order): physical and neighborhood infrastructure improvements; changes in City of Austin operations (such as city contracting practices, code enforcement, regularly seeking immigrant inclusion and input, and hopes for the new 10-1 structure in Austin City Council); raising wages or requiring livable wages; approaches to growth and development; traffic and transportation improvements; needs assessment and data collection to better understand immigrant demographics and needs; addressing institutionalized racism and prejudice at various levels; and increased ownership around and attention to immigrant issues on the part of public and elected officials.

- *We live in a very progressive city and I think people's intentions are to be welcoming but some of the societal issues we have are what keep the quality of immigrants' life down. The root issues are what keep our city divided—poor schools vs. rich schools; not paying workers enough; not having enough affordable*

housing—these are not necessarily just issues for immigrants, but the immigrants we are talking about are in poverty. Those are the things that would make the most difference in the quality of life for immigrants in poverty. (Provider)

- *If we were welcoming we would have a game plan to make sure we do everything we can. No known game plan is a missing piece. Something should be done. (Elected Official)*
- *Everything about what comes out as Austin as welcoming should be institutionalized at all levels. Other cities that have gone through this welcoming city have ended up putting together multicultural offices within mayor cabinets. I think there should be more cross-pollination across city departments to be more welcoming. There is a task force but it would be better if it could be moved into a more formal capacity rather than ad-hoc. There should be a more deliberate way to institutionalize welcoming. (Provider)*

NON-WELCOMING RECOMMENDATIONS

Out of the 343 total interpretable recommendations made by survey participants, there were 55 (16%) that advocated for approaches that did not involve welcoming immigrants. These solutions fell along a spectrum of options, from doing nothing at all to welcome immigrants, to enacting policies that could be construed as anti-immigrant. (The source of all of these recommendations was online surveys; no focus group or interview comments contained such recommendations.)
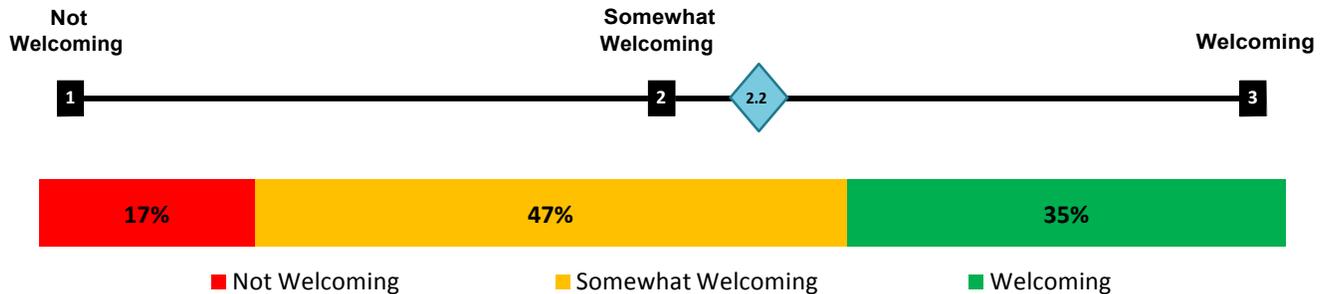
1. **Welcome some immigrants**: Welcome certain immigrants—such as those with legal status, English language skills, specific job skills, higher education levels, or more financial resources—but not others (9 comments, 3%).
   - *I think that we can and should be more welcoming to legal immigrants. (Public)*
   - *Find more immigrants that are well educated and have marketable skills. (Public)*
   - *I don't think Austin should be doing more to attract the wrong kind of immigrants. (Public)*
   - *I see no problems for legal immigrants living, working, and enjoying Austin. (Public)*
   - *Legal immigrants should be treated with respect and assisted in any way possible. Illegals should be sent back to their home country. (Public)*
   - *Welcome with open arms immigrants that come here legally and obey our laws. Eliminate unlawful immigrants so we can better focus on legal immigrants and Austin citizens. (Public)*

2. **Focus resources elsewhere**: The city should invest in other local needs or populations, not immigrant issues or populations (14 comments, 4%).
   - *I am not primarily concerned about this issue. I believe we should serve our existing citizens instead of expending time and money on people who don't have roots here. (Provider)*
   - *I really don't think this should be a priority. I would rather help the people who are already here and getting squinched out. (Public)*
   - *Time and resources would be vastly better spent taking care of Austin's present low income and homeless population, rather than look for ways to ship in more people. (Public)*
   - *Stop making immigrants a priority and just get down to making it a livable city for all. (Public)*
   - *Austin doesn't need more immigrants, at least until the city can provide space for them. We are straining under the burden of trying to get our infrastructure up to the levels needed to accommodate the huge influx of people who have already moved here. More should be done to guide more immigrants and newcomers to the smaller cities in the area…. Take better care of the citizens who live here, and stop trying to be a mecca magnet to immigrants. (Public)*
   - *While I sympathize with our immigrant community, I think we should be more about helping them in fixing the problems in their home countries. No family should have to leave their homes and their families behind just to seek basic food, jobs, shelter, education, safety and opportunity. (Funder)*

3. **Do nothing**: Austin should do nothing to be more welcoming towards immigrants (20 comments, 6%).
   - *I am not sure that this should be encouraged as the infrastructure is lacking for the current residents. (Public)*
   - *It shouldn't be more welcoming. Austin is too big already, primarily due to immigration from California, Florida, Illinois, and elsewhere in Texas. (Public)*
   - *Nothing. Do less. We are growing way too fast! (Public)*
   - *Nothing. Already welcoming enough. (Public)*
   - *We live in a sanctuary city. I think we got it. Our city is so welcoming to newcomers, immigrant or not, that maybe we need not try so hard to bring in new residents. (Public)*

4. **Anti-immigrant solutions**: The city should not try to be more welcoming but should instead take actions to reduce benefits for immigrants (17 comments, 5%). Suggestions included additional taxation, increasing deportations, or reducing, restricting, or denying access to services.
   - *Require social security numbers for all attending schools and getting jobs. (Public)*
   - *Put them in jail till they're here legally. (Public)*
   - *Illegal—they should not receive any benefits whatsoever. They should however, be arrested and dropped off at the border to find their way back home. (Public)*
   - *If they are here illegally then they need to leave. If they are here legally then they need to learn how to integrate into the society and community. They came here to learn to how to become an American. Not the other way around. (Public)*

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Not Welcoming   **Somewhat Welcoming**   **Welcoming**

1 ———————————————— 2 —— 2.2 ———————————————— 3

17%	47%	35%

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming

Slightly fewer than half (47%) of all survey respondents categorized Austin's health and wellness as "somewhat welcoming" to immigrants. Of the remaining respondents, over one-third (35%) rated Austin as "welcoming," while the remainder (17%) thought that Austin is "not welcoming" in this area.

IMMIGRANT VOICES

Eight of 11 immigrant focus groups shared a broad range of reflections around how welcoming Austin in the area of health and wellness. Seven of these groups generally discussed the belief that **good services do exist** in this area.

- *As far as shots and vaccinations, it is very good.*
- *My personal opinion is that what I receive with health insurance is good and free.*
- *I do feel they help us with economic support.*

In 4 focus groups, participants discussed how **Austin has amenities such as parks and green spaces that support a healthy lifestyle.**

- *There are plenty of outdoors and indoors fitness and exercise facilities.*
- *The city is great, the parks and lifestyle.*

Several participants across 4 focus groups also **compared Austin's health and wellness services to those of other locations**. Multiple comments reflected positively on health and wellness supports in Austin compared to their home countries and in general.

- *In Mexico, there is not that availability of Medical services.*
- *Health in Austin, very different than Africa. Even if you do not have money or insurance you can go to the hospital, there is not much disease like back home. The problem is dental coverage.*
- *I do feel they help with economic support. I feel like in Texas there is more help, depending on the illness that one has.*

Three focus groups also discussed **challenges to accessing health services.** Multiple participants discussed difficulties accessing services due to long wait times, transportation challenges, a lack of translation, and insufficient general knowledge of medical systems.

- *Very long wait time for appointments.*

- *As a newcomer to the city, we don't know where the clinics and doctors are.*
- *When I have a doctor's appointment, I don't know how to go and if someone takes me I don't know how to get back home.*
- *There are no translator services at hospitals.*
- *There are interpretation services at hospitals, but not everybody knows it.*

Challenges accessing specialty medical care such as dental services were discussed in 2 focus groups.

- *Dental coverage is bad—that means suffering.*
- *It is true that there is no dental coverage under Medicaid but it does cover general physical health and basic prevention, so it has its value. However it is difficult to get specialist services.*
- *Compared with L.A., there are neither complete medical services nor accessible dental services here.*

Medical care affordability was also brought up by several participants across 2 focus groups. Income and eligibility concerns were raised, as well as access challenges due to cost.

- *I am happy with my daughter who has special needs care, but I am nervous to increase my income because I don't want to be a part of the next income bracket.*
- *The cost for some activities might not be affordable for lower income immigrants.*

Finally, members of 2 focus groups reflected upon how **citizenship and documentation status** might have an impact on how welcoming Austin is related to health and wellness.

- *They will care for you and support you if you are a citizen. If you are a resident they let you die.*
- *Undocumented individuals do not get close [to hospitals] as a result of their migration situation.*

TOP THEMES AND RESULTS FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Of the 517 combined survey respondents who answered this question, 123 (24%) provided narrative comments to explain their rating. The question was discussed by 4 business, 2 funder, and 1 provider focus group, and 6 of 8 interviews with elected officials (the topic was either omitted or not recorded in 2 interviews).[4]

A wide variety of themes related to health and wellness were identified across comments. Several of the top themes discussed across all other stakeholders paralleled those raised in immigrant focus groups, including existing supports and services, access barriers such as language, and differential access depending on the situation of the immigrant in question. A smaller number of participants reflected upon how Austin is experiencing system overuse or is too welcoming in this area.

A high number of responses discussed how **good service options exist for immigrants in the area of health and wellness, and specific organizations are serving immigrants well** (19 survey responses, 15%). Funder focus groups in particular discussed how resources, information, and services exist in Austin, but it is unclear whether they are able to meet all of the community's needs.

- *There are a lot of health services available for immigrants and cost effective/no cost wellness programming and green spaces that immigrants can access. (Public)*
- *Brackenridge treats anyone no matter their race. (Public)*

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[4] Percentages and response counts refer to survey data unless otherwise noted. Focus group and interview quotations were combined with survey responses in order to provide richness of content and theme exploration.

- *The best I know, everyone in Austin has equal access to health and wellness facilities. (Public)*
- *The recently opened South East Health and Wellness Center is a big step forward for immigrants and health care. We still have a long way to go. (Public)*
- *There are many programs in the city like traditional Chinese medicine and tai chi. We have participation from others, not only Chinese people. (Business)*
- *The medical system is very good. (Business)*

Stakeholders also discussed how the **system has limited capacity**, in that **there are not enough resources, services, or staff to meet immigrants' health and wellness needs and/or the quality of existing services is poor** (10 survey responses, 8%). In multiple cases, respondents who indicated that services exist also discussed capacity issues within those services.

- *We offer basic services but do very little to show them how to really improve their health and wellness. (Public)*
- *Central Health is doing great work to try to provide health care services for the gap created by denied Medicaid expansion, but more funding and resources for Central Health, Lonestar Circle of Care, Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas, El Buen Samaritano, etc., is necessary and vital to the health of this community and the immigrants that live here. (Public)*
- *As in all of the U.S. it is difficult to find coverage for medical issues. People end up using the emergency room in hospitals way too much, but they don't have much choice. Our hospitals are set up not to turn anyone away, but I think it is a stress on them and so immigrants who need healthcare are not welcomed. (Public)*
- *It seems that the influx of people to Austin has somewhat overwhelmed the medical system and there is a general shortage of providers in some areas. It also seems that many of the providers who are here are of either Caucasian or Asian Indian. Immigrants may feel more welcomed if there were more service providers of the same race/ethnicity as they. (Public)*
- *Our services are stretched regardless of a person's immigration status. (Public)*
- *While Austin may have special health programs for women and children immigrants, Texas overall majorly lacks in Health and Wellness programs for any immigrant. (Public)*
- *There are not enough public clinics in the area to handle the health and wellness needs of area immigrants, much less area residents with low incomes. Also, I personally have seen these people treated with a lack of respect in area ERs. (Public)*
- *Patients in critical conditions, especially undocumented immigrants, have experienced medical situations where doctors, social workers, etc. in the hospital try to discharge patients in the Medical Access Program early to save money. (Provider)*
- *One a scale of one to ten, a five. Community clinics accept anyone but there are ways we can do better. The immigrant population mirrors our minority populations and there is a lot of disparity in services for most of these groups. (Elected Official)*
- *There is insufficient understanding of the challenges that immigrants face when trying to re-settle here, from the time limited nature of their Medicaid benefits, to the mental and physical health issues they may face, particularly if they have been involved in past traumatic events (torture, etc.). (Funder)*

Difficulties navigating or accessing health and wellness services were also raised by stakeholders (6 survey responses, 5%). Two business focus groups discussed the need for more information due to difficulties finding healthcare services.

- *We do pretty well with providing these services to all but there are still some folks who aren't getting what they need. I think a lot of them aren't aware of services available to them regardless of ability to pay. (Public)*
- *Although programs exist they are not widely published and advertised. (Public)*

- *It is not that they do not have access to the same social welfare and health services, rather it is not always clear how the new immigrants can access them. (Public)*
- *They are confused on how to get health care and what the procedures are. (Public)*
- *Volunteered at UT to drive ill foreign students/faculty to the ER and the admission process is chaotic for them, without assistance, even when these individuals were highly educated and had insurance. The experience is worse for people without papers, insurance or basic language skills. (Business)*

Health insurance access concerns were brought up across multiple focus groups, by elected officials, and within several survey responses.

- *In healthcare we have our lower income undocumented residents that are not ACA eligible and there is a lot of struggle to provide a safety net to immigrants in health care. We also struggle to find meaningful and relevant solutions to dietary and recreational issues. (Elected Official)*
- *Lack of health insurance is a huge issue. (Provider)*
- *Who is left out? What holes exist in coverage and getting to coverage? How do you learn about them? (Elected Official)*

Limited multilingual services were also discussed by the general public as well as an elected official (6 survey responses, 5%). The service providers' focus group noted that good healthcare exists, but language is a consistent barrier.

- *There can be a language barrier if English is not a second language, but there are ways to get around that with interpreting services. (Public)*
- *Translators would be valuable in this area. I'm sure we have plenty of Spanish speakers, but it typically ends there. (Public)*
- *Especially for folks who don't speak English or Spanish, there are quite limited numbers of health care and information sources. (Public)*
- *The community at large has an intention to be welcoming but we haven't been able to accomplish this because we don't have enough Spanish speakers, let alone speakers of other languages. We work towards being culturally competent in the larger health arena and that is good movement but when you strive it means you aren't where you need to be. We are conscious that we have lots to do but are making headway. (Elected Official)*
- *There are concerns with the capacity of federally qualified health centers. Mental and behavioral health is a challenge for non-English speaking populations. (Provider)*

Several survey comments also touched upon a set of themes related to how **the level of welcome may depend upon what kind of immigrant is being discussed**. For example, immigrants with more economic resources or documentation may find Austin to be more welcoming. Related issues were also raised in focus groups and by multiple elected officials. A funder focus group discussed how large heath care providers have made efforts to not limit access due to citizenship status.

- *Limitations on the availability of services—health care is restricted to citizens and documented residents. (Elected Official)*
- *Most of the social services are welcoming, but there isn't anything written or a policy stating such. Questions are raised about citizenship and you get the impression that if you aren't a citizen you don't get services. (Elected Official)*
- *In the area of health and wellness, I believe that our community is geared more towards those of higher income levels and that have access rather than those that do not. Where the boundaries bleed into the immigrant community is when economics come into play. There are programs that reach out to our immigrant community, but rather than preventative and proactive, they are more reactive. (Public)*
- *It depends on what area of Austin you live in. (Public)*

- *The neighborhoods of poverty, which seem to be increasing with the growing numbers of newly arrived living below the federal poverty line, do NOT include accessibility to free or affordable gyms, health and wellness centers, healthcare facilities and universal healthcare coverage, transportation to needed services and grocery stores, lack of HEALTHY food providers (both grocery stores and natural farm and local food produce) within walking distance of our families in poverty. (Public)*

Some additional survey comments related to general perceptions that Austin is **too welcoming** with regards to immigrants' health and wellness (8 respondents, 7%). In particular, concerns were raised around **overuse of systems** and taxpayer dollars being overextended by serving the health and wellness needs of immigrants.

- *They are using our emergency facilities for general medical care which over-taxes those facilities. (Public)*
- *Our community shoulders the burden of uninsured illegal immigrants. (Public)*
- *The range of services, from … food (SNAP and food banks) to health care (via the turn no one away requirement) is more generous than we can afford. (Public)*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP DIFFERENCES

Public — Not Welcoming 18%, Somewhat Welcoming 46%, Welcoming 36%

Business — Not Welcoming 13%, Somewhat Welcoming 47%, Welcoming 39%

Providers — Not Welcoming 11%, Welcoming 11%, Somewhat Welcoming 78%

Funders — Not Welcoming 22%, Somewhat Welcoming 33%, Welcoming 44%

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming
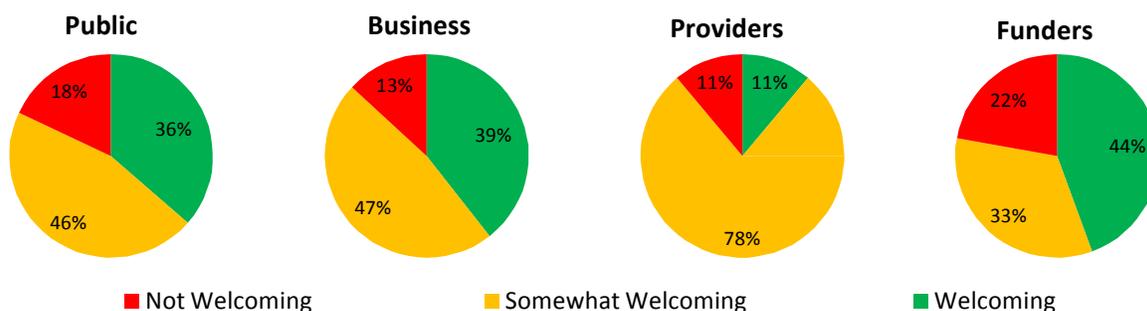
Service Providers were the most likely to rate this issue area as "somewhat welcoming" (78%), while other stakeholder groups were more divided across the three categories. The Funders group was more polarized than others, with 44% rating Austin as "welcoming" and 22% rating it as "unwelcoming."

Language access and limitations in multilingual services were referenced slightly more by service provider survey respondents than by other groups. Few other notable differences emerged between different stakeholder groups' top themes in this topic area.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS ISSUE AREA

Stakeholder groups offered specific recommendations related to making Austin more welcoming in the areas of health and wellness. These recommendations largely focused on increasing the number of services or access to services and increasing multilingual access. Recommendations for improving health care in general and increasing immigrant awareness were also offered.

The most common recommendations were to **increase and improve the resources or services available for immigrants**. These themes were mentioned in survey responses and across immigrant and other focus groups. Responses mentioned affordability, more health coverage, expanded service options, transportation, and culturally sensitive services.

- *Affordable healthcare is a national problem but Austin can take the initiative to be one of the first cities to offer options to immigrants who do not have healthcare or are unable to afford healthcare, such as a*

low-cost medical facility run by medical school students or doctors willing to volunteer their services. (Public)

- *More affordable healthcare. (Immigrant)*
- *Medical care options, something better than Obamacare, especially dental care. (Immigrant)*
- *Expand availability of medical services for immigrants as well as low income residents. (Public)*
- *Create multiple clinics with a ten dollar visit, like dentists, women's health, all the specialists, and just a walk-in clinic without appointments. (Immigrant)*
- *Central Health is doing great work to try to provide health care services for the gap created by denied Medicaid expansion, but more funding and resources for Central Health, Lonestar Circle of Care, Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas, El Buen Samaritano, etc., is necessary and vital to the health of this community and the immigrants that live here. (Public)*
- *Increased access to mental health options and dental care. (Business)*
- *Faster appointments for those who really need a doctor. (Immigrant)*
- *Just have better transportation to go to doctors. (Immigrant)*
- *Provide a more culturally robust Health and Human Services and Parks system response. (Elected Official)*

Stakeholders also recommended an **increase in multilingual access** in order to be more welcoming in the area of health and wellness.

- *Translators would be valuable in this area. I'm sure we have plenty of Spanish speakers, but it typically ends there. (Public)*
- *It is not that they do not have access to the same social welfare and health services, rather it is not always clear how the new immigrants can access them. More needs to be done proactively to reach out to them in their native vernacular. (Public)*
- *Staff could use some training in working with monolingual individuals. (Provider)*

Other recommendations included the following:

Better health care in general for the Austin community, which would have a positive impact on immigrants as well as others.

- *Our health care system is fairly accommodating I think, but I wish we had better health care in general. Better preventative and holistic medicine, better mental health, and better drug and addiction/judicial systems as well. (Public)*

Increase immigrant awareness of options and understanding of systems so that they are better able to access resources successfully.

- *As a newcomer to the city, we don't know where the clinics or doctors are. For the first six months, perhaps they can appoint a person to families to get them to doctors. (Immigrant)*
- *We need to teach them [immigrants] how to use the [healthcare] system. (Provider)*

CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

Not Welcoming — 1

Somewhat Welcoming — 2

2.3

Welcoming — 3

14%	47%	39%

■ Not Welcoming ■ Somewhat Welcoming ■ Welcoming
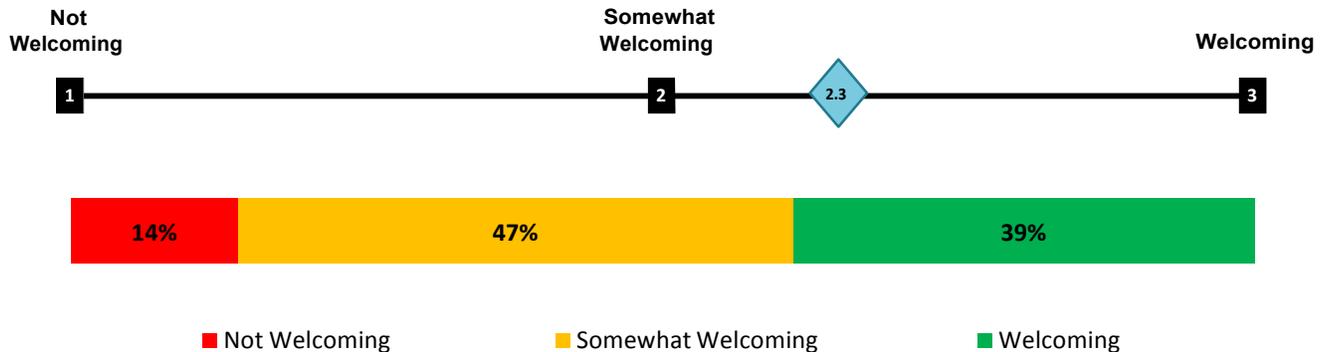
Just under half (47%) of all survey respondents categorized Austin as "somewhat welcoming" to immigrants in the area of Children and Schools. Of the remaining respondents, over a third (39%) rated Austin as "welcoming," while the remainder (14%) thought that Austin is "not welcoming" in this area. Overall, **this issue area was ranked as the most welcoming to immigrants** of all of the issue areas.

IMMIGRANT VOICES

The topic Children and Schools was discussed by 7 of the immigrant focus groups. Comments generally pointed to schools being welcoming towards immigrants. Language, transportation, and discrimination were also discussed, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses.

The opinion that **schools are welcoming**, offering positive experiences and opportunities to families, was raised in all 7 immigrant focus groups in which the question was asked.

- *Educationally we have had very good experiences.*
- *Educationally we are a city that welcomes immigrants.*
- *I am very happy and feel lucky that all my children will be in school.*
- *Open arms. Schools were open to me, and it was very easy to enroll my children in school.*
- *I have a kid that is American and he goes to school and has a lot of opportunity. He learns how to live in a free country, to decide for himself, and could become a technician or a graduate, and that is different from my country.*
- *Overall, pretty welcoming. I have taken part in elementary school international days where parents and kids from all over the globe showcase their homelands.*
- *I think that AISD is accommodating, although teachers and students in some cases are not sensitive to different cultures.*
- *I love my child's school and have an excellent relationship with the teacher. The teacher communicates with me in broken Spanish and makes an effort to include me in all parts of my child's education.*

Bilingual education and language access were also discussed in 3 of 7 groups. Most commenters felt that services in this area have been welcoming, though several also pointed out that there are still unmet needs.

- *Many schools do have bilingual support.*
- *The school districts provide ESL classes for immigrant children.*

- *Here in AISD they make a big effort so that children learn a lot of Spanish.*
- *More translation is needed in schools.*

Three groups discussed the level of **school and community acceptance** of immigrants. Overall, participants reported positive experiences, though a small number of negative experiences were also voiced.

- *Non-citizens are treated similarly to citizens, even if they don't speak English. The school offered to help me as well.*
- *I have always felt comfortable, no racism.*
- *I have the feeling that they are sending Hispanic children to certain parts of the city.*

Finally, **transportation access and concerns** were discussed in 2 focus groups. While some immigrant parents said there were busses to take their children to school, a higher number shared negative experiences.

- *So different than my home country the bus takes them to school, so I think my children will have a good future.*
- *Schools are very good for children but not for parents. We have been having difficulty because we have to walk and take them there every day. That there are no busses.*
- *My experience has been to take my children every morning at 7:15 walking in the cold twice a day for over twenty minutes and we are not used to the cold. Busses are not provided. Because of this my daughter got sick and had to miss two days of class while in the hospital.*

TOP THEMES AND RESULTS FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Of the 508 combined survey respondents who answered this question, 119 (23%) provided narrative comments to explain their rating. The question was discussed in 4 business, 2 funder, and 1 provider focus group, and 6 of 8 interviews with elected officials (the topic was either omitted or not recorded in 2 interviews).[5]

Top themes from the surveys were related to schools being welcoming and language education and access, mirroring the top themes of the immigrant focus groups. There was also a high level of polarization within some areas, especially related to language and bilingual education.

The belief that **schools are welcoming** was shared in 10 survey responses (8%), 4 focus groups, and by 6 elected officials.

- *The school system is doing a terrific job of integrating children in our district and there are some 16 languages! (Elected Official)*
- *I think our education system in Austin is welcoming and progressive to all children. (Public)*
- *It is a federal law—AISD has to accept them into the schools. Through the work that we do, I've seen a lot of extra programming and extra outreach particularly for children who don't speak the language to help them get up to grade level quickly. (Funder)*
- *Fairly welcoming. AISD has to serve any child in the community regardless of citizenship. I don't know if they do a great job of advertising that and outreaching to the immigrant community to feel comfortable and safe enrolling their kids and being active in their kids' education, but from my limited knowledge it is fairly welcoming due to educational requirements. (Funder)*

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[5] Percentages and response counts refer to survey data unless otherwise noted. Focus group and interview quotations were combined with survey responses in order to provide richness of content and theme exploration.

One area of evidence for why schools can be considered welcoming, offered by multiple survey respondents (23 responses, 19%) and in several focus groups, related to **language access availability and bilingual education.**

- *Galindo, the school in my neighborhood appears to be very welcoming, i.e. many bilingual teachers and classes, etc. (Public)*
- *Schools do a good job of integration and teach ESL. (Public)*
- *The schools have bilingual programs and attempt to meet the needs of immigrant children, but it is not easy. There are more and more immigrants from different countries which makes including them all difficult. (Public)*
- *The schools do their part in hiring staff that are bilingual and offer classes for adults to learn English as a second language. (Public)*
- *The schools are excellent. There are opportunities for my children to learn about many cultures. My daughter is learning to speak Spanish. (Business)*

However, 10 survey responses (8%), the service provider focus group, and one elected official also discussed challenges with **limited multilingual services** preventing schools from being more welcoming. For example, several individuals raised the issue that languages other than Spanish may not be supported.

- *If the child is from Mexico, there's really no problem, since most teachers speak Spanish, other countries they might suffer. (Public)*
- *AISD has not adequately prepared for the reality that bilingual education is not just about Spanish speakers. They need to adapt and modernize their services to address the needs of the many cultures now represented in the school system. (Provider)*
- *AISD does a decent job of trying to accommodate more of the Spanish speaking population but then we have other language groups. The challenge for most immigrants is a language barrier from non-Spanish speaking areas. I doubt AISD or the city have resources to help those kinds of families. (Elected Official)*
- *I think Austin schools need many more resources to serve immigrants, including refugees. Appropriate cultural and linguistic assistance seems inadequate in many schools. (Provider)*
- *Especially for parents who don't speak English or Spanish, being an active participant in their children's education and other activities is very difficult. Older children are far too often pushed into the inappropriate role of translating in adult conversations concerning themselves and their siblings. Even in Spanish-language settings, much of the cultural context is Mexican-American, which may be quite distinct from Mexican or any of the other Spanish-speaking countries or origin. The varied formal education backgrounds of immigrants are not always recognized by schools and child-serving groups. Some parents may not be literate, even in their own language, which doesn't mean they are not intelligent. Others may be working in a job outside of their education or professional background, due to language or licensing. Assumptions about parents' limits result in ineffective communication. (Public)*
- *Schools with primarily Spanish speaking students have principles who don't speak Spanish. (Public)*

Other responses fell into a general theme of **limited school system capacity,** due to schools lacking the resources, services, or staff to meet immigrants' needs, or to maintain effective or sufficient quality overall, making schools less welcoming towards immigrants (6 survey responses, 5%). Funder and provider groups also discussed this limitation.

- *I think that any deficits in what is being done with, for, or to immigrant students is not due to immigrant status, but more a function of economics. It seems like a good number of immigrants are low income and ending up in schools that are less supported and have greater challenges. (Funder)*
- *The public school districts do NOT comply with their own practices and laws (Bilingual & Special Ed) with many principals allowing insensitive, untrained, and unknowledgeable clerks to interview, test, and place newly arrived students in appropriate classrooms with teachers that are NOT bilingual or sensitive to the newly arrived special circumstances. School counselors do not address the emotional, economic, or*

psychological stresses that children internalize knowing that at any moment, one or more of their family members could be deported! Parents are NOT welcomed or extended equal access to information OR participation opportunities in PTA's, CAC's, LPAC committees, etc. when meetings are held ONLY in English with NO parental training or inclusion as stakeholders in policy/school/campus planning. (Public)
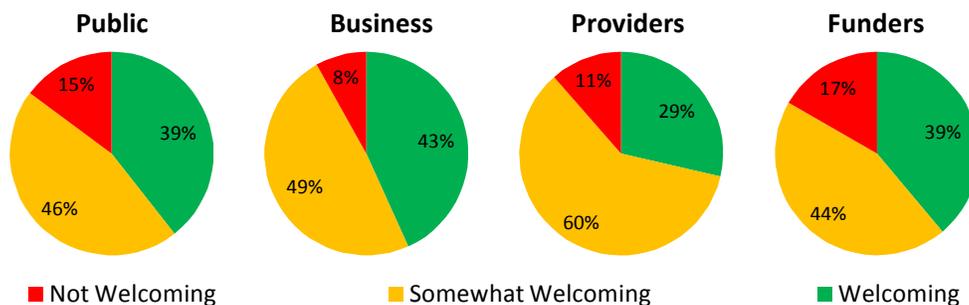
- *I teach at Austin High. I have observed that we do our best to help immigrants become familiar with the United States and use the services available to them. However, immigrants who are below grade-level have issues. We (as a country) have no "safety net" for students who have lived in refugee camps, or who have lived in countries where education is not compulsory have difficulty remediating. I truly wish we had something for these children. (Public)*
- *There is a digital divide but often many parents are illiterate so the way the schools try to reach out is not going to reach them. (Provider)*

Seven survey responses (6%) explored how **variations across school systems and geography** can make Austin either more or less welcoming in this area.

- *It depends on what area of Austin you live in. (Public)*
- *Immigrants can typically only afford homes in the poorest areas which have the worst schools, vicious cycle and such. (Public)*
- *I am happy that my son got into the Harmony School—a science/tech charter school that attracts a lot of Hispanic and Muslim families. They regularly have cultural events and classes that expose children to Turkish food, crafts, dancing—and it opens the door to sharing more cultures. I'd like to believe these kinds of interactions and experiences happen across Austin in the other schools but I think they are not as common in the predominantly white schools on the west side. (Public)*
- *Many of our urban core public schools are losing their ELL [English Language Learners] to the outskirts of town due to affordability factors. Gentrification and cost of living is going up and pushing our immigrant families out of Austin. This is very challenging and causes our inner city schools to turn into transfer only schools rather than neighborhood schools which then creates a separation once again that only those with reliable transportation can attend those schools. (Public)*

A subset of survey responses described Austin as **"too welcoming"** towards immigrants in the area of children and schools (6 responses, 5%), several of which reflected opinions that immigrants get more than other children. Multiple individuals raised concerns with the use of taxpayer dollars on immigrants' education by those immigrants whom they perceive as not paying taxes (7 survey responses, 6%). Finally, some expressed the desire to welcome only children who are here "legally," and that otherwise they should not be welcomed or provided with an education (6 survey responses, 5%).

STAKEHOLDER GROUP DIFFERENCES

Public
- 15% Not Welcoming
- 46% Somewhat Welcoming
- 39% Welcoming

Business
- 8% Not Welcoming
- 49% Somewhat Welcoming
- 43% Welcoming

Providers
- 11% Not Welcoming
- 60% Somewhat Welcoming
- 29% Welcoming

Funders
- 17% Not Welcoming
- 44% Somewhat Welcoming
- 39% Welcoming

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming

Service providers were the most likely to rate this area as "somewhat welcoming" (60%), while the business community participants gave the most "welcoming" ratings (43%). Across all stakeholder groups, some individuals commented that they did not have direct experience with the   area of children and schools and thus

did not have enough information to respond to the question more fully.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS AREA

The public, service providers, immigrants, and an elected official all shared the recommendation to **increase language access and programming**. Specific suggestions included increased educational opportunities for students (e.g. dual language programs, English as a Second Language) as well as broader needs for multilingual, multicultural, and translation/interpretation services.

- *ESL courses are helpful and again, translation services so as to more fully involve parents who may not speak English. (Public)*
- *Schools should be embracing Dual Language and educating ALL of our students in English and Spanish and adding more languages on top of that to really compete globally. (Public)*
- *AISD has not adequately prepared for the reality that bilingual education is not just about Spanish speakers. They need to adapt and modernize their services to address the needs of the many cultures now represented in the school system. (Provider)*
- *More language training in community and schools. Spanish training for English speakers, English training for Spanish speakers! (Public)*
- *Foreign language in schools—not just Spanish. (Public)*
- *More translation is needed in schools. (Immigrant)*
- *I think Austin schools need many more resources to serve immigrants, including refugees. Appropriate cultural and linguistic assistance seems inadequate in many schools. (Provider)*
- *As a public school parent, more dual language programs. If our public school system embraced and pushed dual language programs that would make us more welcoming and more globally competitive. (Elected Official)*
- *Austin would be more welcoming if it built the capacity for bilingual instructors and administration personnel. (Provider)*

Other recommendations to make Austin more welcoming in this area included the following:

Increase cultural competency in schools:

- *The city is welcoming in that they allow them to come into the schools. The actual students at the schools tend not to be so welcoming. I think the District should create programs or allow for activities inside the schools for the students to interact with each other. (Public)*

Educate or train providers in schools:

- *Teachers need at least a briefing and support when traumatized disoriented kids are dropped into their classroom without any context. (Public)*
- *We have had to do face to face advocacy to explain to AISD administrators that regardless of documentation status and country of origin our immigrant students are entitled to a free and public education. ESL curriculum and pedagogy capacity building training is greatly needed for AISD education staff. (Provider)*

Educate immigrants about and increase their awareness of U.S. school systems:

- *As an educator, I believe there should be an orientation for immigrant parents in order to be informed of the expectations and policies of the public education system in the U.S. because it is very different from the education system in Mexico, for example. (Public)*

- *Give more information. The area of more concern, is for the children, they do not have access to good schools. Parents ignore what are their options in schools and they send their kids to the school near them and if they are immigrants who live in bad areas the schools are awful. Many times they do not know that they can send their kids to better schools. (Public)*

PUBLIC SAFETY
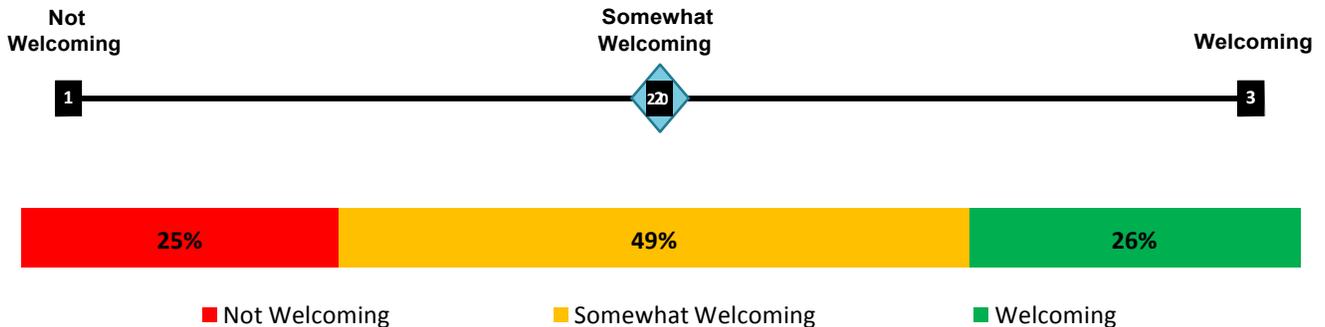
Not Welcoming 1   **Somewhat Welcoming** 2   **Welcoming** 3

25%	49%	26%

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming

About half (49%) of all survey respondents categorized Austin as "somewhat welcoming" to immigrants in the area of Public Safety. The remainder were almost evenly split between a rating of "welcoming" (26%) and "not welcoming" (25%). Overall, **this issue area was ranked as the least welcoming to immigrants** of the six areas of community life that were assessed.

IMMIGRANT VOICES

Public Safety issues were discussed in 8 of 11 immigrant focus groups (the topic was either omitted or not recorded in 3 groups).

In 5 immigrant focus groups, immigrant residents shared positive reflections on **Austin as a safe city,** in that they felt safe and secure, had had good interactions with police, or felt other public safety measures were helpful. This theme was unique to the immigrant stakeholder group.

- *I did receive assistance. I feel safe.*
- *I have been treated with dignity and respect.*
- *I have always had a good experience with police.*
- *Police [are] powerful but fair.*
- *Police [are] very good, fast and secure.*
- *The police respect you. Here they ticket you and let you go.*
- *A good safety system, well organized plan, streets well kept.*
- *It doesn't matter the time, there is always an officer protecting the public, and at night police always patrol everywhere, not only to stop delinquency or crime but to help you.*
- *I think we feel safe here. It is a very safe city. I can walk during the day or night without a problem.*

At the same time, the theme of **immigrants' fear of law enforcement** was also mentioned in 6 immigrant focus groups. Fears spanned the topics of: law enforcement officers and agencies, detention and deportation, discovery of status, or a sense of vulnerability for non-citizens regardless of legal status.

- *If you get detained, they are not kind.*
- *She felt scared because she did not know what to expect when interacting with the police and did not know the rules.*
- *APD have the authority to arrest and send your info to ICE so they are more threatening.*

- *The police become a symbol of deportation and ending my freedom.*
- *If you haven't been through it or lived through it you wouldn't understand. It's really hard to say you're undocumented.*

In 4 focus groups, immigrant participants shared **perceptions of police bias, profiling, or discrimination**:

- *We cannot count on the police to treat Hispanic immigrants right. Not even Chicano police treat the non-English immigrants with compassion.*
- *A police officer stopped me because he suspected I was not the owner of my car. They did it because of my racial profile and I felt insulted.*
- *I feel they are starting to detain people on the street based on their appearance.*
- *I feel the police do not help. As Hispanics, we receive no support. I feel they help Americans more.*
- *The police follow darker people. My husband has dark skin and he is always nervous that the police will pull him over.*
- *Students feel they will be disregarded more easily if they have accents when they call for assistance.*
- *Calls to 911 and request for Spanish agent takes a long while to come to the phone. They seem to respond better to protect animal rights.*

Several other public-safety-related topics emerged in immigrant focus groups but with less frequency, including: Variations in neighborhood safety across different areas of Austin; presence of homelessness; public drunkenness; pedestrian safety; prevalence of weapons in the U.S.; and poor treatment by police of victims of domestic violence if their abusers speak English but victims do not.

TOP THEMES AND RESULTS FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Of the 507 combined survey respondents who answered this question, 104 (21%) provided narrative comments to explain their rating. In focus groups and interviews, Public Safety issues were discussed in 6 of 7 stakeholder focus groups and 7 of 8 interviews (the topic was either omitted or not recorded in 1 business focus groups and 1 elected official interview).[6]

By far the most commonly cited topic was **immigrants' fear of law enforcement** (law enforcement officers or agencies, police militarization, Secure Communities, detention, or deportation). There were 21 comments that referenced this theme, occurring in 20% of narrative responses. This theme, which was also a top theme among immigrant stakeholders, was prevalent in service provider and funder focus groups, as well as interviews with elected officials.

- *It's hard for an undocumented person to trust a cop. (Public)*
- *Some immigrants have expressed fear in calling police for help due to their status in this country. (Public)*
- *I don't feel secure or protected by APD or the Sheriff's Department. (Public)*
- *Most Mexican immigrants hesitate to call the police when they're seeking safety because they fear that their citizenship status will become a topic of discussion. (Public)*
- *I think a lot of immigrants don't reach out to law enforcement because of fear—fear of deportation—so they aren't getting the same level of service. (Public)*
- *There's definitely a stigma that our public safety is not welcoming to immigrants. (Funder)*
- *We are doing a very bad job of being welcoming based on the number of deportations out of the jail. (Elected Official)*

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[6] Percentages and response counts refer to survey data unless otherwise noted. Focus group and interview quotations were combined with survey responses in order to provide richness of content and theme exploration.

- *Concerns about being deported … lead to not reaching out to authorities when they need to. They don't contact the police for fear of deportation. (Elected Official)*
- *We have shown as a society that we are willing to separate families, that we are willing to detain children in holding facilities. That would be my biggest fear as a mother. If I were in that situation, I would be living in a lot of fear all the time. (Funder)*

Within these comments about immigrants' fears, specific references were made with particular frequency to the Travis County Sherriff's Office (either the agency or the Sherriff by title or name) and/or the Secure Communities program, and the impacts of Secure Communities on immigrants' trust in law enforcement. Some respondents also associated Secure Communities with the Austin Police Department.

- *Sheriff's office seems more interested in deportations than safety. (Public)*
- *There is still a great deal of fear of law enforcement because of Secure Communities. (Public)*
- *As long as APD continues to have a relationship with ICE, Austin immigrants will not feel comfortable to reach out to them for help and … perceive them as a threat rather than an ally. (Public)*
- *The Sheriff's participation in Secure Communities—that's a small segment of public safety and the jail and corrections system, but it's a glaring thing that people look at. (Funder)*
- *[Secure Communities] is the one thing that strikes me as actively unwelcoming, on the public side. We do other things that might not be actively welcoming, but that is the one thing that pushes away. (Funder)*
- *We are losing the trust we built for years and years. (Public)*
- *[If] local law enforcement participate in immigration law enforcement … that destroys any trust within the community. (Public)*
- *The actions of one player, even if it's an independent decision making process, affect the whole system …. You've created a dynamic where people who are at a significant risk of victimization are less likely to reach out to the police, because the public safety system has defined them as suspicious. (Funder)*

Additionally, some respondents cited these same concerns as rationale for their overall rating of how welcoming Austin is towards immigrants as a whole, for example:

- *Secure Communities makes Austin an unwelcome, hostile and unsafe community for immigrants. (Public)*
- *Deporting 19 people a week and breaking up families is not welcoming. (Public)*
- *There is a tension between the sanctuary policy and bringing them to jail and turning them over to ICE. It's a bit of a mixture how welcoming we are. (Elected Official)*

The following themes were also prevalent among comments, but at lower frequencies (each being mentioned in 4-5% of comments and 1 to 4 focus groups):

Criminal justice system bias: Some commenters remarked on the prevalence of racism, profiling, or other personal bias in local public safety systems. Several commenters also implied that law enforcement display differential treatment to different immigrants, depending on immigrant "type" or characteristics.

- *I don't think it [public safety] is welcoming to any person of color and in particular immigrants. (Public)*
- *There's probably some racial/ethnic profiling in the area of crime, driving, etc. (Public)*
- *This is a real problem… It is a big bellwether of the predominant anglo, monolingual culture. Go into the court house, there are a lot more people that are not part of the predominant culture, and we have in some sense criminalized being from somewhere else. (Elected Official)*

Variation across the public safety system: Comments indicated that the degree of bias against or welcome towards immigrants in this issue area will depend on the individual officer in question, vary by law enforcement agency, or vary by neighborhood or part of town.

Public safety services that help immigrants: Participants noted specific areas and programs in which law enforcement offers beneficial services to the community, particularly related to Austin Police Department's work with the refugee community.

Immigrants treated equally: Some commenters felt that immigrants were treated equally by the law, without either bias or special accommodation, and that local law enforcement serves all residents equally.
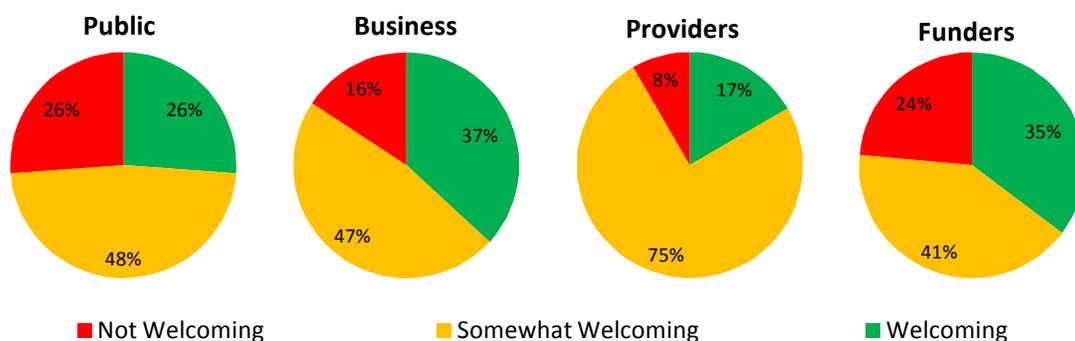
Disproportional experience of crime and arrests: Some comments focused on the likelihood of immigrants to experience non-immigration-related factors that make them more likely to experience crime or negative interactions with public safety agencies:

- *Austin still arrests and convicts a disproportionate number of racial/ethnic minorities. This is problematic for immigrants of color who will likely have to live in lower-income communities. (Public)*
- *Areas where immigrants are concentrated tend to have higher crime rates, fewer public safety programs, and lack basic amenities (sidewalks, bike lanes, street lights). (Public)*
- *Studies show that a disproportionate number of minorities are treated this way. I have personally witnessed harassment and disrespect toward minorities, whether they are immigrants or not. (Public)*
- *I think a lot of these issues aren't just immigrant issues, they are economic issues. If you're unfairly accused and you are poor, you fear you can't afford an attorney. (Funder)*

Limited multilingual services: Language barriers were mentioned in surveys and focus groups as a barrier to effective provision of public safety services:

- *Language is a barrier that makes it difficult to communicate with police. (Public)*
- *Especially for folks who don't speak English or Spanish, interactions with public safety staff can be difficult and anxious. (Public)*
- *I've seen in domestic violence situations, police will talk to the abuser and not the survivor because she doesn't speak English. This is a cultural competency issue and a safety issue. (Provider)*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP DIFFERENCES

Public — Not Welcoming 26%, Somewhat Welcoming 48%, Welcoming 26%
Business — Not Welcoming 16%, Somewhat Welcoming 47%, Welcoming 37%
Providers — Not Welcoming 8%, Somewhat Welcoming 75%, Welcoming 17%
Funders — Not Welcoming 24%, Somewhat Welcoming 41%, Welcoming 35%

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming

Businesses and Funders were the most likely to rate this issue area as "welcoming," while Service Providers were most notably concentrated in the "somewhat welcoming" category. The General Public stakeholder group was the most critical of Austin's welcoming of immigrants in this issue area. Few notable differences emerged between different stakeholder groups' top themes, with the exception of the following:

- Participants in Business focus groups didn't mention any public safety concerns, while all other stakeholder groups did.
- About half of elected officials who answered this question discussed how immigrants' perceptions of law enforcement may be influenced by experiences, potentially negative, with law enforcement in their home countries. This theme was discussed sparingly, if at all, by other stakeholder groups.

Three main recommendations emerged among participants who answered questions related to public safety, listed below in descending order of frequency.

Change policies and practices related to the Travis County Sherriff's Office, the local jail, and detention procedures: This was the most frequently-cited recommendation in this issue area, mentioned in focus groups, surveys, and interviews, and by 4 of 6 stakeholder groups (providers, funders, elected officials, and the public).

- *I would like our policies to be in line with our rhetoric. I don't want to say we are a welcoming city if our law enforcement and public safety policies don't line up with that. (Funder)*
- *One big thing that sticks out is to stop our relationship with Travis County with regards to the jail and how we use it. (Elected Official)*
- *It would be nice if the Sherriff less vigorously engaged in deportations. (Elected Official)*
- *Stop TCSO [Travis County Sherriff's Office] participation in Secure Communities! (Public)*
- *Use the power of the purse to shut down Travis County S-Comm operations. (Public)*
- *End local law enforcement's participation with ICE. (Public)*
- *We have a pretty powerful and relatively compassionate public safety net, but there is a legal limbo on compliance on PEP [Priority Enforcement Protocols] or compliance with Secure Communities. (Elected Official)*
- *One of the concrete things is to get the Sherriff to stop making things harder. That would change the dynamic in the community. There's so much mistrust, and they are looking at the police and associating law enforcement with government. If they don't trust law enforcement, they don't trust government— those two things are seen as one. That is the single biggest thing that can be done. If we can eliminate that mistrust, we can engage in other areas. (Funder)*

Promote cultural competence in law enforcement personnel and community connection between law enforcement and immigrant residents. Participants recommended a variety of measures to fulfill this purpose:

- *It's up to the Police Department to work with leaders in these communities to further establish a sense of trust. (Public)*
- *A liaison who understands this [undocumented] population would be vital. To speak on their behalf would be essential. (Immigrant)*
- *Real community dialogue needs to happen. (Public)*
- *Immigrants, like the rest of us, must feel comfortable in reporting crimes to the police…. More outreach by the APD to immigrant communities is important to create and foster relationships. (Public)*
- *Police could do a better job of building relationships with the immigrant communities because of the fear of police that they have. (Elected Official)*
- *We need to do more work on building trust between immigrants and the public safety entities … where they feel comfortable contacting them. The greatest challenge is the uncertainty of whether it is "their public safety" or part and parcel of a broken immigration system. (Elected Official)*

Educate and train law enforcement on immigrant issues, as well as **educate and train immigrants on U.S. laws and norms and how to interact with law enforcement:**

- *There should be education around police because a lot of immigrants come from countries and communities where the police are very corrupt. (Provider)*
- *There needs to be more … refugee and immigrant public safety trainings in the community. Police and government aren't engaging immigrants in the right way. "Y'all come" doesn't work. (Provider)*
- *We need to make our clients culturally competent to communicate with police but also police training to be competent linguistically and culturally with immigrants. (Provider)*

BUSINESS & JOBS, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & HIGHER EDUCATION

The two topics of Business & Jobs and Workforce Development & Higher Education were addressed separately in surveys, focus groups, and interviews. However, researchers found significant overlap and interconnection between participants' input across these topics. To avoid redundancy and better explore the interconnectedness of these related topic areas, researchers opted to report on the combined results of these two issues.

RATINGS SUMMARY

BUSINESS & JOBS
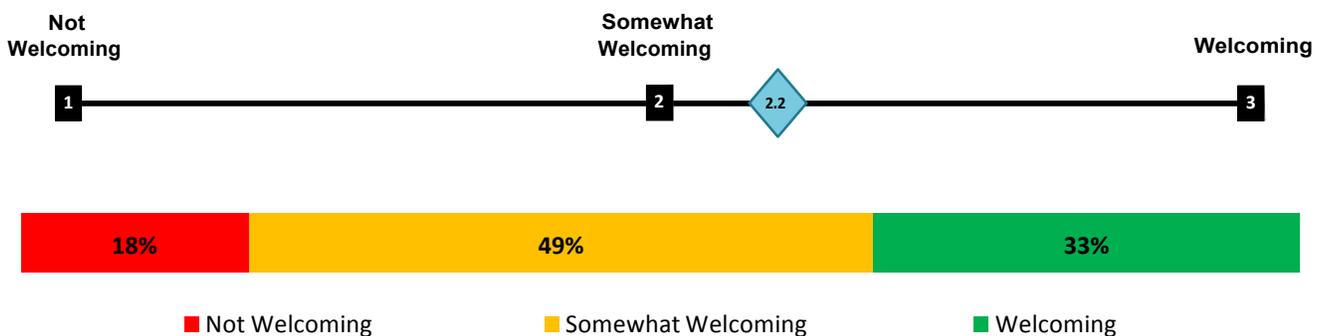
Not Welcoming	Somewhat Welcoming	Welcoming
1	2 —— 2.2	3

18%	49%	33%

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming

About half (49%) of all survey respondents categorized Austin as "somewhat welcoming" to immigrants in the area of Business & Jobs, and one-third rated it as "welcoming." Less than one-fifth (18%) rated Austin as "not welcoming" in this area.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & HIGHER EDUCATION

Not Welcoming	Somewhat Welcoming	Welcoming
1	2 —— 2.2	3

15%	53%	31%

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming
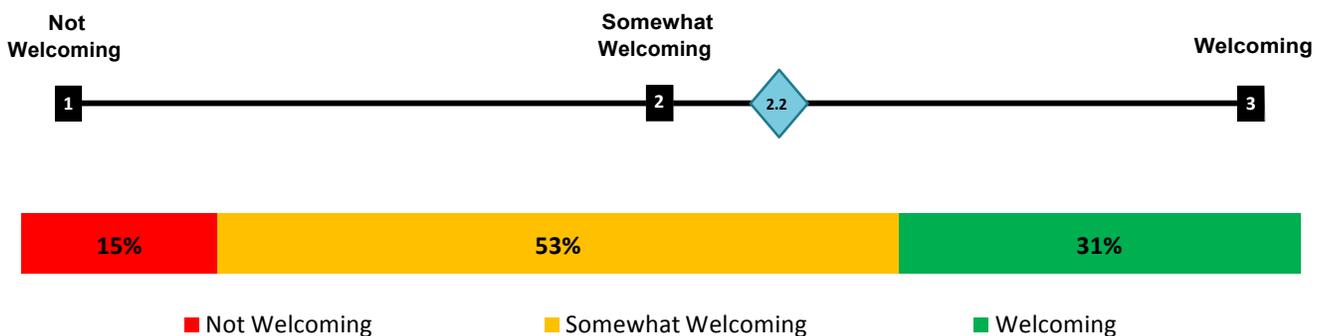
In the area of Workforce Development & Higher Education, more than half (53%) of all survey respondents categorized Austin as "somewhat welcoming" to immigrants. About 31% rated Austin as "welcoming" and 15% as "not welcoming" in this area.

IMMIGRANT VOICES

Business and Jobs were discussed in 8 of 11 immigrant focus groups (the topic was either omitted or not recorded in 3 groups), while Workforce Development and Higher Education were discussed in 5 of 11 immigrant focus groups (and either omitted or not recorded in the other 6 groups).

In 4 groups, participants shared positive reflections on **immigrants' access to jobs and opportunities**:

- *Austin gives lots of opportunities …. You can work and you can start maybe at a minimum, but you grow and advance.*
- *The jobs are very good in Austin.*
- *I have been working really hard for 13 years at the same bakery. I started off with the broom and mop and now I'm the manager.*
- *Austin seems to have a very good job market partly due to the efforts of the local government to attract business.*
- *Lots of opportunities for people who work hard.*
- *There are opportunities and they have not inhibited employers from contracting with undocumented workers or contractors.*
- *Austin is experiencing one of the best professional growth opportunity in the country, so very welcoming!*

However, in 3 groups, participants also commented about **a lack of availability of jobs, or a lack of good quality jobs**, for immigrants.

- *Austin has a ways to go to be a good source of jobs.*
- *What they pay you is not enough to survive.*

Some participants also discussed the **business and job market's conditional preference for certain immigrants with higher skills and resources** (mentioned in 4 groups):

- *[Austin is] quite welcoming. At least for professionals.*
- *Good luck, unless you are in mainstream but slightly specialized fields of IT.*
- *People with a specific job find work here. If they come, it is because there is work.*
- *Austin is very welcoming for investors, including foreign investors.*

Credential transfer issues were mentioned in 3 groups, where participants discussed how degrees, accreditations, certifications, or credentials from their home countries don't fully transfer to the U.S., leading to employment or under-employment challenges:

- *A lot of people come as professionals…. It is going to be hard for me to adjust and do something basic like washing dishes.*
- *I have work already at $12, and I will start learning, cleaning … but I am an accountant/professional. That is what is bad about this country.*
- *A professional degree should be respected in all countries.*
- *Recertification in professional fields [is a] barrier in becoming as productive a citizen as possible.*
- *Whether you have a degree or not have a degree, you have fifty rooms to clean.*

In 4 groups, a significant theme arose around the need for **improved workplace conditions and worker protections**. Concerns were related to immigrant workers being overworked, underpaid, and/or subjected to negative treatment or unsafe conditions. Some commenters focused particularly on **undocumented workers being more vulnerable to abuses**.

- *The value of our work is minimized and we are paid less.*

- *My boss is disrespectful and always making me do the hardest work. If I don't do it, they know there are many others waiting in line to take my place.*
- *We need to know our rights as workers. If we don't know our rights, we are mistreated.*
- *I worked at a restaurant where the owner … paid us and I went to cash the check and there wasn't money in the bank. He said if I said anything he would tell immigration.*
- *There are not good salaries for the undocumented. They work them more hours.*
- *It's a matter of papers versus no papers. Without papers, you work hard and a lot … they may recognize you, but you won't get paid good.*

In 3 groups, participants felt they had received **differential treatment or discrimination in the workforce due to their immigrant or immigration status**:

- *I always felt and I thought I was the best at work … my boss always said I was the best worker [at a childcare facility]. But then a white lady showed up and received more money, because I don't have a social.*
- *Unfortunately this is a pain point to me. It is a lot harder for an immigrant to be hired. It's like you have to be almost two levels overqualified to be hired and companies like to take advantage of us.*
- *There is more discrimination against immigrants of Hispanic origin… We are treated more harshly. I see other non-Hispanic workers in my job who seem to get away with more. Also, I know that the "gringos" earn more than me and my coworkers for the same type of job.*
- *The minute employers hear my accent they start treating me [poorly].*
- *Companies are mostly looking for good talent, and are agnostic to origins. However I have been rejected once when I was on H1B visa for just that reason.*
- *Culture [is a barrier]. Miss a job because of the way you acted in an interview – eye contact, handshake. Lose a job opportunity or a job because of cultural differences.*

Participants in 3 groups mentioned **specific local organizations or services that provided helpful training** for their job prospects:

- *Free English classes is something good with Caritas, iACT, and ACC, and that helps us get work.*
- *There are many organizations and city resources to assist immigrants.*
- *Caritas offers a lot of training and courses to improve our knowledge for what we want to do to get a job in the future.*
- *Very [welcoming], the city has resources and partners with nonprofit organizations to help immigrants enter the workforce.*

However, participants in 3 groups also discussed the **limited availability of multi-lingual job training,** and reported that **lack of English proficiency was a barrier in the workforce**:

- *Lots of training in English but nothing in Spanish.*
- *I think in our case the majority of us need to improve our English to improve our job options.*

In the arena of higher education, 4 groups discussed **the availability of higher education options** and **feeling welcomed in the higher education setting**:

- *Even though I haven't been here long, I saw University of Texas and ACC, and I hear there are more than five universities here, so it seems like there are good resources here.*
- *The universities make Austin more welcoming. UT's vibe is way more welcoming. We [students] are welcoming of all immigrants, documented or not.*
- *Even if you did not have a chance [to finish high school], you can do GED or Job-Corps. Good options and higher education.*
- *Very welcoming, Austin is a big college town and a lot of people seek higher education.*

Yet several participants (in 3 groups) did discuss **perceptions of discrimination** or **feelings of discouragement** in their higher education experience:

- *At UT, I felt a lot of discrimination …. They did not want to accept me. I found it very challenging.*
- *Sometimes I feel like saying "screw school" because it seems bleak for an undocumented student to try and finish college. I felt like I didn't have the choice to complain because I made it to college, so I felt ungrateful if I tried to complain.*

Lastly, one focus group comprised of international students discussed a dynamic that they called **"educating competitors":** Participants expressed frustration that the U.S. can "recruit great talent for education" and that **they can be educated in the U.S. but then are "sent back" to their home countries**. They linked this to visa restrictions: many experienced barriers to receiving HIB visas, saying it was "nearly impossible for non-STEM majors." This theme was also mentioned by other stakeholders (discussed in the next section).

TOP THEMES AND RESULTS FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Of the combined survey respondents who answered the questions related to the two issue areas of Business & Jobs and Workforce Development & Higher Education (510 and 507 respectively), 20% of ratings were explained by narrative comments (113 related to Business & Jobs, and 87 related to Workforce Development & Higher Education). In focus groups and interviews, these issue areas were discussed in 7 of 7 stakeholder focus groups and 5 of 8 interviews (the topic of Workforce Development & Higher Education was either omitted or not recorded in one business group, and both topics were not covered in 3 elected official interviews).[7]

Participants cited evidence that **immigrants do have access to jobs and job opportunities**, although the specific examples varied widely. This theme was referenced in 9% of narrative responses (occurring in 18 comments) as well as in business focus groups and elected official interviews.

- *Clearly the restaurant industry and the construction industry are providing opportunities for immigrant labor. (Public)*
- *High demand for good workers. (Public)*
- *Anywhere you go in Austin you can see industrious laborers who are immigrants. (Public)*
- *We give subsidies to bring in immigrant businesses and their employees. (Public)*
- *There are jobs everywhere if someone is willing to work … and we do seem to welcome those that want to work. (Public)*
- *The technology sector seems to attract well educated/skilled immigrants for jobs in software, IT, etc. And there is a great need for entry level laborers in the food industry, housing related industry, etc. (Public)*
- *Austin seems to attract folks from elsewhere to the high tech jobs and to [higher education institution name] as well. (Public)*
- *Universities and tech business understand the value of immigrants too. So do hotels, agriculture, and other service industry business owners. (Public)*
- *Austin area hires many immigrants—we see this on a daily basis. (Business)*
- *We are fortunate to have a strong business climate. There are many good jobs here with growing companies. (Business)*
- *The job sector is very welcoming and cognizant of how important it is for us to be an international city from a competitive international perspective. (Elected Official)*

Some respondents indicated that **the degree to which the workforce welcomes immigrants will vary** by

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[7] Percentages and response counts refer to survey data unless otherwise noted. Focus group and interview quotations were combined with survey responses in order to provide richness of content and theme exploration.

industry, sector, or by individual employer (mentioned in 4% of comments, 8 comments).

However, many participants expressed that there is **a conditional preference for certain immigrants over others in the workforce and job market** (19 comments referenced this theme, occurring in 10% of narrative comments). These conditional preferences could be based on legal or citizenship status, documentation types, education or skill level, origins, or language ability. This theme was also discussed in all service provider and funder focus groups, as well as several elected official interviews.

- *The issue of access depends on who is seeking higher education, work, [and] skills enhancement. (Public)*
- *I work in the IT sector, which tends to be more welcoming of those from South Asia … but perhaps the other sectors of white collar business it may not be the case. (Public)*
- *My perception is that it depends on the person's skills (IT & Engineering are very welcoming) and higher education in the same fields. (Public)*
- *[Welcoming] mostly to those of Asian & Indian … background. (Public)*
- *Depends on who the immigrant is and what they've brought with them into Austin. (Public)*
- *This depends on the immigrant's legal status, education, continent of origin, religion, race and language skills, but the majority of immigrants don't perceive businesses as welcoming. (Business)*

Within these comments related to conditional preferences, some participants remarked on how Austin's workforce favors immigrants at the higher end of the wage, skill, or educational spectrum:

- *I feel like Austin only welcomes more educated/higher skilled immigrants, specifically in the university system and tech fields. (Provider)*
- *If we need their skills, they are welcomed. (Funder)*
- *Austin is more welcoming for some immigrants than others, for example high tech, business entrepreneurs, and those who are possibly already English-speaking, as opposed to those perceived to be low-resource. (Elected Official)*
- *I think we need to be careful about being dichotomized about the type of immigrant we welcome. A high tech immigrant is valuable but it doesn't mean that a low skilled worker isn't valuable. (Provider)*
- *We are a high tech community, so our employers like Google, IBM, 3M go and recruit scientists and engineers from other countries. So if you are in that area, it's pretty welcoming, but if you're not in a technology field, there are … barriers in place. (Funder)*

Others suggested that employers intentionally seek out low skill, low wage, or undocumented workers, sometimes with negative impacts for those employees:

- *The lower level service industry sector is always very welcoming and relies on foreign-born with low education. (Elected Official)*
- *Businesses love hiring undocumented workers. (Public)*
- *Majority are lower wage jobs which may provide little social mobility. (Public)*

As in the immigrant focus groups, participants from other stakeholder groups also commented on **a lack of availability of jobs, or a lack of good quality jobs, for immigrants** (11 comments, 6% of comments):

- *I think they can find work, but, it is the lowest paying work, and they are often payed in cash. (Public)*
- *They are offered only minimum wage with no benefits and no ability to take off without repercussions- good deal for the employers. (Provider)*
- *Need more jobs for refugees and immigrants. (Public)*
- *Low wage work is abundant for immigrants. The same cannot be said for higher salaried positions. (Public)*

Also similar to the immigrant stakeholder group, one of the most significant themes to emerge from other

stakeholders was **the need for improved workplace conditions and worker protections**, concerning pay, hours, safety, fraud, and abuses, particularly related to the higher vulnerability of undocumented workers (18 comments, 9% of comments).

- *Low pay, lousy working conditions and long hours are the hallmark of the immigrant job. (Public)*
- *The construction industry and private employers are eager to have them. Problem is they have no rights and get exploited. (Public)*
- *[They] take on undocumented workers, treat them shabbily, pay them low wages or maybe not pay them at all. (Public)*
- *Workers, especially people lacking documents or English-language skills, do need access to workplace protections. (Public)*
- *Too many employers take advantage of undocumented immigrants. (Public)*
- *We under pay them because they are willing to work for less. (Public)*
- *Most immigrants, in my experience, are hard-working people, mainly in the service industry and construction. Many of these jobs are minimum wage and dangerous—often not protected by workers comp., not paying for overtime, etc. (Public)*
- *Workers are not given enough protection in pay (being paid less than minimum wage or hustled) and are out of luck if they are injured while on the job. (Public)*
- *They allow them to get jobs but give them horrible wages. If businesses are going to hire them, they should pay them what they would pay any other worker. They shouldn't be taken advantage of just because the business thinks they aren't going to speak up. (Public)*
- *No one cares how much they work, but they are not as protected as citizens are. (Elected Official)*
- *There are a lot of employers in town who are willing to invest in their immigrant employees' professional development…. What that masks though is horrible wages. It makes it look like we are investing in immigrants through professional development but there is no real interest in raising wages. (Provider)*
- *There are many employers who are willing to take advantage of less clear status, but is that a good opportunity? I don't know. I'm sure most employers are not trying to be abusive. But I think there are times when … workers are subject to abusive practices. (Funder)*

Some participants discussed the ways in which **immigrants with greater socio-economic resources or specific characteristics have more access to opportunities** (7 comments, 4%):

- *Educated immigrants can always find good jobs; non-English speakers, whether here legally or illegally, cannot. (Public)*
- *Low-income immigrants can get very low waged jobs. Very well educated ones can go anywhere. (Provider)*
- *If the new immigrant has the right skills, finding a job in a city with a hot economy, like what exists in Austin, is a snap. But if the new immigrant lacks the necessary skills and doesn't know where and how to acquire them, times get to be very tough. (Public)*
- *There's a system by which if a foreign investor is willing to invest over $500,000 in projects of benefit to targeted economic areas, as defined by employment rates, they can essentially buy their way to the front of the line for getting both legal residency and citizenship if they are so inclined. (Funder)*
- *Workforce [development] is a curious area because so much of it is state and federal level investments, so … we are funding services through the Workforce Board. They say immigrants are not excluded because of their legal status, they are excluded because they can't serve people who are not eligible for work. [That has effects] at the lower end of the skilled labor market. (Funder)*

Respondents discussed the ways in which **specific social service agencies, professional networks, and educational institutions are providing services** that benefit or further the development/education of the immigrant workforce (5% of narrative comments, 10 comments):

- *I see Chamber of Commerce activity in multiple cultures and that is good. (Public)*
- *The Austin Cultural Center and Minority business groups are extremely active in educating their members in business and entrepreneurial matters. (Public)*
- *EGBI [Economic Growth Business Incubator] does entrepreneur training, Mexnet Alliance and the international accelerator, and the IC2 [Institute] through UT. Mexnet and EGBI focus on the really small business, and there is so much of that in the immigrant community. (Provider)*
- *Agencies such as Workers Defense Project are actively making a difference in this area by factual education galvanizing public support. (Public)*
- *Somewhat welcoming because academic institutions like ACC [Austin Community College] are trying to make education affordable for all people. Their short-term training programs and degree programs are welcomed. (Public)*

On the topic of higher education, many participants discussed **the availability of and access to higher education options in Austin** (14 comments, 7% of comments):

- *We offer many higher education institutions, many of which offer decreasing tuition costs for Hispanic Americans and immigrants.*
- *Very welcoming in higher education.*
- *UT is very embracing of a diverse student body and seems to recruit internationally. Austin Community College offers an affordable option for immigrants.*
- *The universities I am familiar with seem to welcome students from all countries.*
- *I know a lot of students come to Austin for the education in UT.*
- *I think there are good scholarships and programs available, but could probably be expanded.*
- *The UT community is hugely welcoming to the foreign-born …. Academically, UT is a magnet for foreign-born residents. (Elected Official)*
- *Higher education always has a better handle on welcoming immigrants. (Elected Official)*

However, some participants (in one focus group and several survey comments) noted an apparent **disconnection between the availability of higher education for immigrants and their subsequent linkage to the U.S. workforce**:

- *We should allow more people educated in our schools to remain in Austin and work in Austin. There are many jobs available for everyone. It is a waste of resources to educate smart and capable people, then send them to another country to compete against us. (Business)*
- *UT and other Texas schools allow them, but offer no way to get a job afterwards. (Public)*
- *There should be a way to keep more highly skilled people in the USA. (Business)*

Lastly, a subset of survey responses reflected a variety of **perceptions that immigrants have a negative impact on the local economy and workforce, or shouldn't be welcomed by educational institutions and employers**. Collectively, these comprised 11% (22 comments) of the narrative responses in surveys, the large majority from the general public stakeholder group. (There were no comments of this nature from any focus groups or interviews.) The main themes within this subset of responses were:

- Perception that immigrants have greater access to jobs, education, and other workforce opportunities than do native-born residents
  - *You can get more scholarships if you are an immigrant. (Public)*
  - *I have trouble funding my college education but there are non-citizens here who get free tuition and free books—how is that fair to those who grew up here? (Public)*
  - *They can get a business loan before I can get a business loan. (Public)*
- Belief that educational and workforce resources and opportunities should be provided to native-born residents first or exclusively over immigrants

- o *The residents and taxpayers of this state deserve an opportunity for higher education before immigrants. (Public)*
  - o *Too many business owners and citizens need work. Why welcome all these people who need all the extra help to "make" it. Help Austin citizens first. (Public)*
- Belief that educational and workforce resources and opportunities should be provided to immigrants only if they have legal status
- Concerns that employers that hire undocumented workers are violating laws
  - o *Hiring illegal aliens is against federal law. Most people that hire illegal aliens do so to exploit them. (Public)*
  - o *Many employers hire immigrants without exercising proper screening to insure they are here legally. (Public)*
  - o *Too many businesses turn a blind eye to illegal labor. They should be fined for this. (Public)*
- Concerns about limited public resources and systems being overextended by serving immigrants, and/or concerns about immigrants not paying into those systems via taxes
- Generalized comments about Austin's employers and educational institutions being too welcoming towards immigrants
- Generally negative comments and characterizations of immigrants related to education and employment

STAKEHOLDER GROUP DIFFERENCES

BUSINESS & JOBS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & HIGHER EDUCATION
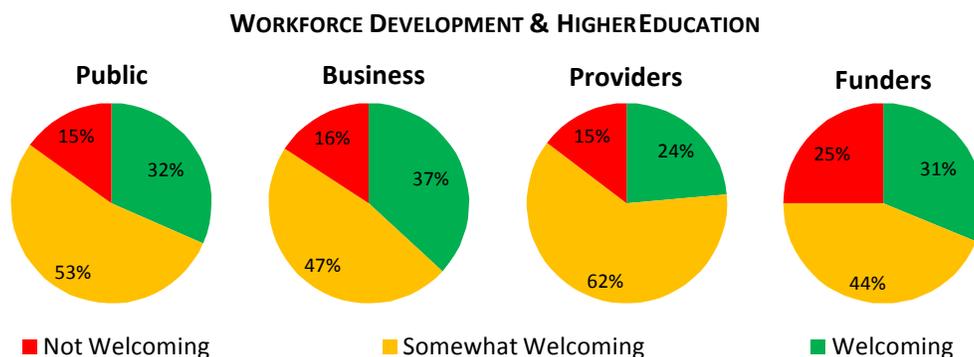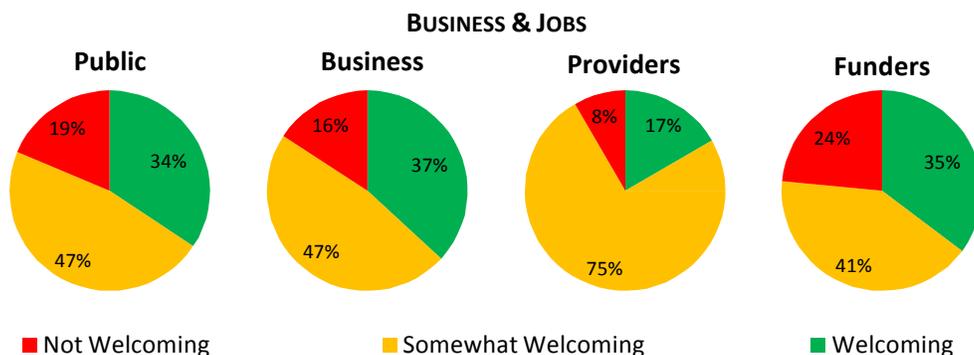
The business group was more likely to rank both of these issues areas as "Welcoming" than were all other stakeholder groups, while funders were more likely to rank these issue areas as "Not Welcoming" than were all other stakeholder groups. Finally, service providers has significantly higher rankings of both issue areas as "Somewhat Welcoming."

Regarding top themes, the following differences were noted:

- While the conditional immigrant preference theme was prominent among general public, service provider, and funder respondents, it was rarely reference by business participants.
- Business and general public participants cited many examples of job availability and access for immigrants, while funders and service providers did not.

The top recommendation that emerged in the combined issue areas of Business & Jobs and Workforce Development & Higher Education was to **increase the services or resources for immigrants to meet their work and educational needs.** Specific recommendations spanned across all three topic areas:

Business & Jobs:
- *Create more services and jobs. (Public)*
- *Give us jobs (don't take them away from us) (Public)*
- *Austin can partner up with SCORE [a local nonprofit association] and offer free monthly workshops that can discuss the basics of starting a business. (Public)*
- *Offer jobs in Spanish. (Immigrant)*

Workforce Development:
- *[Offer] free ESL classes. (Immigrant)*
- *Provide more free English classes. (Public)*
- *Program should be offered to high school dropouts and especially kids from foreign countries whose English is not good enough. (Immigrant)*
- *There should be far more vocational training and certification programs at very affordable levels. (Immigrant)*
- *Give more attention to trades and crafts and such as an alternative. Training should include classes in basic business operations, financial savvy, and such... The labor unions should be working with the city and schools on this. (Public)*

Higher Education:
- *Offer financial assistance for education. (Immigrant)*
- *Local schools have to find ways to work with them to let them have an affordable college education. (Funder)*
- *I think there are good scholarships and programs available, but could probably be expanded. (Public)*
- *I think more needs to be done to assist kids in public education with … college preparatory goals. (Public)*

The second-most frequently cited recommendation was to **increase access to existing services by removing barriers or creating new access pathways.** Again, respondents shared ideas related to both workforce and educational access for immigrant residents:

- *If the City of Austin can show support to undocumented students by giving them greater access to higher education, that would be the greatest thing that the City of Austin can do. (Immigrant)*
- *Establish partnerships with universities in other countries so UT doesn't charge foreign students as much. (Immigrant)*
- *In the area of workforce development, the biggest detriment may be in language skills. While ESL training is widely available, how the new immigrants access them is the challenge and needs some enhancements. (Public)*
- *Better access to education and credentials. (Public)*

- *The Worker's Defense Project needs to be more heavily utilized as an expert and resource when it comes to wages, labor and fairness, especially with regards to working immigrants in Austin/Travis County. (Public)*

A variety of other recommendations emerged as well, with less frequency among respondents than the two listed above:

Increase immigrants' awareness of job- and education-related resources and services:

- *I suggest we have specialized people from UT and ACC to explain … about classes/college here. For example, the difference of ESL and ESOL, and what courses are free of charge and what we have to pay for. (Immigrant)*
- *More information at the high school level for higher education … needs to be available for immigrants. (Public)*
- *Provide [information] regarding city services and opportunities available to immigrants such as adult GED classes, computer-use or technology classes, basic job training, and English language classes. (Public)*
- *One of the major areas where immigrants get taken advantage of is that a lot aren't aware they qualify for deferred action. We try to inform the community about the programs and that they shouldn't be scared of them. If they have a work permit, they have less of an excuse for employers to take advantage of them, they can get a driver's license, save for college. But what I am looking for is … how to get this information out into the community…. There is still a stigma with it. (Provider)*

Educate and train immigrants on the laws, norms, and systems related to higher education and employment:

- *There should be an orientation for immigrant parents in order to be informed of the expectations and policies of the public education system in the U.S. because it is very different from the education system in Mexico, for example. (Public)*
- *I wonder if there is a system that can help me open a business. I suggest a guideline procedure to open a business. (Immigrant)*
- *There are a lot of immigrant run businesses but we have a ways to go as far as … educating these small businesses on codes, ordinances, and compliance. (Elected Official)*

A small subset of respondents shared recommendations to **restrict immigrants' access to jobs and education**:

- *We allow undocumented and illegal immigrants to go to our colleges but we must put a stop to this practice. (Public)*
- *Employers that violate the federal immigration law should be subject to harsh penalties including jail. (Public)*
- *Require social security numbers for all attending schools and getting jobs. (Public)*

Finally, a collection of responses suggested a wide variety of other recommendations that all had the potential to positively impact immigrants through city-wide strategies. A central theme that emerged here was **livable wages**, as well as non-specific **increased economic opportunities for all**:

- *If we could just be sure that everyone who is working is paid and there is no fraud by failure to pay a decent wage, everyone will be better off. (Public)*
- *Austin could definitely use a higher minimum wage. (Public)*
- *Austin should be paying a living wage. (Public)*
- *Establish a city statute that requires paying a living wage to those who live in our area. (Public)*
- *We need to work harder to generate opportunities for those at a socioeconomic disadvantage, and to include them in the city's prosperity. (Public)*

- *Encourage employment opportunities that allow immigrants to earn livable wages and receive benefits like health insurance and paid leave. (Public)*
- *Improve/increase the living wage. (Public)*
- *Promotion of the rights of laborers, particularly recent immigrants, to a safe environment and a livable wage. An empowered workforce will make Austin a better, more prosperous place to live.*

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

RATINGS SUMMARY

Not Welcoming **Somewhat Welcoming** **Welcoming**

1 ——————————— 2 [2.1] ——————————— 3

22%	50%	28%

■ Not Welcoming ■ Somewhat Welcoming ■ Welcoming
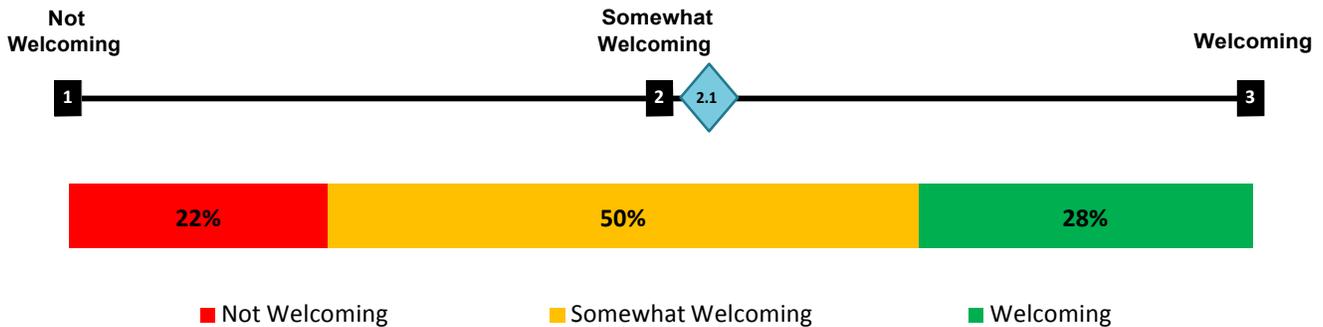
One-half (50%) of all survey respondents categorized the area of civic engagement and community involvement in Austin as "somewhat welcoming" to immigrants. Of the remaining respondents, 28% rated Austin as "welcoming," while 22% thought that Austin is "not welcoming" in this area.

IMMIGRANT VOICES

Austin's level of welcome towards immigrants in the area of civic engagement and community involvement was discussed by 6 of 11 immigrant focus groups. Participants raised both opportunities for and challenges to getting involved. Challenges included language and information access as well as other factors. Several group members also expressed frustrations around engagement options only catering to certain immigrant groups.

Participants in 3 focus groups thought that **opportunities to get involved exist** for immigrants in Austin.

- *Libraries have many programs to participate in.*
- *It is easy to get involved, but it may take time to figure out.*
- *Very [welcoming]! Lots of social activities and volunteering options.*

However, participants in 2 groups also discussed their view that **immigrants face difficulties getting involved**.

- *One must become integrated with the school or some organization. If you are not a parent or someone who works in a community it is difficult to become involved.*
- *I believe it is very difficult to affect any decisions made by the city.*
- *There are many options, but it can be hard to choose among them and difficult to get involved quickly when you are new to Austin with no friends yet.*
- *The lack of participation is cultural. Perhaps the CAC is not the medium. Maybe seating Hispanics on a committee is not the medium.*

One group discussed **language as a barrier to immigrant involvement** in this area.

- *Need good English to participate in the community, so it is hard.*
- *I was asked to do some cooking at my son's school but I couldn't because I could not communicate and it was difficult.*

Two focus groups explored the idea that the level of welcome in civic engagement and community involvement **depends on the type of immigrant.**

- *In my opinion that city management doesn't do enough. There are events important to Mexicans and Chinese but what about other cultures?*
- *Unfortunately, I don't think the city engage[s] all demographics in community involvement. Only the major minorities such as Hispanics are actively engaged.*

Finally, 2 groups discussed concerns that **information is not available**, which limits immigrant involvement.

- *They are not making an effort to explain what the commission does.*
- *Not much as far as I know. This is the first time I am hearing about a commission on immigrant affairs.*

TOP THEMES AND RESULTS FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Of the 507 combined survey respondents who answered this question, 79 (16%) provided narrative comments to explain their rating. The question was discussed in 4 business, 1 funder, and 1 provider focus group, and 5 of 8 interviews with elected officials (the topic was either omitted or not recorded in 1 funder group and 3 interviews).[8]

One of the top themes identified, by 11 survey respondents (14%) and across all 4 business focus groups, was the idea that **opportunities and services exist** to promote immigrant civic engagement and community involvement. Several elected officials commented on engagement through religious organizations.

- *I think there are a lot of wonderful organizations and events for different immigrant communities in Austin. I think there is more support/resources for groups with a large immigrant presence in Austin (for example Indian immigrants) than ones which might have a smaller presence in Austin (e.g. African immigrants). (Public)*
- *My experience is that the non-profits and civic organizations in Austin welcome a diverse volunteer base and do not discriminate or deny people based on race/immigration status. There are some organizations that are specific to certain demographics such as the Hispanic/Latino community and I suspect they would be especially welcoming to immigrants. Where I volunteer, there is a constant call for engagement and immigration status would not be a factor. The only factor that might be a deterrent is the requirement to provide fingerprints/agree to a criminal background check; even for those who do not have any criminal history, they may find this requirement offensive or concerning. (Public)*
- *There are many civic and social organizations that work to make it easier for immigrants to assimilate into the population here. (Public)*
- *We have the new Asian American Center and that is good for the whole community. (Business)*
- *A lot of community involvement comes through churches and schools—places that immigrants trust. (Elected Official)*
- *They get involved in the communities close to home. They … contribute to help their community through their churches. (Elected Official)*

Other responses described **immigrant exclusion from community engagement** as making Austin less welcoming in this area. Nine survey responses (11%) and 3 elected officials identified this theme, as well as the service provider and one funder group.

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[8] Percentages and response counts refer to survey data unless otherwise noted. Focus group and interview quotations were combined with survey responses in order to provide richness of content and theme exploration.

- *If the powers that be, in each community effort, are not welcoming, they can have strong influence in the use of language in marketing invitations for involvement, and can significantly limit participation by immigrants. Even selection of meeting places and where announcements are posted and gatherings are held indicates such. (Public)*
- *Not aware of avenues through which immigrants can be heard. (Public)*
- *So much of Austin's "civic engagement" revolves around neighborhood associations, which on the whole are incredibly hostile toward anybody who isn't part of their little clique, including immigrants and renters (which most immigrants at least start out as). (Public)*
- *I have yet to see culturally and linguistically competent practices and staff implement that which is necessary for a non-English speaking community to be brought to the stakeholder table to discuss and recommend policy changes to address ALL issues. (Public)*
- *There probably are a number of avenues in place for any and all immigrants in Austin for community involvement, but even within that context, I've seen immigrants treated rather badly. (Public)*
- *I feel like many immigrants are disenfranchised from community engagement. (Provider)*
- *I am hearing mostly from educated and entrepreneurial immigrants and bicultural folks, but I'm not hearing from more recent immigrants. (Elected Official)*
- *Understanding of how to be involved in the local government can be a natural barrier, because our form of government could be different than where they come from. (Funder)*
- *The City has a hard enough time engaging citizens in the process, so they haven't made a concerted effort to involve non-citizens. (Funder)*

Different stakeholders across surveys and focus groups discussed how **language is a challenge that limits immigrant engagement** (7 survey responses, 9%).

- *It's one thing to send out invitations for people to come out and speak up about the city and the community but if the meetings and invites are in English, what good is that going to do? (Public)*
- *The language barrier is their biggest hurdle, but their civil engagement should be expected to be somewhat limited anyway until they become U.S. citizens. (Public)*
- *Especially for people who don't speak English or Spanish, opportunities for city and community involvement are limited. The language barriers are exacerbated by economic and family situations— many immigrant groups are less able to take off work or to arrange childcare for a meeting. (Public)*
- *I've never seen an Arabic, Farsi, Kinyarwanda interpreter at a City function. Without being on a bus route and offering a kid-friendly option, the people I work with will not attend. (Business)*
- *Lacking in general for everyone, more so for immigrants if there are language barriers. (Elected Official)*

Lastly, service providers in particular raised the issues of fear, hopelessness, poverty, and geographic limitations as barriers to engagement:

- *If people are afraid they won't become engaged and won't become involved and, unfortunately, people are afraid. (Provider)*
- *There is a sense of hopelessness like no one is listening. (Provider)*
- *Immigrants are so buried in trying to get their kids enrolled in school, work, etc. that it's hard to lift your head and see what's going on or get involved civically. (Provider)*
- *People get pushed further outside the city and that makes it harder to participate within the city. (Provider)*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP DIFFERENCES

Public

- 21% Not Welcoming
- 52% Somewhat Welcoming
- 27% Welcoming

Business

- 8% Not Welcoming
- 45% Somewhat Welcoming
- 47% Welcoming

Providers

- 37% Not Welcoming
- 49% Somewhat Welcoming
- 14% Welcoming

Funders

- 39% Not Welcoming
- 22% Somewhat Welcoming
- 39% Welcoming

■ Not Welcoming   ■ Somewhat Welcoming   ■ Welcoming
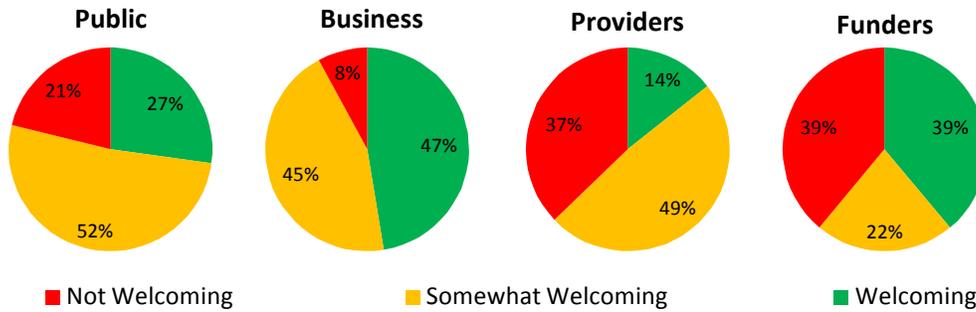
Providers and funders each provided a relatively high proportion of "unwelcoming" ratings for this area (37% and 39%, respectively). The business community was more likely to rate Austin as "welcoming" (47%).

RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS AREA

The top three recommendations for this topic area focused on improving civic engagement and community involvement through reaching out to immigrants, improving infrastructure and systems, and encouraging cultural connections through community events.

Reach out more to immigrants was the most commonly cited recommendation across stakeholder groups as a way to make Austin more welcoming in this area.

- *It may not be easy for some communities to interact with our government. We need to reach out to people where they are. (Elected Official)*
- *There is a need for a "link" at the beginning when immigrants arrive as a way to better connect them to the community and ways to get involved. (Immigrant)*
- *You have to reach the communities to help them receive this information. (Immigrant)*
- *Many recent initiatives have been launched but a lot more needs to happen in this area. It can start by letting immigrants know they are welcome here by having them attend a get acquainted workshop. (Public)*
- *Hold civic meetings in high-immigrant-population communities. (Provider)*
- *Reach out to [immigrants], engage them further in volunteering initiatives and provide an interactive environment where they can contribute more to the social aspects rather than only the economic aspects as they are now. (Immigrant)*
- *It would be good to reach parents through them [Austin Community College or the City of Austin] because often that is their only point of contact through the community. And churches. (Provider)*

A second recommendation offered across most stakeholder groups was to **assess and improve infrastructure, policies, and systems in order to decrease barriers to engagement.** Participants recommended a variety of potential ways to begin this work.

- *Look at the entire city infrastructure and determine where communication, collaboration and acceptance is lacking. Develop and implement access to all elements of the infrastructure for everyone. (Provider)*
- *It's going to take deliberate work to fund the infrastructure needed to get people involved and engaged in livelier debate around civic issues beyond immigrant-specific issues. We need to take a different route towards engaging non-naturalized residents and helping them understand there was ways to be engaged beyond voting. (Elected Official)*
- *More community centers to volunteer and interact with other members of the community would be desirable. (Immigrant)*

57

- *How do we make sure that at a higher level, policies that are built and tied directly to the future of voters include or take into account the needs of the immigrant community? In other words, how do we pair up immigrant-friendly work with work that benefits all the community? (Elected Official)*
- *I think it would behoove the city to be proactive rather than reactive. (Provider)*
- *In the area of community involvement I think if it was possible, we should have translators to help them engage. (Public)*

The third most commonly shared recommendation in this topic area is to **develop and promote multicultural events and gatherings for community connection and sharing.**

- *We should collaborate to get different cultures out of their silos, perhaps put on a yearly cultural event. (Elected Official)*
- *There is Pachanga Fest & the MACC is doing more programming, Shen-Yun has been a regular ballet performance brought in.... Austin ISD has done more to attract the ELL [English Language Learner] families such as La Feria, etc. but I would like to see more international events being advertised and given press and brought to the general public. SXSW & ACL dominate in Austin on a global level, I wish we were able to bring some more international attention to events that are also organized by international Austinites to give it a more global perspective. (Public)*
- *We need help promoting these [cultural] events to more people. (Business)*
- *It would be nice to invite every multicultural group to take a tour of Austin and show what they are proud of so cultures can say what they are proud of and it is an opportunity to go to City Hall and say what their issues are and civically engage with city leaders. (Provider)*

IMMIGRANT RESIDENTS

IMMIGRANT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT   DEMOGRAPHICS

There were 140 participants in immigrant focus groups; 106 (76%) provided personal demographic information.

AGE AND SEX

Of the participants who answered these questions:

- 54 (51%) identified as female,
- 51 (48%) identified as male, and
- 1 person (1%) identified as transgender.

Their average age was 43.

The majority (56%) were under age 45.

Pie chart showing age distribution: 13%, 1%, 8%, 8%, 23%, 16%, 31%

Legend:
- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
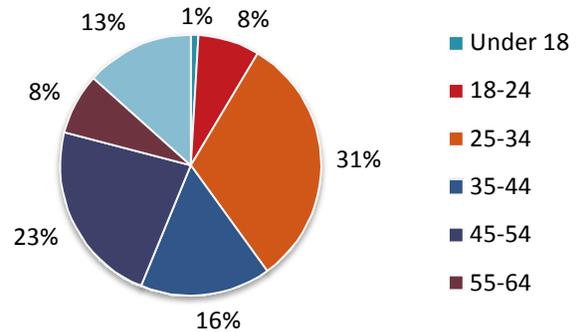
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Twenty-four countries were represented among 106 participants who answered the question, "What is your country of origin?" The most populous were Cuba, Iraq, India, and Mexico.

Country	Number	Country	Number	Country	Number
Cuba	22	Russia	2	Iran	1
Iraq	21	Rwanda	2	Jordan	1
India	13	Spain	2	Philippines	1
Mexico	13	Ukraine	2	South Africa	1
Congo	8	Afghanistan	1	Switzerland	1
The Netherlands	5	Bulgaria	1	Trinidad	1
Germany	3	Honduras	1	Italy	1
Poland	2	Iceland	1		

LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME

Twenty-seven languages were indicated by 100 participants in response to the question, "What language(s) do you speak at home?" The most common were Spanish (36%), English (32%), Arabic (20%) and Hindi (9%). Of those who submitted language information, about one-quarter (24%) reported being bilingual or trilingual.

Language	Number	Language	Number	Language	Number
Spanish	36	Punjabi	2	Gujrati	1
English	32	Swahili	2	Hebrew	1
Arabic	20	Tamil	2	Icelandic	1
Hindi	9	Telugu	2	Italian	1
Kinyarwanda	6	Turkish	2	Kiswahili	1
Dutch	3	Bulgarian	1	Kordesh	1
German	2	Dari	1	Pashto	1
Marathi	2	Ezedi	1	Persian	1
Polish	2	French	1	Russian	1

LENGTH OF TIME IN THE U.S.

Of the 105 participants who answered the question, the large majority had arrived in the U.S. either during the past six months (51%) or more than five years prior (42%).

How long have you been in the U.S.?	Number	Percent
Under 6 months	54	51%
6 months to 1 year	2	2%
1 to 5 years	5	5%
Over 5 years	44	42%

STATUS AND DOCUMENTATION

A total of 106 participants answered the question, "Do you know someone who is undocumented?"

- 79% reported "No"
- 21% reported "Yes"

Participants reported possessing the following types of documentation:[†]

Social Security Number — 74
Driver's License — 31
Visa — 29
Legal Permanent Residency Card (Green Card) — 24
State Identification Card* — 6
Matricula Consular* — 0

OTHER IMMIGRANT PARTICIPANTS

IMMIGRANT RESPONDENTS IN THE GENERAL PUBLIC SURVEY

Among the 449 respondents to the General Public Survey, 51 self-identified as having not been a U.S. citizen at birth.[9] The following are some selected demographics among that subset of respondents who answered each respective question:

- **Age**: 64% were under age 45.
- **Sex**: 76% identified as female and 24% identified as male.

[†] An error in the Spanish language focus group translations resulted in the last two identification types (State Identification Card and Matricula Consular) being omitted from the information cards. As a result, some participants who did submit information for this question did not have the full range of options from which to choose. Thus the totals for the last two identification types should be considered unreliable.

[9] The values of inclusion and anonymity were prioritized in this public input process, so as to better engage populations for whom disclosure of identifying or sensitive information could have a chilling effect on participation. Participation was not restricted or tracked across input tools, thus duplication in participation across input methods was possible.

- **Education**: The majority (63%) had a graduate or professional degree or higher.
- **Duration of residency in Austin**:[10] Only 5% had been in Austin for less than one year; 69% had been in Austin for 6 years or more.
- **Countries of origin:** 26 countries were represented; the most common was India (20%).
- **Languages spoken at home:** 16 languages were represented, the most common being English (59%), Spanish (23%), French (9%) and Hindi (9%). Almost one-third (30%) reported being multilingual.
- **Status:** Only 2% reported knowing someone who was undocumented.
- **Documentation types:** This group was very likely to have a driver's license (94%) or a social security number (92%), while 29% had a legal permanent residency card and 18% had a visa.

IMMIGRANT PARTICIPANTS IN OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Immigrant residents were also likely among the business, funder, and service provider participants in both surveys and focus groups (as evidenced by the content of some narrative responses). In particular, the sector of the business community that was targeted was immigrant professional networks, so those focus groups were largely or entirely comprised of immigrant residents. However, these other stakeholder group participants were not specifically asked about their nativity status, because their participation was sought primarily a representative of their organization or company to speak to organizational practices, not as an individual community member to speak to their personal experience as an immigrant. (However, an error in the implementation of business focus groups did result in those participants providing personal demographic information. These characteristics are summarized in the Business stakeholder section of this report.)

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[10] For this question, wording and selection options differed slightly between the general public survey and immigrant focus groups, because the relative time scale of duration of residency was considered differently for these two stakeholder groups. Thus personal data from self-identified immigrants among general public survey responses could not be perfectly aligned to aggregate with that of the immigrant focus group participants.

GENERAL PUBLIC

There were 449 responses to the General Public survey. A summary of their reported demographic characteristics appears below.

AGE AND SEX

Of the participants who answered the question:

- 270 (64%) identified as female,
- 150 (36%) identified as male, and
- 1 person (approximately 0.2%) identified as transgender.

Respondents were fairly evenly distributed across the age spectrum.
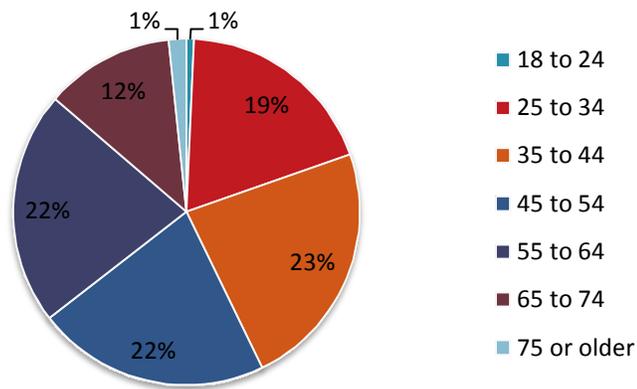
RACE/ETHNICITY

About three-quarters of respondents identified as Non-Hispanic White. Of the remainder, were split between the categories Hispanic or Latino, Non-Hispanic Asian, and Two or More Races.
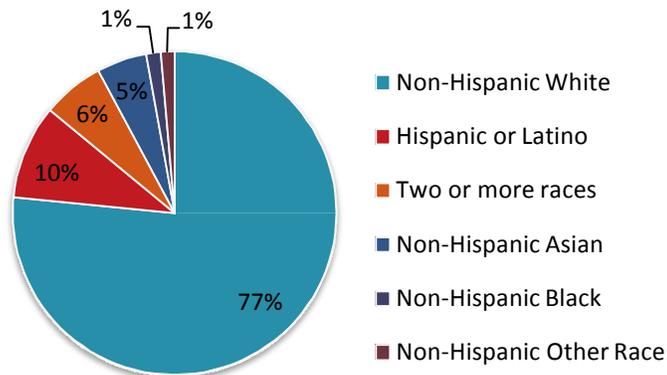
DURATION OF RESIDENCY IN AUSTIN

Respondents were asked, "How long have you lived in Austin?" The strongest participation (almost 4 in 10 respondents) came from the segment of residents who have lived in Austin for 25 years or more.

Legend:
- Less than 1 year — 3%
- 1-5 years — 14%
- 6-10 years — 17%
- 11-15 years — 13%
- 16-20 years — 8%
- 21-25 years — 7%
- 25 years or more — 38%
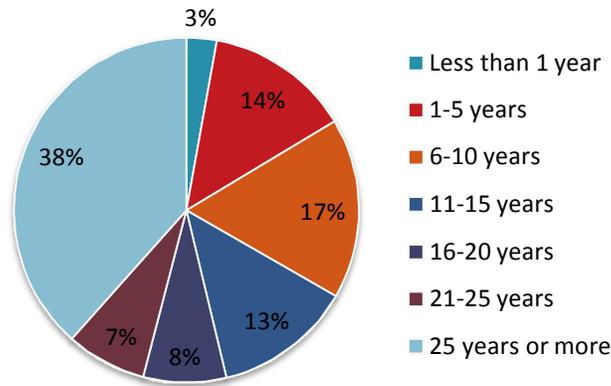
EDUCATION LEVEL

The large majority (80%) of respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher.

- High school degree or equivalency 10%
- Associate's degree 10%
- Bachelor's degree 35%
- Graduate or professional degree or higher 45%
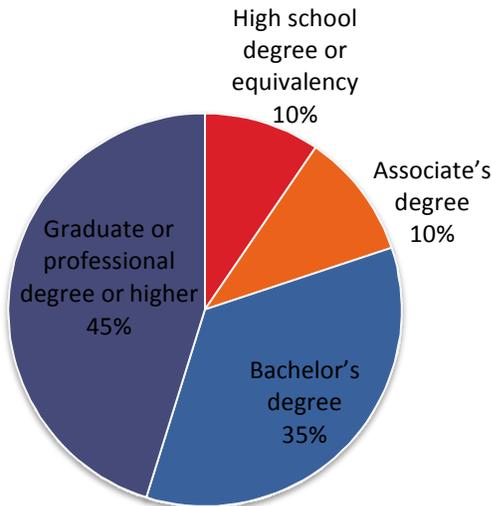
IMMIGRANT CHARACTERISTICS

Of 449 survey respondents, 51 (11%) identified as not having been a U.S. citizen by birth. A more detailed description of the characteristics of this subset of respondents is found in the *Immigrant Residents* stakeholder section of this report.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

There were 9 focus group participants and 38 survey respondents from the Service Provider stakeholder group, for a total of 47 participants.[11] The information below summarizes their characteristics in aggregate.

ORGANIZATIONAL TYPE AND SIZE

The most common service provider type was non-profit (55%), followed by government (19%). By agency size, participant composition was mixed, with agencies of all sizes represented.

Organizational Type	Count
Non-profit	26
Government	9
For-profit	6
Other	2
Faith-based	2
Quasi-governmental	1

People Employed	Number	Percent
1-10	13	31%
10-25	7	17%
25-50	7	17%
50-99	5	12%
100 and greater	10	24%
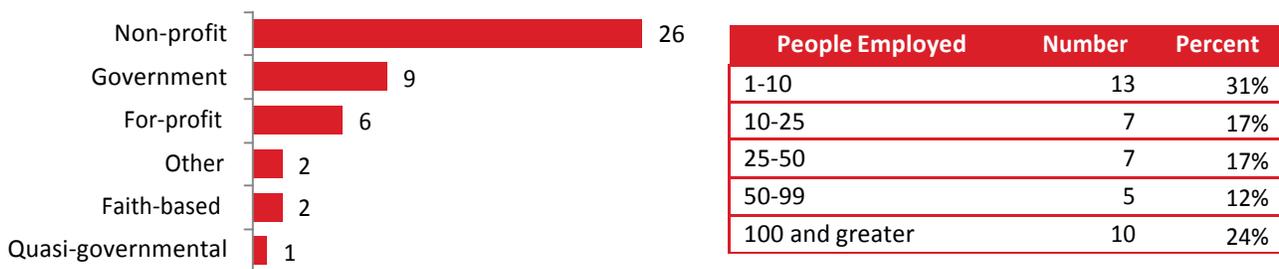
ISSUE AREAS

Participants were asked, "What issue areas do your organization's services address?" and could indicate all that applied. This stakeholder group had the strongest participation from the areas of health and mental health, immigration-related services, victim services, and housing.
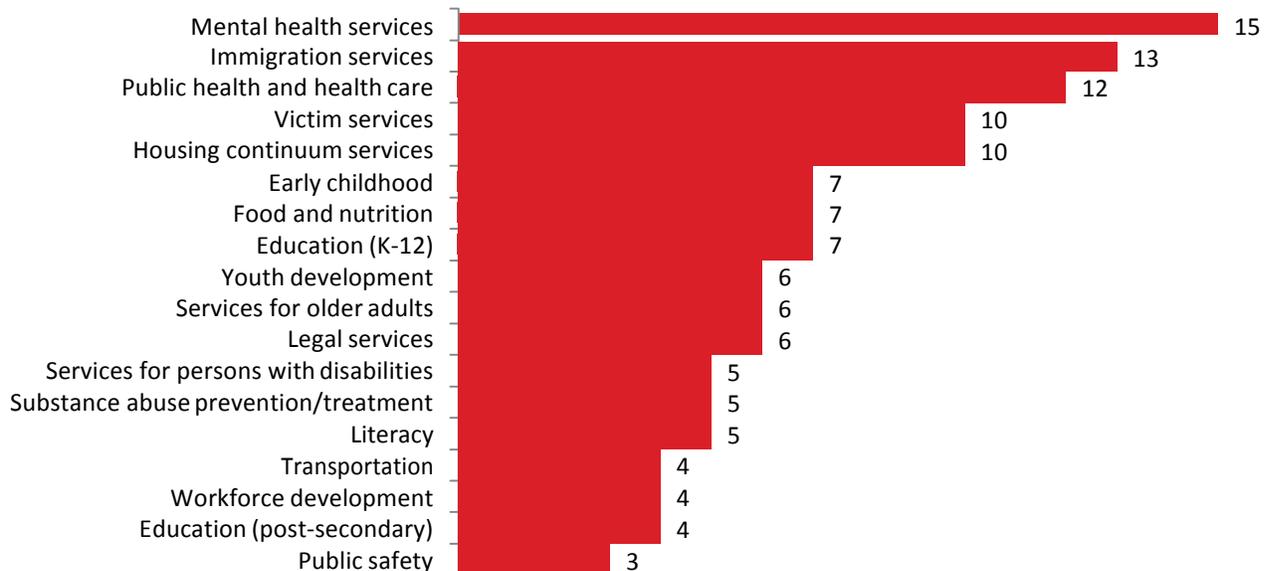
Issue Area	Count
Mental health services	15
Immigration services	13
Public health and health care	12
Victim services	10
Housing continuum services	10
Early childhood	7
Food and nutrition	7
Education (K-12)	7
Youth development	6
Services for older adults	6
Legal services	6
Services for persons with disabilities	5
Substance abuse prevention/treatment	5
Literacy	5
Transportation	4
Workforce development	4
Education (post-secondary)	4
Public safety	3

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[11] The values of inclusion and anonymity were prioritized in this public input process, so as to better engage populations for whom disclosure of identifying or sensitive information could have a chilling effect on participation. Participation was not restricted or tracked across input tools, thus duplication in participation across input methods was possible.

Agency Annual Budget

- Less than $250,000
- $250,000 to $999,000
- $1,000,000 to $2,999,999
- $3,000,000 or more
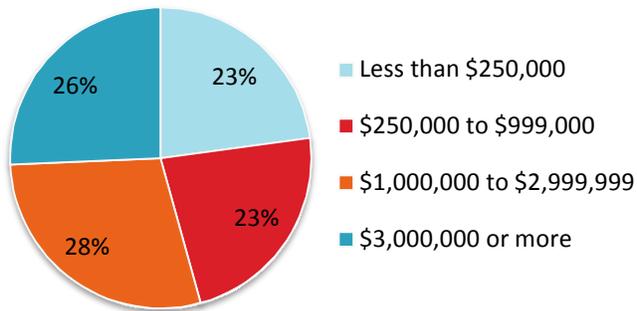
Participants displayed a fairly even mix in terms of their annual budget.

When asked to rank funding sources from largest to smallest, the funding source with the highest average rank was Federal Government. However, the funding source that the most participants had in common was Local Government, cited as a funding source by 66% of respondents.

Over one-third (37%) of participants received funding specifically intended for immigrant services, while 39% did not (with 24% unsure).

Some organizations did receive funding that excluded services to specific clients based on documentation, legal, or citizenship status.

People Employed	Average Rank	Frequency Cited
Government: Federal	1	62%
Government: State	2	60%
Philanthropic: Foundation	3	53%
Government: Local	4	66%
Philanthropic: Private donors	5	53%
Philanthropic: Corporate	6	57%
Fee for service	7	51%
Social enterprise	8	40%
Other	9	47%

Does your organization receive any funding that specifically excludes services to ...

	Yes	No	Unsure
Clients who lack documentation	20%	70%	10%
Clients who lack legal status	20%	70%	10%
Clients who lack citizenship	10%	78%	12%
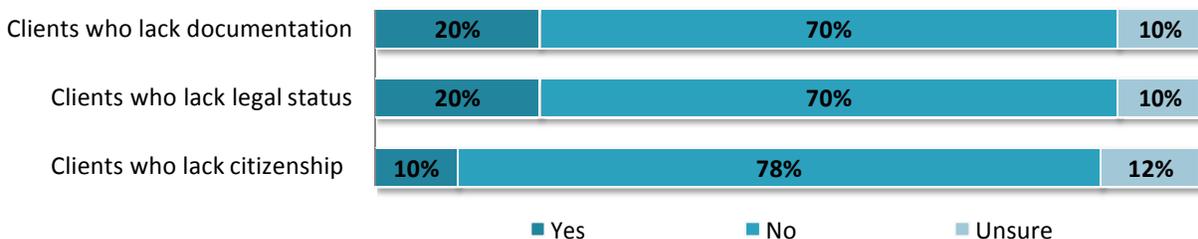
SERVICE PROVISION INFORMATION

The following information is drawn from the 38 survey responses only.

CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS

Participants estimated what percentages of their clients spoke different languages or originated from different countries. The results follow, listed in descending order.

Countries of Origin		Languages	
1	Mexico	1	Spanish or Spanish Creole
2	India	2	Arabic
3	Cuba	3	African languages
4	Honduras	4	French (including Patois, Cajun)
5	El Salvador	5	Hindi
6	Guatemala	6	Vietnamese
7	Vietnam	7	German
8	Philippines	8	Chinese
9	Pakistan	9	Urdu
10	Korea	10	Tagalog
11	China (including Taiwan and Hong Kong)	11	Korean

SERVICE OFFERINGS AND REQUIREMENTS

Does your organization offer …

	Never	Sometimes	Always	Unsure
Interpretation during service provision	13%	27%	53%	7%
Service provision in the language of origin of the client	10%	52%	34%	3%
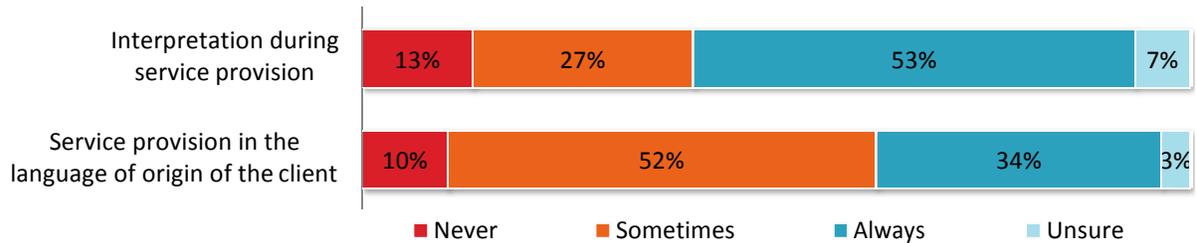
Which forms of identification does your agency accept?

Green card or visa	88%
Driver license	81%
Passport	69%
State identification card	69%
Social Security number	56%
Matricula consular	50%
Birth certificate	50%
Other	44%
Utility bill	25%
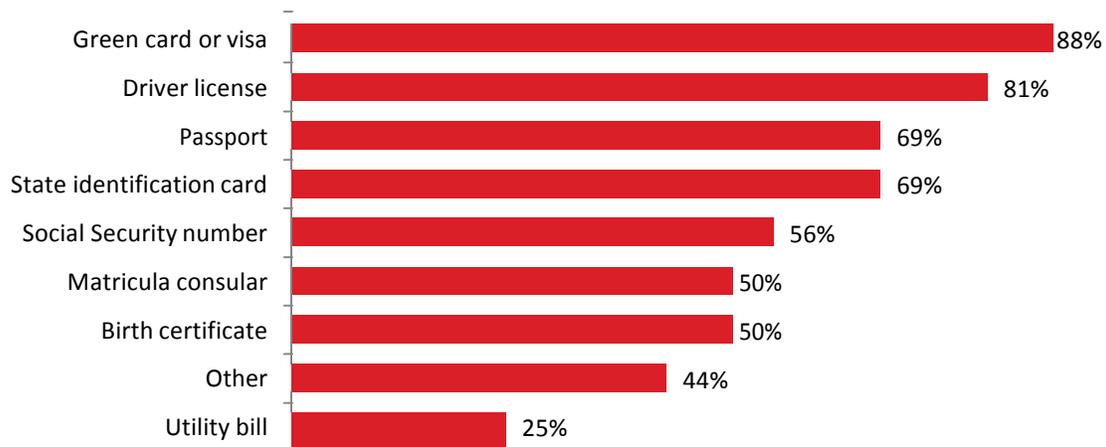
Does your organization require proof of identification to access services?

No	47%
Yes, some services require proof of identification	33%
Yes, all services require proof of identification	17%
Unsure	3%

Do your organization's services have eligibility limitations/requirements related to legal status?

No services have eligibility requirements related to legal status	69%
Some services have eligibility requirements related to legal status	7%
All services have eligibility requirements related to legal status	24%

Does your organization provide services that specifically target immigrant populations?

Yes	57%
No	40%
Unsure	3%

If yes: Are those services tailored based on immigration or legal status?

Yes	53%
No	29%
Unsure	18%

BARRIERS TO AND SOLUTIONS FOR SERVICE PROVISION

Please rate the degree of difficulty you think each barrier below poses for your immigrant clients in accesssing your organization's services.

Legend: Unsure, No impact, Low impact, Medium Impact, High Impact

Barriers listed:
- Lack of acceptable identification
- Misinformation about legal status eligibility requirements
- Location of services
- Legal status eligibility requirements for services
- Misinformation about general eligibility requirements
- Misinformation about services provided
- Lack of awareness of services provided
- Lack of translation or interpretation services
- Fear of interacting with organizations/official entities
- English proficiency
- Lack of transportation

Does your organization utilize any of the following methods to identify and develop immigrants as a client base?

Method	Percentage
Provide informational materials in languages other than English	73%
Conduct outreach to organizations that serve immigrants for potential referrals	65%
Conduct outreach to target immigrants as clients	50%
Advertise in radio/print/TV media in languages other than English	42%
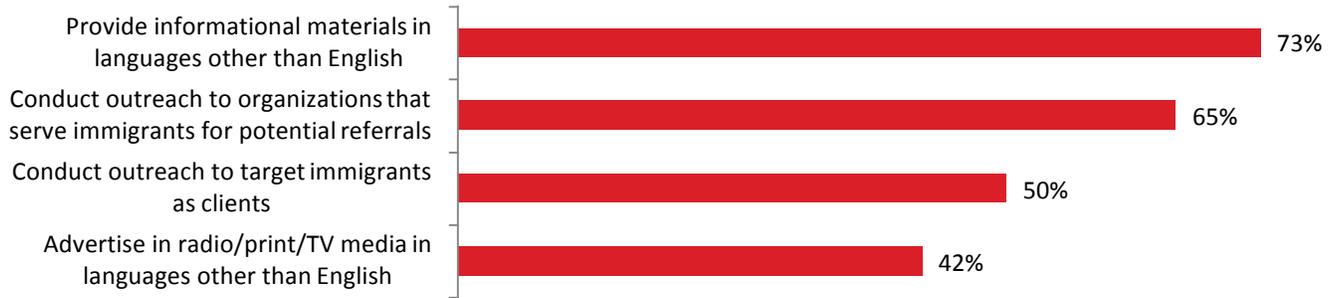
Does your organization utilize any of the following methods to make services more welcoming towards immigrants?

Method	Percentage
Employ staff who speak the languages of the target populations	86%
Provide materials in languages of the target populations	82%
Do not deny services based on legal status	79%
Provide services in the languages of the target populations	75%
Hire or contract with professional or community interpreters	75%
Implement diversity and nondiscrimination policies and procedures	75%
Provide cross-cultural competency training for staff	54%
Outreach to immigrant communities	50%

FUNDERS

There were 18 survey respondents and 14 focus group participants from the Funders stakeholder group, representing both private and public funders, for a total of 32 participants.[12] The information below summarizes their characteristics in aggregate.

FUNDER TYPE

Participants in this stakeholder group were largely representative of philanthropic funders (88%) rather than public funders. Only 4 participants (12%) identified as representing some form of government entity.

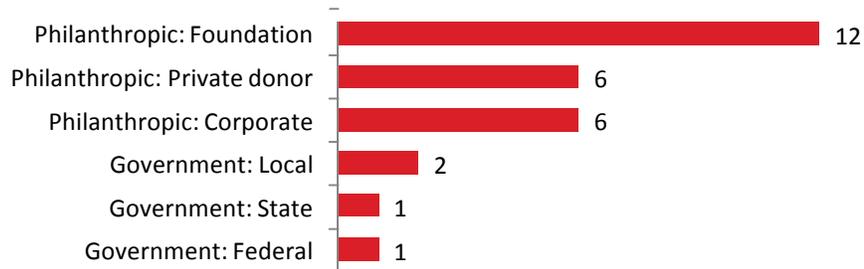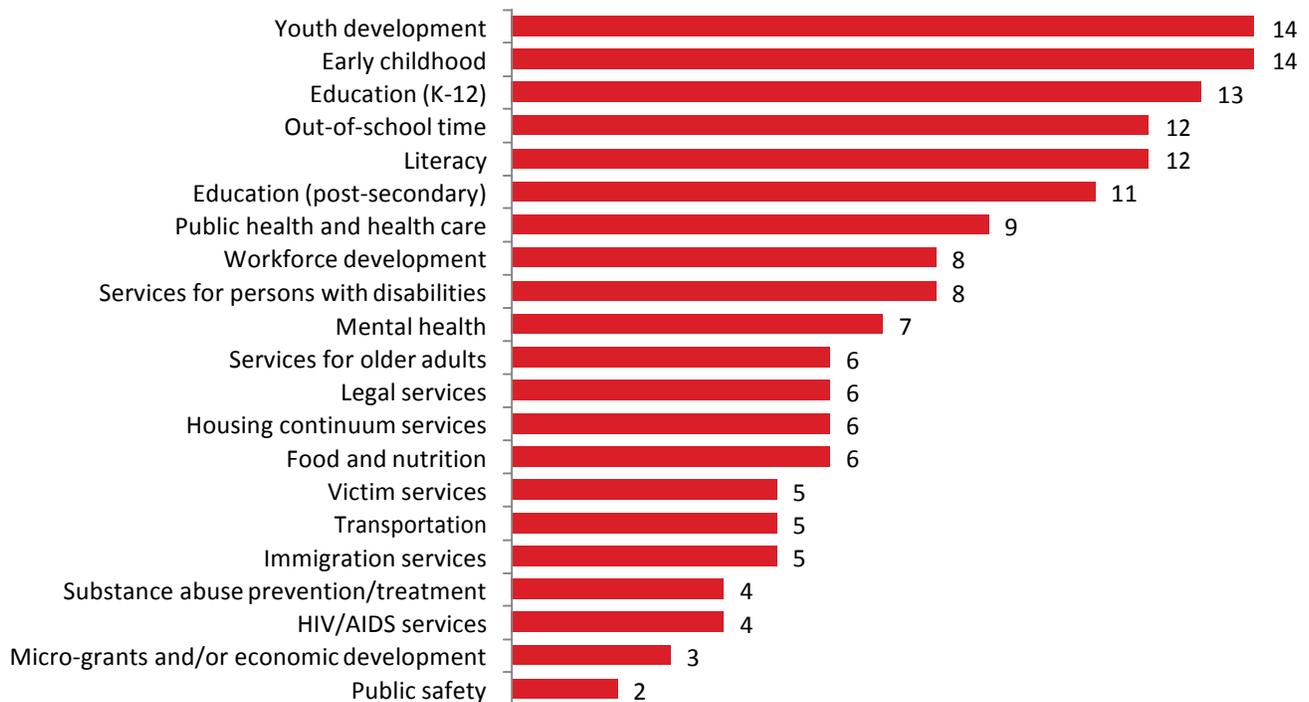| Funder Type	Count
Philanthropic: Foundation	12
Philanthropic: Private donor	6
Philanthropic: Corporate	6
Government: Local	2
Government: State	1
Government: Federal	1

ISSUE AREAS FUNDED

Participants were asked, "What issue areas do your organization fund?" and could indicate all that applied. The most commonly funded issue areas were related to child and youth services, education, and literacy. Only 5 respondents indicated that their organizations funded immigration-related services.

| Issue Area	Count
Youth development	14
Early childhood	14
Education (K-12)	13
Out-of-school time	12
Literacy	12
Education (post-secondary)	11
Public health and health care	9
Workforce development	8
Services for persons with disabilities	8
Mental health	7
Services for older adults	6
Legal services	6
Housing continuum services	6
Food and nutrition	6
Victim services	5
Transportation	5
Immigration services	5
Substance abuse prevention/treatment	4
HIV/AIDS services	4
Micro-grants and/or economic development	3
Public safety	2

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[12] The values of inclusion and anonymity were prioritized in this public input process, so as to better engage populations for whom disclosure of identifying or sensitive information could have a chilling effect on participation. Participation was not restricted or tracked across input tools, thus duplication in participation across input methods was possible.

The largest segment of this stakeholder group grants less than $500,000 annually, while about one-quarter grants over $5 million annually, in the Austin/Travis County area.

Amount of funds awarded annually in Austin/Travis County

- Less than $500,000
- $500,000 to $1,000,000
- $1,000,000 to $5,000,000
- Over $5,000,000
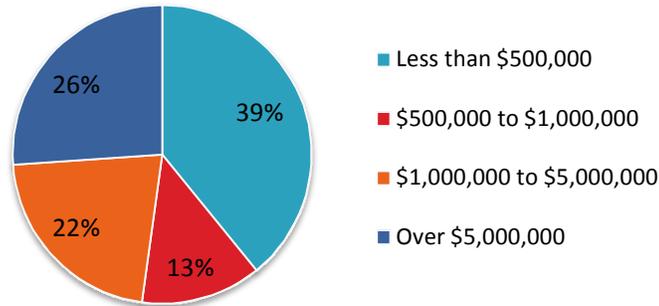
Of the 25 respondents who answered the question "Does your organization grant any funds that are specifically intended for immigrant services?" the majority (60%) indicated that their organizations do not grant funds intended for immigrant services, while 36% did.

Some funders did report awarding funds that exclude services to specific clients based on documentation, legal, or citizenship status.

Does your organization grant any funds that specifically exclude services to ...

	Yes	No	Unsure
Clients who lack documentation	24%	64%	12%
Clients who lack legal status	20%	68%	12%
Clients who lack citizenship	12%	76%	12%
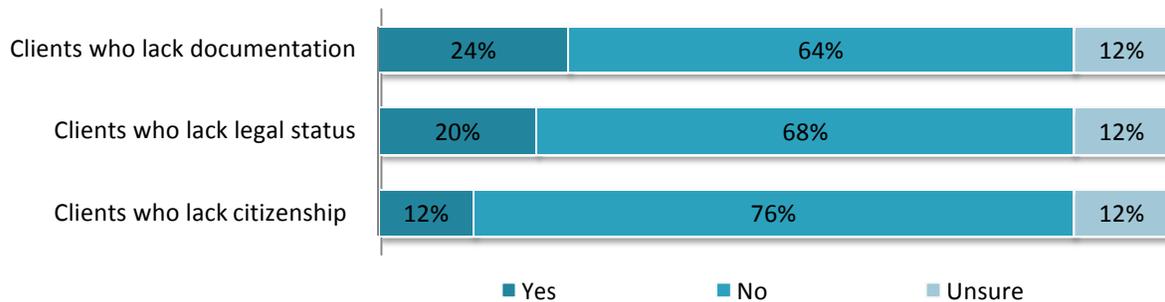
BUSINESSES

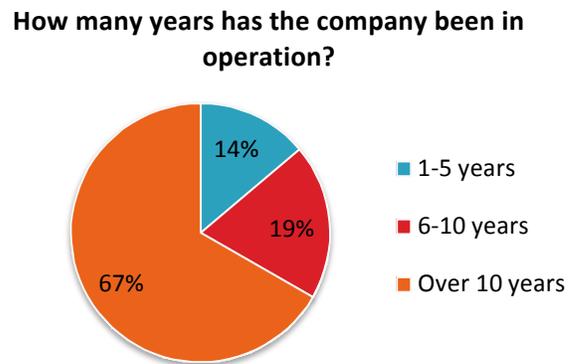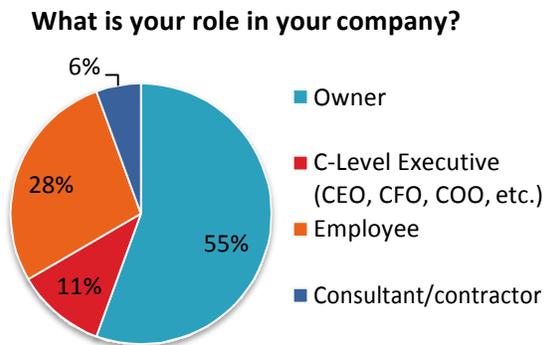There were 43 focus group participants and 38 survey respondents from the Business stakeholder group, for a total of 81 participants.[13] Survey respondents provided detailed information on company characteristics. Due to an implementation error, the business focus groups were facilitated using materials from another stakeholder group; as a result, only personal, not organizational, characteristics can be reported for business focus group participants. Thus organizational characteristics reported in this section pertain to survey respondents only, while selected demographic characteristics of focus group participants are provided at the end.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The majority (55%) of respondents characterized their role in their organization as that of business owners, and two-thirds represented companies with over 10 years in operation.

What is your role in your company?

- Owner
- C-Level Executive (CEO, CFO, COO, etc.)
- Employee
- Consultant/contractor

6%
28%
55%
11%

How many years has the company been in operation?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
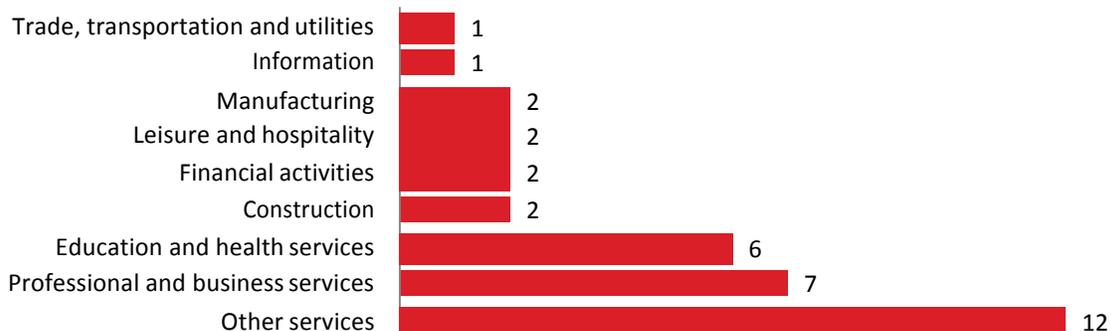- Over 10 years

14%
19%
67%

The largest segment of this stakeholder group (39%) was made up of small employers (of 1-4 people). Very few large employers were represented in survey responses.

Regarding industry, participants could indicate all that applied. This stakeholder group had the strongest participation from the Professional and Business Services category.

People Employed	Number	Percent
1-4	14	39%
5-49	13	36%
50-99	3	8%
100-499	3	8%
500 or more	3	8%

Which industry best categorizes your company?

Industry	Value
Trade, transportation and utilities	1
Information	1
Manufacturing	2
Leisure and hospitality	2
Financial activities	2
Construction	2
Education and health services	6
Professional and business services	7
Other services	12

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[13] The values of inclusion and anonymity were prioritized in this public input process, so as to better engage populations for whom disclosure of identifying or sensitive information could have a chilling effect on participation. Participation was not restricted or tracked across input tools, thus duplication in participation across input methods was possible.
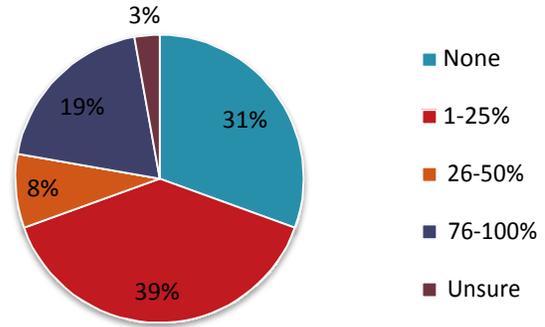
Those who selected "Other services" wrote in a mix of responses – such as technology, sales, and nonprofit – which may have fit within the listed categories but which researchers could not determine based on the information provided.
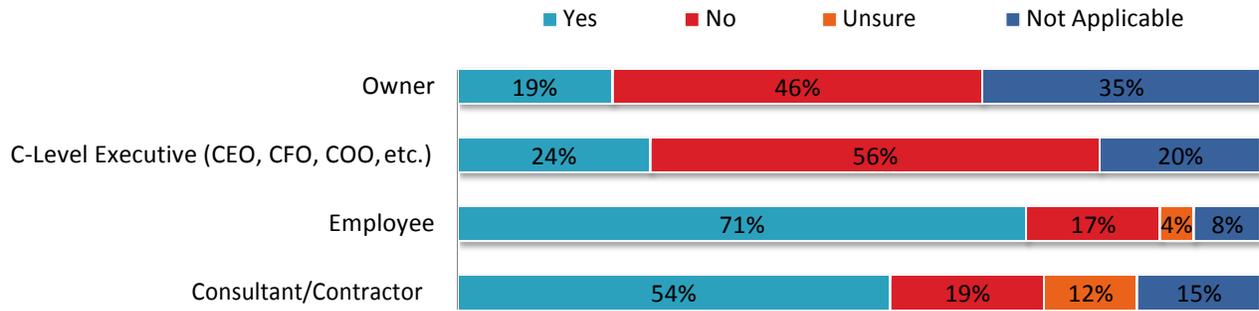
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Respondents were asked, "What percentage of your company's employees do you estimate are foreign born?" and could select from a series of percentage ranges. Their responses indicated diversity in the stakeholder group: Almost one-third employed no foreign-born employees, while about two-thirds employed foreign-born employees to varying degrees.

Regarding the roles played by those foreign-born individuals, the majority (71% of respondents) were in the role of employee. For one-quarter of respondents, immigrants were in the role of C-level executives at their companies, and in the role of business owner for one-fifth of respondents.

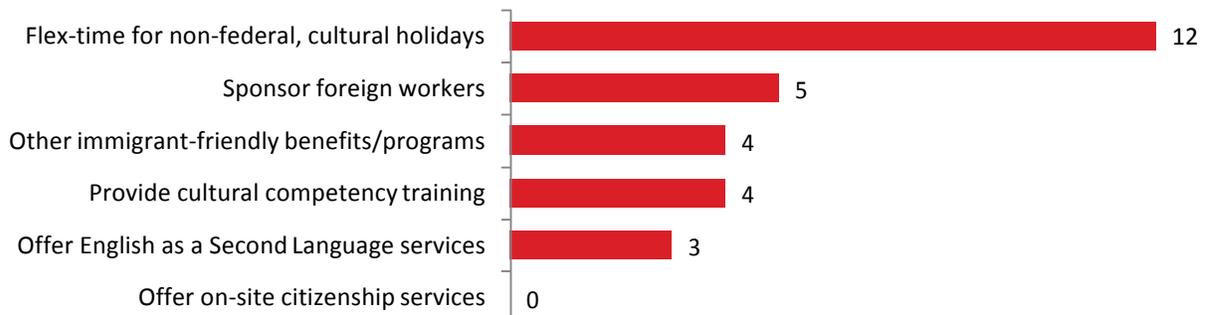**What percentage of your company's employees do you estimate are foreign-born?**

Pie chart:
- None: 31%
- 1-25%: 39%
- 26-50%: 8%
- 76-100%: 19%
- Unsure: 3%

Are foreign-born individuals employed at your company in any of the following roles?

Legend: Yes | No | Unsure | Not Applicable

Role	Yes	No	Unsure	Not Applicable
Owner	19%	46%		35%
C-Level Executive (CEO, CFO, COO, etc.)	24%	56%		20%
Employee	71%	17%	4%	8%
Consultant/Contractor	54%	19%	12%	15%

Regarding employee benefits that could make employers more immigrant-friendly, the most commonly offered was providing flex-time for non-federal, cultural holidays. (Among those who reported that "other benefits" were offered beyond the answer options, these included: advising on housing, education, finances, or citizenship; referrals for services and information; and paying a living wage.)

Does your company offer any of the following benefits to employees?

Benefit	Count
Flex-time for non-federal, cultural holidays	12
Sponsor foreign workers	5
Other immigrant-friendly benefits/programs	4
Provide cultural competency training	4
Offer English as a Second Language services	3
Offer on-site citizenship services	0

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate the distribution of minimum education level or technical certifications for jobs across their company, both overall 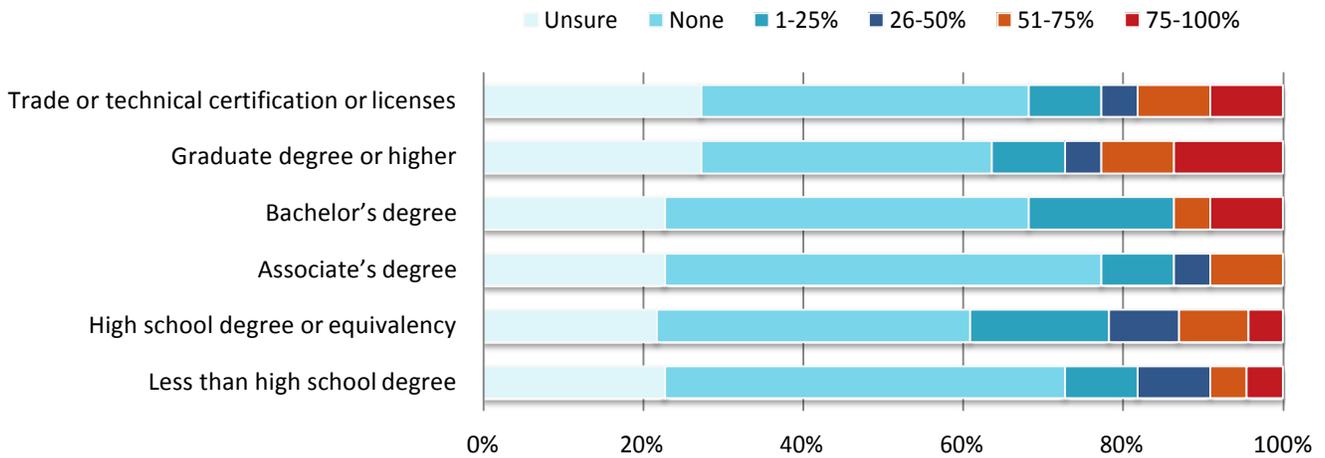and for positions occupied by immigrant employees. In general, respondents' immigrant employees were less likely to occupy positions with minimum requirements, and more likely to occupy positions with no minimum requirements, compared to positions in those companies overall.
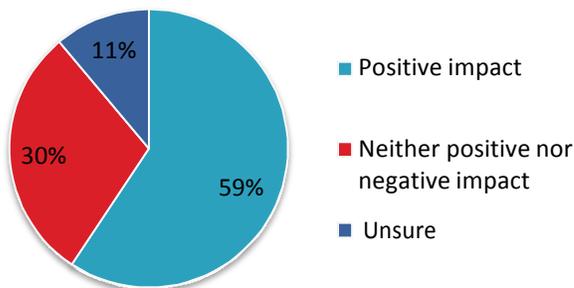
What percentage of positions in your company require a minimum of:

Legend: Unsure, None, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 75-100%

- Trade or technical certification or licenses
- Graduate degree or higher
- Bachelor's degree
- Associate's degree
- High school degree or equivalency
- Less than high school degree

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
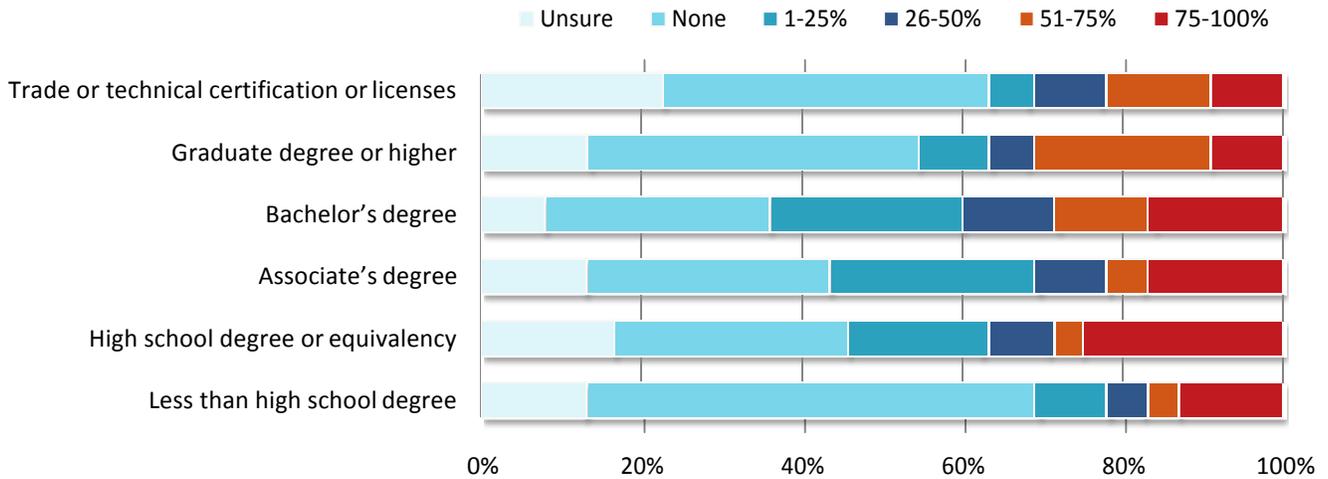
What percentage of your company's foreign-born employees are in positions with a minimum of:

Legend: Unsure, None, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 75-100%

- Trade or technical certification or licenses
- Graduate degree or higher
- Bachelor's degree
- Associate's degree
- High school degree or equivalency
- Less than high school degree

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

How does Austin's immigrant workforce impact your company's economic growth potential?

- 59% Positive impact
- 30% Neither positive nor negative impact
- 11% Unsure

Finally, the majority (59%) of respondents indicated that Austin's immigrant workforce positively impacts their company's economic growth potential; no respondents reported that the immigrant workforce had a negative impact.
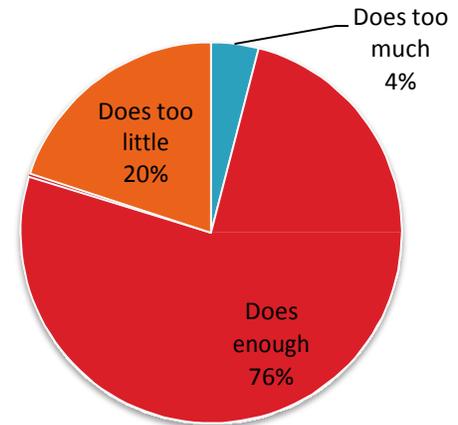
73

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

In the area of customer relations, the business respondents also showed a broad mix of representation. Just over half reported that immigrants comprise one-quarter or less of their customer base, and about three-quarters believed their company "does enough" to identify and sell to immigrant customers. Impressions of the impacts of the immigrant consumer market on growth potential were mixed.
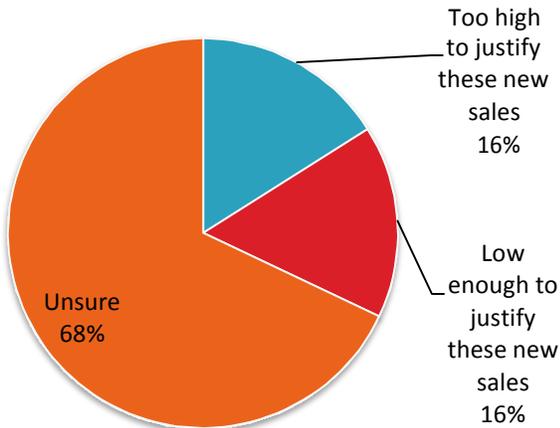
What percentage of your company's customer base do you estimate is comprised of immigrants?

8%
4%
12%
11%
46%
19%

- None
- 1% to 25%
- 26% to 50%
- 51% to 75%
- 76% to 100%
- Unsure
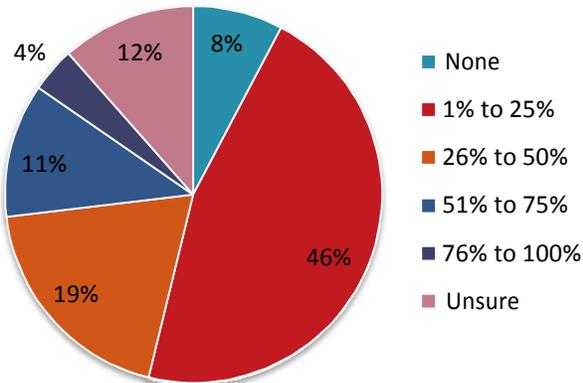
Do you believe your company _____ to identify and sell to immigrant customers?

Does too much
4%
Does too little
20%
Does enough
76%

For your company, the costs associated with identifying and engaging immigrant customers are:

Too high to justify these new sales
16%
Low enough to justify these new sales
16%
Unsure
68%

How does Austin's immigrant consumer market impact your company's economic growth potential?

Unsure
24%
Positive impact
24%
Negative impact
8%
Neither positive nor negative impact
44%
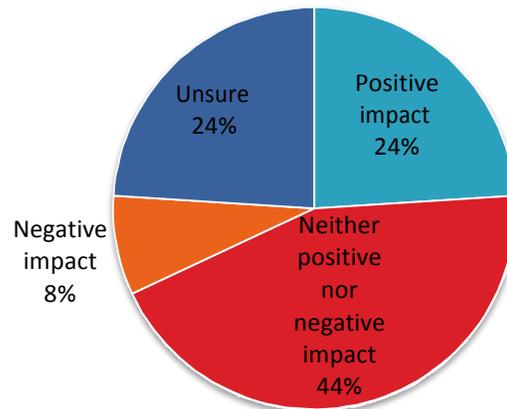
BUSINESS TO BUSINESS RELATIONS

Immigrant-owned businesses were represented among respondents' suppliers and/or customers with generally less frequency than immigrants were represented among customers or employees.

What percentage of your company's business-to-business base do you estimate is comprised of immigrant-owned businesses (suppliers and/or customers)?
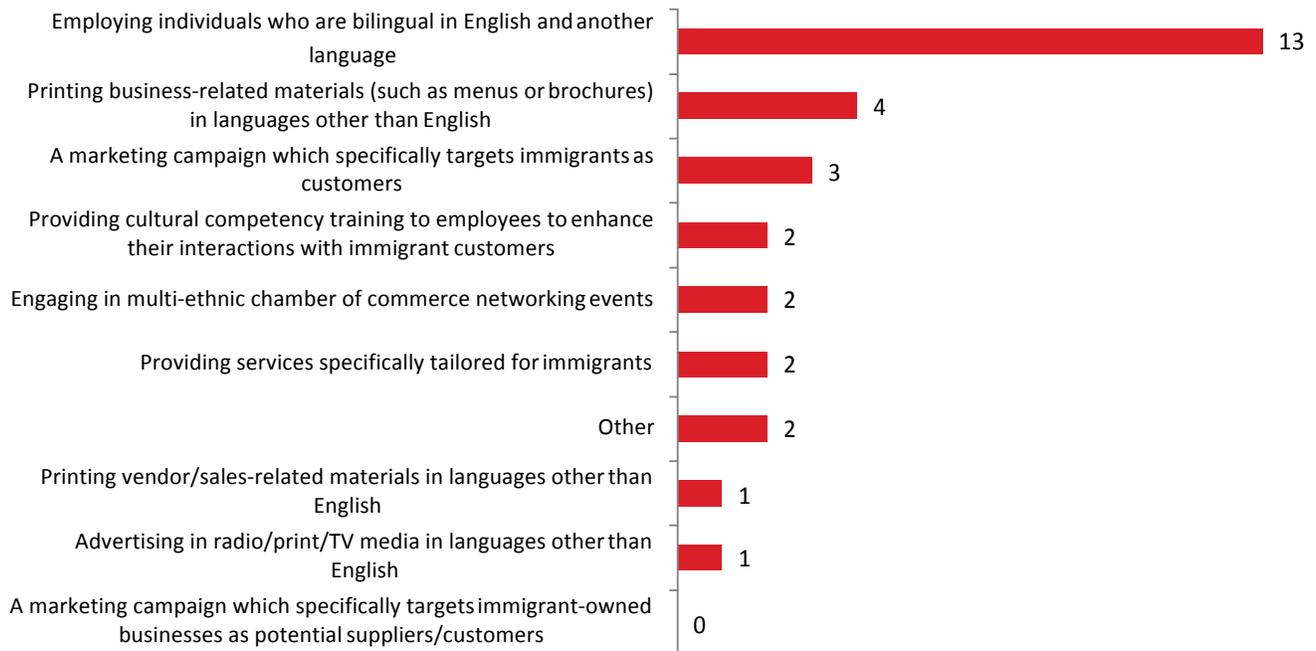
Pie chart legend:
- None — 12%
- 1% to 25% — 36%
- 26% to 50% — 12%
- 51% to 75% — 4%
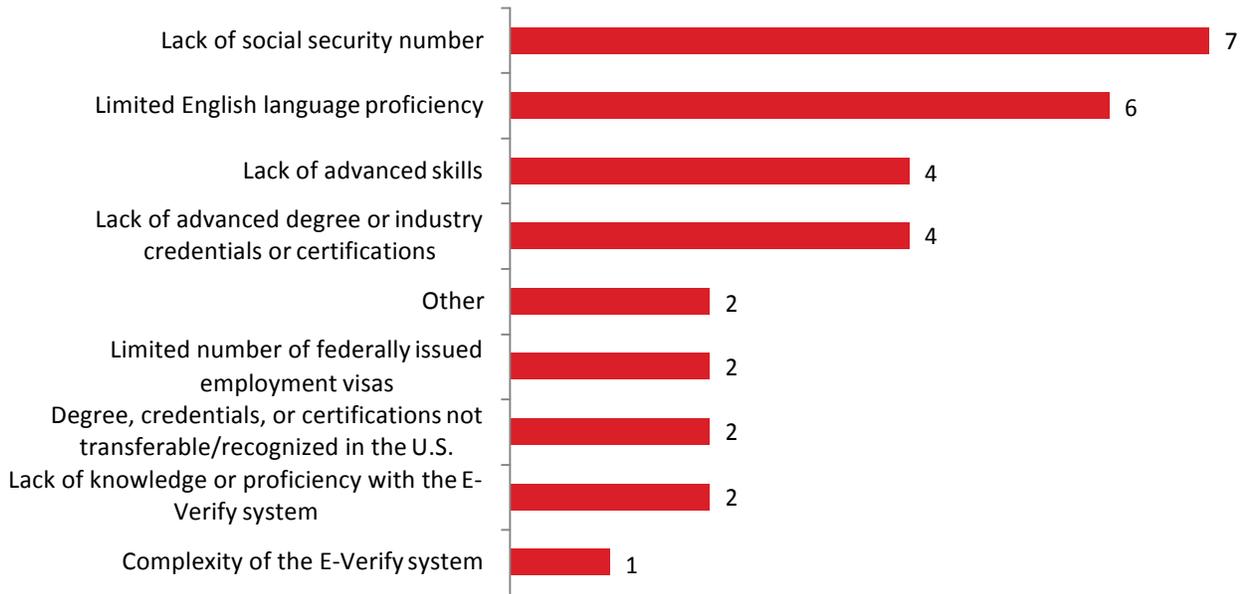- Unsure — 36%
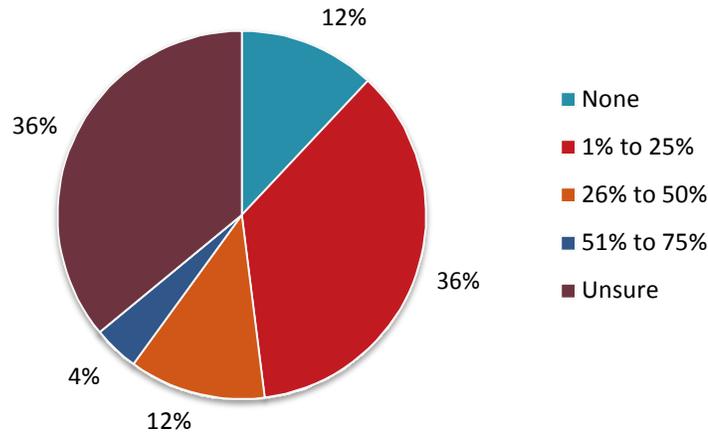
BARRIERS & SOLUTIONS

The predominant method through which respondents develop immigrant customers as a market base was employing bilingual staff.

Does your company utilize any of the following methods to develop immigrant customers as a market base or to develop immigrant-owned businesses as potential suppliers/customers?

Method	Count
Employing individuals who are bilingual in English and another language	13
Printing business-related materials (such as menus or brochures) in languages other than English	4
A marketing campaign which specifically targets immigrants as customers	3
Providing cultural competency training to employees to enhance their interactions with immigrant customers	2
Engaging in multi-ethnic chamber of commerce networking events	2
Providing services specifically tailored for immigrants	2
Other	2
Printing vendor/sales-related materials in languages other than English	1
Advertising in radio/print/TV media in languages other than English	1
A marketing campaign which specifically targets immigrant-owned businesses as potential suppliers/customers	0

Regarding barriers to employing foreign-born employees, lack of social security number and limited English proficiency were the top two barriers ranked by respondents.

Which of the following barriers impact your company's ability to employ foreign-born individuals?

Barrier	Value
Lack of social security number	7
Limited English language proficiency	6
Lack of advanced skills	4
Lack of advanced degree or industry credentials or certifications	4
Other	2
Limited number of federally issued employment visas	2
Degree, credentials, or certifications not transferable/recognized in the U.S.	2
Lack of knowledge or proficiency with the E-Verify system	2
Complexity of the E-Verify system	1

Lack of management interest as well as language barriers were the most frequently cited barriers to developing immigrant customers as a market base or immigrant-owned businesses as partners.
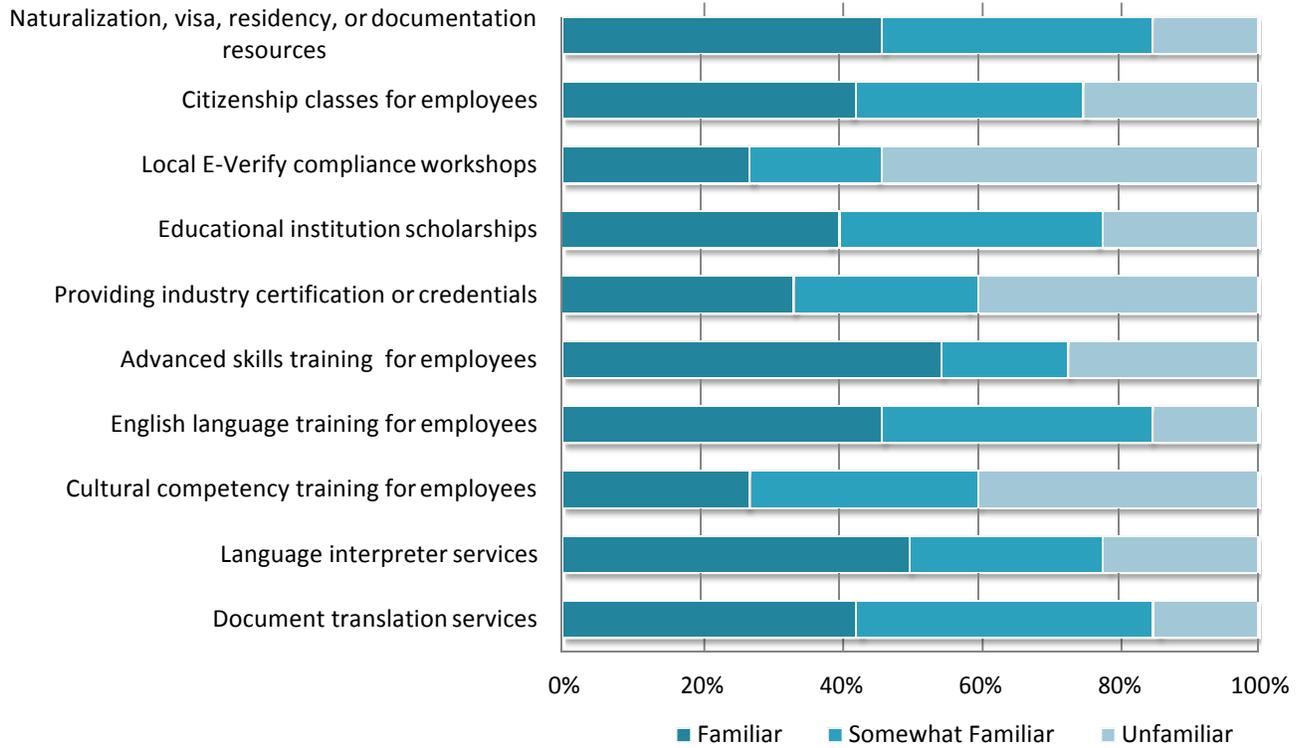
Which of the following barriers impact the company's ability to develop immigrant customers as a market base or develop immigrant-owned businesses as partners?

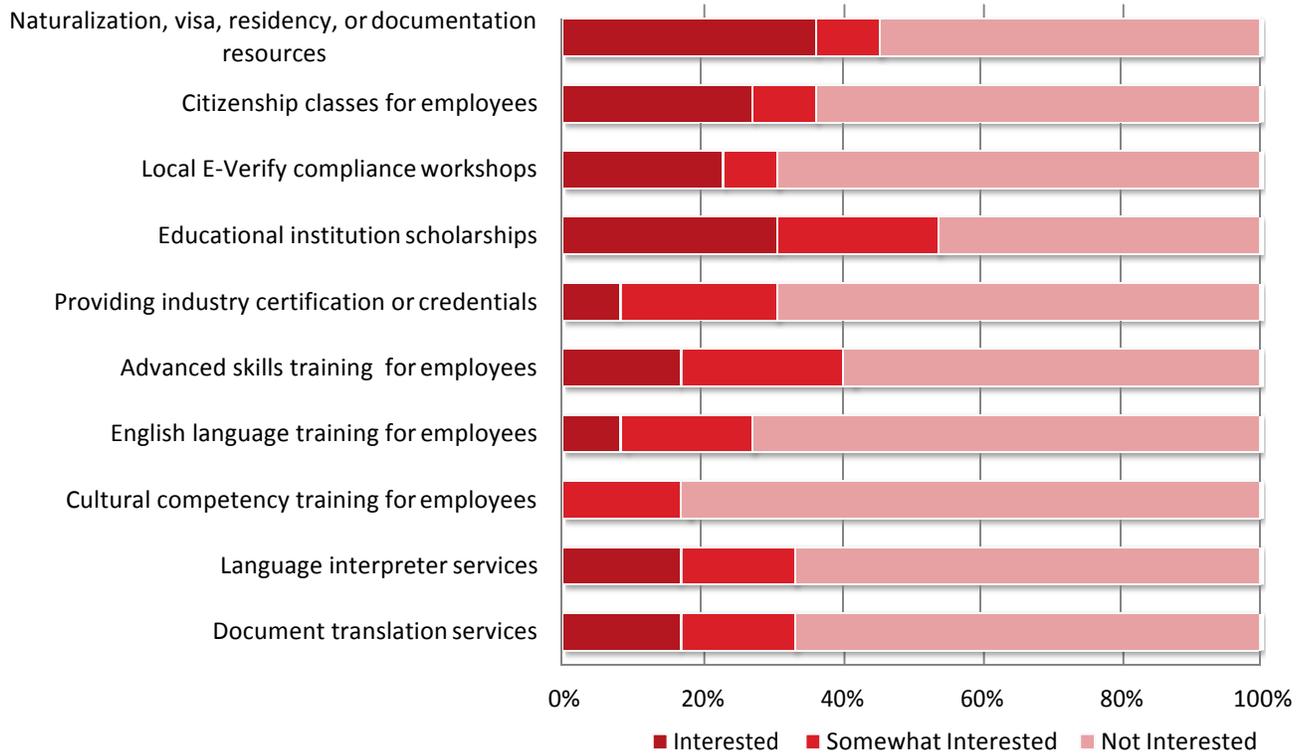| Barrier	Value
Management does not intend to seek out immigrant-owned businesses as suppliers or customers	6
Language barriers	5
Other	3
Perceived tensions in communication and integration	3
Lack of opportunities to meet with immigrant business owners	2
Lack of cultural training for employees	2
Lack of document translation services	2
Lack of cultural knowledge regarding target customer populations	2
Cultural differences	2
Demographic shifts in local market/traditional customer area	0

Survey respondents were also asked to rate their level of familiarity with and interest in a variety of potential resources for their companies. They were most familiar with: naturalization, visa, residency, and documentation resources; advanced skills and English language training for employees; and language interpretation   and

documentation translation services. They had the highest interest level in: naturalization, visa, residency, and documentation resources; and educational institution scholarships.

Familiarity

Categories (top to bottom):
- Naturalization, visa, residency, or documentation resources
- Citizenship classes for employees
- Local E-Verify compliance workshops
- Educational institution scholarships
- Providing industry certification or credentials
- Advanced skills training for employees
- English language training for employees
- Cultural competency training for employees
- Language interpreter services
- Document translation services

Legend: ■ Familiar   ■ Somewhat Familiar   ■ Unfamiliar

Interest

Categories (top to bottom):
- Naturalization, visa, residency, or documentation resources
- Citizenship classes for employees
- Local E-Verify compliance workshops
- Educational institution scholarships
- Providing industry certification or credentials
- Advanced skills training for employees
- English language training for employees
- Cultural competency training for employees
- Language interpreter services
- Document translation services

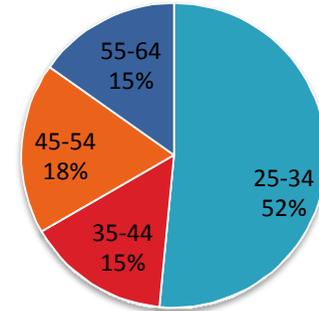Legend: ■ Interested   ■ Somewhat Interested   ■ Not Interested

AGE

Of the participants who answered these questions:

- 9 (24%) identified as female
- 28 (76%) identified as male

Their average age was 39.

The majority (67%) were under age 45.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Ten countries were represented among 37 participants who answered the question, "What is your country of origin?" The most common were China and Mexico.

Country	Number	Country	Number
China	16	Iran	1
Mexico	8	Japan	1
India	5	Taiwan	1
South Korea	2	Vietnam	1
Bangladesh	1	South Africa	1

LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME

Nine languages were represented among 36 participants who answered the question, "What language(s) do you speak at home?"

The most common were English and Mandarin, and 36% of participants reported being bilingual.

Language	Number
English	26
Mandarin	12
Spanish	5
Korean	1
Kurdish	1
Vietnamese	1
Japanese	1
Bengali	1
Korean	1

LENGTH OF TIME IN THE U.S.

Of the 37 participants who answered the question, the majority (51%) had arrived in the U.S. more than five years prior.

How long have you been in the U.S.?	Number	Percent
Under 6 months	1	3%
6 months to 1 year	2	5%
1 to 5 years	15	41%
Over 5 years	19	51%

STATUS AND DOCUMENTATION

A total of 36 participants answered the question, "Do you know someone who is undocumented?"

- 83% reported "No"
- 17% reported "Yes"

Participants reported possessing the following types of documentation:

Documentation	Count
Driver's license	27
Legal Permanent Residency Card (Green card)	17
State Identification card	14
Visa	5
Social Security Number	2
Matricula Consular	0

ELECTED OFFICIALS

A total of eight elected officials were interviewed, out of 16 contacted and invited to participate. Three were members of the Travis County Commissioners Court and five were Austin City Council members. Completion rates varied significantly for elected official interviews, with some interviews incomplete because either subjects declined to answer all questions (for reasons unknown or because they expressed lack of knowledge or familiarity with the topic), or calls or visits were cut short by interview subjects. Only one of eight elected officials completed 100% of interview questions; for the remainder, completion rates ranged from 42% to 92% of intended content.

Due to the nature of the stakeholder group, personal demographic details or organizational data were not collected. However, some stakeholder-specific questions were asked during elected official interviews that were not asked of other stakeholder group participants. These topics and responses are detailed below. (For elected officials' perspectives on how welcoming Austin is across issue areas, as well as their recommendations to make Austin more welcoming, please see those respective sections of the report.)

WHAT ROLE DO IMMIGRANTS PLAY IN YOUR CONSTITUENCIES?

All eight interviewed elected officials answered this question.

Three elected officials indicated that immigrants play a large or notable role in their constituencies:

- *At the county they play a big role.*
- *My district is heavily immigrant.*
- *Immigrants are everywhere in district [number]. From Vietnamese … to Ethiopian, Mexican, Latin American, Cuban.*

Three suggested that the role of immigrants in their constituencies was not as great as in other areas, either due to geographical distribution differences or to immigrants not having a strongly voiced presence:

- *Not as great an immigrant population [in my district] … but I feel I serve all of Austin.*
- *Their role just isn't as prominent. They are not out in front being spokespeople.*
- *Probably not as much because of the part of town I represent.*

One expressed that immigrants' "roles would be those of everyday people … their role is no different than that of non-immigrants," and one said "I don't know what the percentage is."

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING FROM THE IMMIGRANTS YOU REPRESENT?

Five elected officials answered this question.

Two indicated that general affordability concerns are the primary feedback they receive from immigrant constituents:

- *Just how expensive it is to live here. That is probably the main one.*
- *Affordability issues … not different from other constituents. Limited jobs available and limited availability of second sources of income for immigrants.*

Three referenced language challenges as an issue that either immigrant constituents communicate to them about, or that interferes with constituent communications:

- *I'm most in touch with Asian immigrants [and] got a strong sense that Austin needs to do a better job of reaching out to Asian immigrants, culturally, linguistically.*
- *[I'm] hearing some but mostly from educated, entrepreneurial immigrants, and/or bicultural folks; but not hearing from more recent immigrants. I'm trying to hire a Vietnamese speaker to help with messaging and communication.*
- *Some immigrant specific issues are the lack of translation capabilities at the Court House. We are working to increase this and make sure that the county environment is open to everyone.*
- *City of Austin hasn't done such a good job with the main Asian languages and Spanish.*

One elected official indicated that the main concerns voiced by immigrant constituents relate to immigration enforcement practices within the Travis County Jail:

- *Most of it is the ICE issue at the County Jail. It is difficult because … elected officials do not answer to each other. We can't tell the Sheriff what to do …. We do control the purse strings but it would not be responsible [to defund him] in its effects to the community at large.*

The other constituent communications or concerns mentioned included: safety issues with multi-family housing stock and code enforcement with landlords; lack of Asian representation among City Council and city employees; and immigrant residents' greater use of public parks and recreational facilities.

WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS OR CONSIDERATIONS WHEN MAKING POLICY DECISIONS OR SETTING POLICY DIRECTION?

Interviewees were asked, "What are your concerns or considerations as an elected official when making policy decisions or setting policy direction related to immigrants and immigrant issues?" Six elected officials answered this question.

Some responses alluded to the importance of including or considering immigrant concerns among the larger community issues they address:

- *It is important to contextualize immigrant issues within the broader realities and issues of our community while staying as inclusive as possible.*
- *I think about: Who is left out? What holes exist in coverage and getting to coverage? How do you learn about them? I don't know that there is a lot of awareness and understanding of how different policies impact immigrants and that is a big need.*
- *Not to set policy on one level which will have unintended consequences on other levels.*

Three elected officials referenced the idea that policy is set in response to constituent concerns, and immigrant voices may not be heard. Several expressed optimism that the new 10-1 structure would enable greater involvement from immigrant populations.

- *We're often responding to people we hear from, and immigrants are people we hear less from. This is one of the benefits of the new [10-1] system we have; it will be an incredible opportunity.*
- *Learning about Austin's different immigrant populations and understanding them. It's often hard to reach immigrants.*
- *This is certainly a challenge under the 10-1 system and a strength—how we reach out to these population. Just know we are really trying to do that—with district office hours, town hall meetings, newsletters…. The challenge is how to do that, to find ways to move more deeply into the district … to reach out to people so we grow what we have and step beyond where we've been.*
- *My concern is how do you respond to needs of constituents which are immigrants when you have so few people engaged in city politics and even fewer represent the immigrant community at large.*

Lastly, one elected official expressed that the federal immigration framework is a consideration for local policy:

- *A large part of my constituency has a problem with immigration because people are confused about whether it is legal or illegal, and there is a distinction there, not just in my precinct but the country as whole is split on how you handle illegal immigration.*

METHODOLOGY

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In September 2013, the Austin City Council issued a proclamation declaring Austin "a welcoming city for international newcomers," formalizing the City of Austin's commitment to being a welcoming, immigrant-friendly community. In the same year, the City of Austin launched the International Welcome Program and became one of the first 14 municipalities in the country to officially become a Welcoming Cities and Counties Affiliate through Welcoming America.

The City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs took on the goal of developing a shared definition of and vision for Austin as a Welcoming City, in alignment not only with the 2013 Council proclamation, but also with the City's vision as the most livable city in the country and with Imagine Austin's vision that our city's greatest asset is its people. The Austin: Welcoming City Initiative was embarked upon as a starting point in that process. The Commission envisioned this initiative as a public input process, to give residents the opportunity to share their perceptions of Austin's inclusion of immigrants and to inform and define what "welcoming" means in the context of our community, and invited a collection of community partners to contribute to the endeavor.

The following illustrates the phases of the project as they were designed and carried out:

	Planning	Design	Implemen-tation	Analysis	Final Products
Tasks	• Identify research questions • Identify public participation goals • Establish partner roles • Determine resources and timelines	• Design public participation plan • Design public input tools: surveys, focus groups, and interviews	• Open surveys online • Facilitate focus groups • Conduct interviews • Deliver results to analysis team	• Inductive analysis of all qualitative data • Aggregation of all quantitative data • Integration of data across issue areas & stakeholder groups	• Preliminary Highlights (June 2015) • Final Report (August 2015) • Executive Summary (August 2015)
Lead Partner	• Commission on Immigrant Affairs, with planning support from TCHHS/VS, R&P	• TCHHS/VS, R&P in consultation with other partners	• Commission on Immigrant Affairs • Immigrant Services Network of Austin • Economic Development	• TCHHS/VS, R&P, with review and consultation from Commission chair	• TCHHS/VS, R&P, with review and consultation from Commission chair
Planned timeline	June-July 2014	August-September 2014	October 2014-February 2015	March-April 2015	May-June 2015
Actual timeline	June-July 2014	August-September 2014	November 2014-April 2015	May-June 2015	June-September 2015

Planning → Design → Implementation → Analysis → Products

CORE PARTNERS

The following table lists the organizations that served as core partners in the Austin: Welcoming City Initiative, and their respective roles. Staff and volunteer representatives from these organizations comprised a planning team that directed the work, under the leadership of the Chair of the Commission on Immigrant Affairs.

Partners	Roles/Responsibilities
City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs	• Primary sponsor, coordinator, and owner of the initiative • Implementation partner: Funder and elected official stakeholder groups • Responsible for final decision making and approval for all parts of the initiative
City of Austin Economic Development Department	• Sponsoring City of Austin department • Financial sponsorship of $3,000 • Hosted Austin: Welcoming City web page • Assisted with logistics and consulted/participated in overall planning • Implementation partner: General public and business community stakeholder groups
City of Austin Health & Human Services Department	• Financial sponsorship of $10,000 • Consulted/participated in overall planning
Immigrant Services Network of Austin	• Implementation partner: Immigrant stakeholder group
Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department (TCHHS/VS), Research & Planning Division	• Planning support in designing public participation plan • Consultation and research partner • Design of public input tools • Analysis of results • Documentation of results in final products

A WELCOMING FRAMEWORK

The Austin: Welcoming City initiative was set within the framework of: Austin City Council's 2013 proclamation declaring Austin "a welcoming city for international newcomers"; the City's launch of the International Welcome Program through the Economic Development Department in the same year; and Austin's formal induction as one of the first 14 municipalities in the country to officially become a Welcoming Cities and Counties Affiliate through Welcoming America. Those actions demonstrated an intention for Austin to be a welcoming, immigrant-friendly community. Within those parameters, this public input process attempted to answer questions around *how* Austin could be welcoming to immigrants, not *if* Austin should be welcoming to immigrants. Although some of the input received through online surveys questioned or expressed disagreement with the intent of the process, or implied bias in the methodology, the planning team members felt that the design of the public input process was appropriately rooted in the Austin City Council's official position on and orientation to the issue.

RESOURCES

The City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs provided the impetus for the Austin: Welcoming City initiative. Like all City boards and commissions, the Commission on Immigrant Affairs is comprised of community volunteers who apply to serve and are appointed by City Council members.

The following formal resources were dedicated to this effort:

- Austin City Council directed the City Manager to allocate appropriate resources to the Commission's Austin: Welcoming City initiative.
- Economic Development Department was assigned to staff and support the initiative. Economic Development allocated a $3,000 financial sponsorship and hosted the Austin: Welcoming City webpage.
- Additionally, the Commission sought and secured additional financial support from the City of Austin Department of Health & Human Services in the form of a $10,000 contract.

Financial resources dedicated to the initiative funded:

- The Austin: Welcoming City Summit (February 2015)
- Printing and associated event related costs
- Gift cards ($50) to be used as raffle items for immigrant focus group participants

The following in-kind resources were secured from partner agencies and networks:

- Planning support from Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service, Research & Planning Division, which entailed staff support from June 2014 through August 2015
- Pro-bono bus advertising from Capital Metro during the months of October-December 2014
- Fiscal agent services from Caritas of Austin
- Volunteer staff efforts and donated facility use from member agencies of the Immigrant Services Network of Austin and various other local community-based organizations (for a full list of collaborators, see the Acknowledgements section of this report)

VALUES ADOPTED AND RESEARCH CHOICES

We prioritized the following key values in this public input process:

- Inclusion for all stakeholders and particularly immigrant voices
- Minimizing barriers to participation, as resources allowed
- Protection of anonymity in participation
- Emphasis on public input of individual perceptions, experiences, and knowledge
- Allowing participants to define what "welcoming" means to them

From this value orientation, we made the following methodological choices:

- Employed largely qualitative methods of data collection, supplemented by quantitative methods
- Made all questions optional, so as to better engage populations for whom disclosure of identifying or sensitive information could have a chilling effect on participation
- Did not collect IP information from online survey responses
- Survey settings allowed multiple entries per computer station to allow for public computer use
- Made no attempt to restrict or identify participation across any of the input tools

DESIGN PHASE

Planning → Design → Implementation → Analysis → Products

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the design process:

- What are residents' perceptions of Austin's inclusion of immigrants, both in general and across specific areas of community life?
- What can Austin do to be more welcoming towards immigrants?
- Within specific stakeholder groups, in what ways are Austinites working to include immigrants, what sector-specific barriers exist for the inclusion of immigrants, what impacts do stakeholders experience, and what solutions do they recommend?

TARGETED GROUPS AND METHODS

We identified six key stakeholder groups to target, and developed appropriate, participatory, public input techniques for each group. Techniques were selected based on stakeholder group type and resources available, given that implementation largely relied on volunteers and pro-bono or in-kind efforts.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNER	INPUT TECHNIQUES			
		ONLINE SURVEYS	FOCUS GROUPS	WELCOMING CITY SUMMIT	INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS
Immigrant Residents	Immigrant Services Network of Austin	✓	✓		
General Public	City of Austin Economic Development Department	✓			
Service Providers	City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs	✓	✓*	✓*	
Business Community	City of Austin Economic Development Department	✓	✓		
Funders (public and philanthropic)	City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs	✓	✓		
Elected Officials	City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs				✓

Service providers were initially targeted through the Welcoming City Summit. Due to an inclement weather closure at the facility, the participation component of the summit was cancelled and later replaced by a focus group.

INPUT TOOLS USED, RATIONALE, AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Online surveys offered an economical and widely accessible input tool for broad inclusion. Research & Planning staff worked with the planning team to develop survey topics and questions for each group that met the goals of the public participation process. Four surveys were created to capture input from service providers, businesses, funders, and the general public (the latter available in English and Spanish). Eight core questions were asked across all stakeholder groups (assessing Austin's general degree of welcome towards immigrants, Austin's degree of welcome towards immigrants across six specific issue areas, and collecting recommendations to make Austin more welcoming), with additional customized sector-specific questions, as well as questions to collect de-identified demographic and/or organizational information for each participant.

Focus groups provided an intimate setting for small group discussion and the rich exploration of qualitative information. Focus groups were the primary vehicle for immigrant residents' input, as well as a supplement to survey data for the business, funder, and service provider stakeholder groups. Focus group discussion questions mirrored the core questions from the surveys so that data from both sources could be aggregated.

Focus group tools were designed by TCHHS/VS Research & Planning staff such that volunteers could

independently implement focus groups on behalf of the Commission. The planning team considered hosting in-person training sessions for focus group hosts, however there were concerns about (1) logistical challenges and barriers associated with coordinating one group training for all volunteers, and (2) the extensive time and resources it would require to train each facilitator and recorder at their convenience. Instead, the approach adopted was to create detailed toolkits for focus group hosts, including the following materials:

- An invitation packet for host agencies/organizations, with detailed instructions on staff needed, target group size, recommended time duration, and room setup suggestions.
- An instruction sheet for the focus group facilitator and focus group recorder.
- A focus group facilitator script with discussion questions that mirrored the core questions from the surveys so that data from both sources could be aggregated.
- A results form for focus group recorders to capture descriptive group information and notes on participant responses to discussion questions
- Focus group participant information cards, which asked for a selection of personal demographic information or organizational characteristics (depending on stakeholder type) that was identical to a subset of questions from the online surveys
- Labeled envelopes for the return of hard copies of materials, or alternately, instructions for electronic delivery of results

The *Austin: Welcoming City Summit,* a two-day event featuring an agenda of informational speakers and panels, was wholly designed and executed by the Commission on Immigrant Affairs, with the exception of a public input session designed by Research & Planning, the structure and content of which paralleled other focus groups and survey questions. The event was broadly publicized but in particular targeted service providers, and was intended as the primary vehicle for service provider input. (An inclement weather closure at the facility on second day of the event caused the input session to be cancelled, resulting in no input gathered at this event. A focus group for service providers was later scheduled in its place.)

Individual interviews were used to collect input from elected officials. Because of the time and labor intensive nature of this input method, this method was only used for this stakeholder group. The interview tool was developed by the Chair of the Commission on Immigrant Affairs, with consultation from Research & Planning staff in order to align interview questions collected information with that of other input tools.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS IN DESIGN

Staff from Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service, Research & Planning Division consulted on or led most design processes. R&P staff applied best practices in participatory process, survey methodology, and qualitative data analysis, based on knowledge and principles learned through professional training and experience in community planning work. However, R&P staff are not professional evaluators, which presents inherent limitations. In addition, as a result of resource limitations, implementation would rely heavily on volunteer efforts, which influenced some design decisions towards less rigorous methods.

IMPLEMENTATION

| Planning | Design | Implementation | Analysis | Products |

PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

A total of 766 responses were collected and analyzed for this report, combined from online surveys (543 responses), focus groups (215 participants), and in-person interviews (8 participants). By stakeholder group, participation was as follows:

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	PARTICIPATION
Immigrant Residents	• 149 focus group participants
General Public	• 449 survey responses • 51 respondents self-identified that they were not a U.S. citizen at birth
Service Providers	• 9 focus group participants • 38 survey responses
Business Community	• 43 focus group participants • 38 survey responses
Funders (public and philanthropic)	• 12 focus group participants • 18 survey responses
Elected Officials	• 8 local elected officials were interviewed

Note duplication of participation was possible across various groups and input tools, thus instances of participation should not be considered unduplicated individuals and mutually exclusive of each other. This was acknowledged by the researchers as a potential limitation in the precision of results; however this decision was consistent with the spirit and values of the initiative.

ONLINE SURVEYS

General Implementation Details: Four surveys (General Public, Business, Funders, and Service Providers) were initially designed and hosted through the Survey Monkey platform, through the TCHHS/VS Research & Planning subscription. A fifth survey (General Public, Spanish translation) was later added. Links to the surveys, along with descriptions for email/newsletter invitations or online web pages, were provided by TCHHS/VS Research & Planning staff to the planning team members who distributed surveys to their appropriate networks. Surveys were posted by the City of Austin Economic Development Department on their *Austin: Welcoming City* web page and released to the media through a City of Austin press release in January 2015. Information was also disseminated through the City of Austin Nextdoor network. A total of 548 survey responses were received across all stakeholder groups.

General Implementation Challenges: Many of the challenges predictably resulted from the values orientation adopted by the planning team, in line with the overall goals of the public participation plan. Other challenges resulted from resource limitations.

- Online surveys create an inherent limitation in access for stakeholders who did not have computer and internet access.
- Because all survey questions were optional, some respondents skipped questions. This created some challenges in analysis and reporting of results, given that different questions had different universes of respondents.
- Because survey settings were selected to maximize inclusion and access (allowing multiple entries per computer station to accommodate public computer stations, no IP addresses collected, no restrictions on input across tools), duplication of entries was possible. If desired, an individual could make multiple submissions of the same survey, or take multiple surveys intended for different stakeholder group.
- Because all participation was optionally anonymous and there were no restrictions across input tools, duplication of participation was also possible between surveys and other input techniques.

- Immigrant residents may have been, and likely were, included among business, funder, and service provider survey respondents. However for those surveys, no demographic information was asked of respondents regarding nativity status, because their participation was sought primarily a representative of their organization or company to speak to organizational practices, not as an individual community member to speak to their personal experience as an immigrant.
- Due to limitations in financial resources, most surveys were posted in English only. Researchers acknowledged the inherent limitation of using primarily English survey tools for a public input process focused on collecting information on immigrant issues. The planning team decided instead to focus translation efforts and more intensive human resources on focus groups for immigrant residents, as a more appropriate tool for engaging that stakeholder group.
- Immigrant residents who were among general public survey respondents did have the option to self-identify as not having been a U.S. citizen at birth. Follow-up questions for this subset of respondents would have collected some information about immigrant-related characteristics, but in categories and using data breaks aligned with that of the general public survey, not those of immigrant resident focus group participant information cards; thus self-identified immigrant survey respondents' personal data could not be perfectly aligned to aggregate with that of the immigrant focus group participants.
- Immigrant residents who may have been included among funder, service provider, and business survey respondents were not specifically asked about their nativity status or their experiences as immigrants, because their participation was sought primarily a representative of their organization or company to speak to organizational practices, not as an individual community member to speak to their personal experience as an immigrant or non-immigrant.
- Resources were later allocated to translate the General Public survey into Spanish, but this occurred in February 2015, three months after all English surveys had been posted. All surveys were extended an additional month and closed at the end of March, instead of the end of February, to allow more time for publicity and completion. However the Spanish language survey link was never posted on the *Austin: Welcoming City* web page, so it is unclear how users would have found the survey to take it.

Stakeholder-Specific Implementation Details and Challenges:

Stakeholder Survey	Implementation Details	Challenges/Limitations
General Public, English	• Publicized through City of Austin press release in January 2015 • Live November 2014—March 2015 • Response total: 449	• For majority of open survey period, only available in English • Translation resources later allocated for Spanish; translation resources for other languages unavailable
General Public, Spanish	• Publicized through Telemundo • Live February 2015—March 2015 • Response total: 0	• Late release resulted in shorter open survey period than other surveys • Late release resulted in different publicity efforts and timeline • Link not posted to Economic Development Department *Austin: Welcoming City* web page
Service Providers	• Publicized through City of Austin press release, Immigrant Services Network of Austin newsletter, Commission on Immigrant Affairs newsletter and later shared through the Community Advancement Newsletter • Live November 2014—March 2015 • Response total: 38	• Limited outreach through convenience sample • Potential duplication of participation between survey and focus group
Funders	• Publicized through City of Austin press release, emails by planning team members to funder contacts, and Austin Area Funders Group network (through Austin Community	• Limited outreach through convenience sample • Potential duplication of participation between survey and focus group

Businesses	• Publicized through City of Austin press release, identified business networks/associations, and Chamber of Commerce • Live November 2014—March 2015 • Response total: 38	• Intended for the larger Austin area business community, but only immigrant business networks and associations were targeted in implementation. This represented a significant loss of data for this stakeholder group. • Potential duplication of participation between survey and focus groups.

(Above the Businesses row, the top of the table continues:)

| | • Foundation)
• Live November 2014—March 2015
• Response total: 18 | |

FOCUS GROUPS

General Implementation Details: Three focus group toolkits were originally created, one each for the Immigrant, Business, and Funder stakeholder groups. A fourth focus group toolkit was later created for the Service Provider group, when a service provider focus group was scheduled following the cancellation of the public input session at the Austin: Welcoming City Summit due to inclement weather.

Focus group toolkits were sent by TCHHS/VS Research & Planning staff directly to implementation partners, to either distribute through their networks or use directly with their stakeholders. In most cases, toolkits were sent electronically.

Implementation partners held focus groups between November 2014 and March 2015. A total of 18 focus groups were held, with a total of 215 participants. Recommended process for focus group implementation included:

- One designated facilitator with role of:
    - Guiding discussion using the provided script
    - Encouraging respectful dialogue and equitable participation opportunities
    - Keeping discussion on topic
    - Managing time in order to allot enough time for all questions and end on time
    - Remaining neutral regarding discussion content
    - Distributing and collecting participant information card
- One designated recorder with the role of:
    - Recording the essence of participants' ideas and comments
    - Keeping all recorded comments anonymous and unidentified
    - Remaining neutral and uninvolved in the content of the discussion
- Ideally facilitators and scribes were fluent in the language of origin of participants or could recruit interpreter assistance from their agencies/organizations.
- Facilitator script included promise to participants that demographic or organizational information cards were optional, names would not be written down by recorders or connected to any specific comments, and that any quotations used in the final report would be anonymous and only attributed to a focus group participant, not a specific person or focus group. Where applicable, script also included promise that comments or information shared would not affect any services participants received from any service provider.
- Recommended focus group size was 6 to 15, with an ideal size of 10.
- Recommended time duration was 1.0 to 1.5 hours depending on group size and whether interpreters were used.
- Recommended room setup was a private space with seats arranged in a circle or U-shape for maximum interaction between both participants and facilitator.

- Recommended that facilitators distribute and collect back participant information cards at the beginning of the focus group while reading introductory script, so as to better ensure collection of demographic information.
- Recommended that facilitators conduct gift card raffle at the end of the focus group session.

General Implementation Challenges: Implementation challenges stemmed primarily from limited resources, reliance on volunteers, and the resulting variance in how volunteers performed their roles.

- Focus group invitations through convenience sampling for most stakeholder groups meant that there was no mechanism to ensure that participation was demographically or organizationally representative of Austin's diverse community.
- Facilitators varied in their fidelity to the provided focus group scripts. Results from submitted recorder notes indicated that some facilitators led discussions exactly according to the script, while other facilitators skipped questions, changed question wording, and/or added different questions than were in the script.
- There was significant variance in recorder style, thoroughness, and fidelity to recorder instructions. Some recorders provided more detailed notes, with individual comments and ideas separately transcribed and salient verbatim quotations, as requested. Other recorders provided more cursory, third-party summaries of the discussion content. Focus groups notes containing less detail offered less content and thus less utility in the analysis of results.
- Completion of focus group questions varied across groups. In some groups, some questions were either skipped or answers went unrecorded. Some recorders noted that skipped questions were due to time constraints, but other groups did not provide explanations for incompletions.
- Attendance varied greatly. Actual group size across all stakeholder groups ranged from a low of 1 to a high of 32, with a mean of 12.
- Without continuity of personnel and facilities across groups, researchers cannot verify whether recommendations for focus group duration or logistical arrangements were consistently followed.
- Due to reliance on volunteers to conduct focus groups, rather than professional or trained researchers, interviewer bias may have been present.
- Focus group toolkits were produced in English only, due to limited resources available to researchers who created the tools. Spanish version was translated by the Commission on Immigrant Affairs. Focus groups with non-English speaking populations were conducted in participants' language of origin where possible. Facilitators and recorders either spoke participants' language or recruited interpreters from host agencies/organizations to assist them. Hosts were asked to translate recorded notes back into English before returning them to researchers, as the researchers conducting analysis did not have access to translation services. Reliance on bilingual volunteers to do translation and interpretation, who may or may not have had formal experience or training in these skills, may have impacted results.
- Participant information cards were not returned for all groups; for some groups, cards were only returned for some participants. Because the cards were optional on the part of participants, it is not possible to determine whether the reason for missing cards was participant choice or focus group host omission.
- Because most immigrant stakeholders for groups were recruited from the clientele of partner social service agencies, focus groups were often held on location at the agencies from which those clients were receiving services, and focus groups were frequently facilitated by the staff from which clients may have been receiving services, there was the potential for social desirability bias on the part of participants.
- Immigrant residents who may have been included among funder and service provider groups were not specifically asked about their nativity status or their experiences as immigrants, because their participation was sought primarily a representative of their organization or company to speak to organizational practices, not as an individual community member to speak to their personal experience

as an immigrant or non-immigrant.

- The business stakeholder group's focus groups were facilitated with materials intended for another stakeholder group (immigrant residents). Thus results omitted intended information related to that sector, but did collect information on immigrant status and immigrant experiences. This created a challenge in the analysis phase, in that information collected from focus groups and surveys for this stakeholder group could not be aggregated and reported together.

Stakeholder-Specific Implementation Details and Challenges:

Stakeholder Group	Implementation Details	Challenges/Limitations

Immigrant Residents	• 11 focus groups held by 7 host organizations
	• Languages focus groups conducted in:
	  • 8 groups monolingual, 3 bi- or multi-lingual
	  • 6 Spanish, 7 English, 2 Kinyarwanda, 2 Arabic
	• Facilitators:
	  • 9 reported they were native speakers of focus group language; 1 was not but reported "functional fluency"
	  • 6 reported they regularly conduct interpretation/translation services; 4 did not
	  • 2 multilingual groups used interpreter assistance
	  • 1 group used non-traditional online format and did not have a facilitator
	• Recorders:
	  • 7 were native speakers of focus group language; 1 was not
	  • 4 reported they regularly conduct interpretation/translation services; 4 did not (however these were all for English language focus groups)
	  • 2 groups did not report recorder information
	  • 1 group used same person for facilitator and recorder role
	  • 1 group used non-traditional online format and did not have a recorder
	• Total participants: 149
	• Participant cards submitted: 106 (71%)
		• Invitations through convenience sampling through Immigrant Services Network of Austin meant participation was not demographically representative of Austin's immigrant population, but rather representative of willing volunteer host agencies' client bases.
		• Varying completion of focus group questions:
		  • 4 of 11 groups completed all focus group questions
		  • Remaining 7 groups completed between 33% and 89% of focus group questions
		  • Only the first and last question (how welcoming is Austin towards immigrants; how can Austin be more welcoming to immigrants) had 100% completion across all groups. All other questions had varying degrees of completion.
		• In 4 groups, facilitator changed question wording from focus group script
		• In 2 groups, facilitator asked additional leading questions as prompts or follow-up
		• In 4 groups, facilitator added additional questions on supplemental topics not included in the script (housing and/or transportation)
		• 3 groups used the provided results form to return transcriptions; 8 did not, and instead provided notes in some other format (some closely resembling the provided results form and some varying more widely).
		• Participant information cards not returned for all groups.
		• Participant information cards omitted last two answer options for some Spanish language groups, due to error during translation, resulting in incomplete data collection for the last question on the card for those groups.
		• Potential for social desirability bias given that participants were clients of social service agencies, and focus groups were mostly facilitated on location and by staff from those agencies.

Service Providers	• 1 focus group held • Language focus group conducted in: English • Total participants: 9 • Participant cards submitted: 9 (100%)	• Limited invitations through convenience sampling • Initial public input session at *Austin: Welcoming City Summit,* which could have yielded attendance of 80 to 120 people, was cancelled due to an inclement weather facility closure. This

		represented a significant loss of data for this stakeholder group. • Replacement focus group yielded much lower attendance: an RSVP count of 23 and an actual attendance of 9 participants.

Funders	• 2 focus groups held
	• Language focus groups conducted in: English
	• Total participants: 14
	• Participant cards submitted: 14 (100%)
		• Limited invitations through convenience sampling:
		  • Relied on a community partner to identify and contact private funders network
		  • Relied on planning team members to identify and target local public funder contacts
		• Public funders group had low attendance (2 individuals).
		• Invitation email sent to private funders group misinformed participants of purpose. Attendees believed they were receiving a presentation and were surprised to learn they were focus group participants. Facilitator offered all the option to decline to participate and leave the session, but none did; however some expressed confusion and displeasure with the circumstances.
		• Recorder computer failure at start of private funders group resulted in using a borrowed laptop and thus notes were not transcribed using the intended results form.
		• One issue area question was skipped in private funders group due to time constraints.

Businesses	• 4 focus groups held
	• Languages focus groups conducted in:
	  • 2 English, 1 Spanish, 1 Mandarin
	• Facilitators:
	  • 4 reported they were native speakers of focus group language
	  • 2 reported they regularly conduct interpretation/translation services; 2 did not (however both were for English language focus groups)
	• Recorders:
	  • 4 were native speakers of focus group language
	  • 4 reported they regularly conduct interpretation/translation services;
	• Total participants: 43
	• Participant cards submitted: 37 (86%)
		• Intended for the larger Austin area business community, but only immigrant business networks and associations were targeted in implementation. This represented a significant loss of data for this stakeholder group.
		• Business groups were facilitated using immigrant focus group materials (both script and participant information cards). As a result, participants were asked questions about their experience as immigrant residents, and were not asked intended sector-specific questions about their role as employers of immigrants or their immigrant customer base.
		• Participant information cards were returned for all groups but not all participants.

INTERVIEWS

Implementation Details: Interviews were used to target local elected officials. The target stakeholder group consisted of the 11 members of the Austin City Council and the 5 members of the Travis County Commissioners Court. The target group was divided up between two members of the Commission on Immigrant Affairs. All were contacted with the same form letter invitation by email; one additional follow-up was sent in cases of non-response. Interviews were sent and interviews arranged during February-April 2015. Interviewers transcribed interview notes and provided them to researchers for analysis. In total, 8 of 16 (50%) of the targeted stakeholder group were interviewed.

- Among 11 City Council members:
  - 3 did not respond
  - 1 responded to decline
  - 2 responded to accept, but arranged interviews did not occur due to scheduling conflicts
  - 5 responded to accept and were interviewed
- Among 5 Travis County Commissioners Court members:
  - 2 did not respond
  - 3 responded to accept and were interviewed

Implementation Challenges:

- Four interviews were conducted by phone and four were conducted in person.
- Two different interviewers conducted and transcribed the interviews. This could have had an impact on the style and level of detail in the transcriptions.
- Invitations were emailed at different times by different interviewers (because an intended third interviewer resigned from the process and their contacts were redistributed at a later date between the remaining two). This could have had an effect on subject availability or response rates.
- Some interviews were incomplete, either because subjects declined to answer all questions, or because calls or visits were cut short by the interview subjects.
  - Only 1 of 8 elected officials completed 100% of interview questions; for the remainder, completion rates ranged from 42% to 92% of intended content.
  - Interview subjects were most likely to skip issue-area specific questions because they expressed lack of knowledge or familiarity with the topic.
- Interview subjects varied greatly in the level of detail provided in response to questions, ranging from one-word responses, to more verbose answers with multiple ideas and illustrative examples.

ANALYSIS PHASE

Planning → Design → Implementation → Analysis → Products

SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

The qualitative survey data responses were analyzed first through an inductive, multi-coder process. Initially, three team members read independently through sub-sets of the survey data across all of the core questions (Q1-8) to begin to identify emergent themes. The three individuals then met to brainstorm all of the potential themes and began grouping these ideas under the broad categories of "welcoming," "somewhat welcoming," "not welcoming," and an additional category of "too welcoming." The team started this process with responses from Question 1 ("*How welcoming do you think the greater Austin community is towards immigrants?*") and identified several dozen general themes. Responses from the six issue area questions were then discussed, and either new, issue area-specific themes were created or it was decided that a sufficient general theme had already been identified. The team then identified themes across survey recommendations.

All of the themes were organized into a single "code book" to support coders in their reading and analysis. Each theme was assigned a novel three-letter code, description, and inclusion and exclusion examples (as needed). An example of a theme from the code book is shown below.

Overarching Category	Theme Code	Theme Title	Theme Description	Inclusion Examples
Somewhat Welcoming	**SDN**	Systems Difficult to Navigate or Access	Systems are difficult for immigrants to identify or access	Government bureaucracy

The code book was piloted by a team of four coders who paired up to read through two survey response sets comprising roughly 15% of the total responses across questions and ratings for the General Public survey. Each coder read through and assigned one or multiple three-letter codes (representing unique themes) to every survey response. The two coders who read the same data set then compared their codes to determine their approximate level of inter-rater agreement and to discuss challenges with the code book. The full team then met to revise and expand the code book as needed and to discuss standardized coding techniques. When completed, the full code book included 76 unique themes. The same pairs then continued analyzing the remainder of the survey responses across all surveys. Finally, each pair spent time discussing all remaining code disagreements and determining final codes for all responses that were amendable to both parties.

The final codes for all responses were aggregated across questions and stakeholder to support final analysis and writing.

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Two of the researchers who had coded survey responses conducted the analysis of all results from focus groups and interviews. The survey code book was used as a supporting tool for analyzing the content of the focus groups and interviews. However, the inductive theme development process to generate the initial code book occurred exclusively with the survey responses. Therefore, in order to account for potential novel themes in the focus group or interview data, the coders did not rely solely on the survey code book for that part of the analysis. Because focus groups, not surveys, were the primary vehicle for immigrant resident inclusion, researchers did an additional inductive code development process using immigrant focus group results. Subsequently, an additional eight novel themes were identified.

The code book, including survey themes and novel themes, was used as a supporting tool for analyzing the content of the focus groups and interviews. Researchers read all transcripts for topic and theme frequency. Due to variety in focus group transcriptions, researchers could count theme occurrence across groups, but not across individuals or degree of agreement between individuals (i.e. we could report only total number of groups in which a given theme was mentioned, but not frequency of theme occurrence by individuals within groups). Researchers also computed completion rates for each question, focus group, and interview.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS IN ANALYSIS

The following challenges and limitations could have impacted the results during the analysis phase:

- Researchers did not have access to advanced qualitative data analysis software. Microsoft Excel was the primary tool for coding and analysis.
- Potential researcher bias existed in inductive theme identification.
- Differences in researcher interpretation of responses may not have been fully mitigated by the inter-rater coding process.
- Because initial theme development was drawn from a sub-set of the data, researchers found that some themes were missing from the code book upon coding all responses (i.e. initial theme development may have differed if a different sub-set, or larger sub-set, had been used). Missing codes had to be accounted for through team discussion at the end of the analysis process. Some but not all responses were recoded as a result.

- In order to meet project time constraints, limited time to create the code book meant that some themes were not fully developed or overlapped with other themes. For example, there were not enough themes in some specific topic areas to adequately describe all of the responses. Researchers attempted to explore and separate underdeveloped or overlapping theme areas in the writing phase.

FINAL PRODUCTS

Planning → Design → Implementation → Analysis → **Products**

The final report was structured in two main halves: Issue area sections with topical explorations, and stakeholder group sections with stakeholder- and sector-specific information.

ISSUE AREA SECTIONS

Within each issue area section, aggregate survey ratings were translated into a weighted average by assigning a value of 1 to "not welcoming," 2 to "somewhat welcoming," and 3 to "welcoming," and averaging the total results. These ratings were displayed along a spectrum for each section, along with a 100% stacked bar to show rating distributions.

Researchers decided to feature and explore immigrant voices first and separate from other stakeholders, followed by the combined results from other stakeholder groups, and any noteworthy differences between groups.

Top themes for each issue area were used to structure narrative explorations. Theme frequencies throughout the report referred to the percentage of responses featuring that theme *among those who answered that specific question* (not percentage of total survey respondents). Supporting quotations were drawn from across all stakeholders and input tools. Researchers made the following decisions regarding selection and display of quotations:

- Individual quotations remained anonymous but were ascribed to a stakeholder group, as researchers decided it was substantively valuable contextual information that helped the reader better understand and interpret the data presented.
- Researchers did correct for spelling and punctuation errors in cited quotations, as well as applying standard sentence case, where those corrections improved uniformity in the report and removed barriers to comprehension without changing the meaning of the quotation.
- Editorial additions were noted with brackets and added where needed to provide clarity or definition to aid in reader comprehension (for example, "S*tand against SCOM [Secure Communities] policy")*.
- Quotations that were defaming, slanderous, or used derogatory language (such as slurs or hate speech) were not selected for inclusion as supporting examples for narratives, although they were included in analysis for themes.
- Researchers decided not to redact specific names of agencies, organizations, or individuals (provided the comments met the aforementioned criteria regarding language), as those specific references were determined to be useful both contextually and substantively, and the redaction thereof often obscured meaning and relevance. Researchers attempted to apply this criterion equally to comments that were both positive and negative in nature.

Finally, each issue area section discussed any recommendations that were specific to that topic area, drawn from survey, focus group, and interview responses to that specific topical question, or from questions that

related to Austin more generally (Q1 and Q8) for which answers may have been more topically focused. Recommendations that were general, cross-issue area, or community-wide in nature were explored in the Recommendations section of the report.

STAKEHOLDER SECTIONS

Stakeholder group sections for immigrant residents, general public, business, funder, and service provider groups featured the following information, frequently displayed graphically:

- Aggregated personal demographic information, as reported in focus group participant cards and self-reported survey respondent information
- Aggregated organizational information, as reported in focus group participant cards and self-reported survey respondent information
- Stakeholder- and sector-specific survey data

For all statistics reported in stakeholder group sections, percentages referred to the share of responses featuring that response *among those who answered that specific question* (not percentage of total participants).

Researchers made the following decisions for analysis of unclear stakeholder demographic information:

- For write-in responses for languages spoken or country of origin that were misspelled or used abbreviations, researchers assigned the response to a language or country name if the intended meaning was reasonably clear and interpretable. If the meaning was not clear and interpretable, the answer was counted as a non-response.
- For write-in responses that listed multiple languages spoken, all were included in analysis and respondent was counted as multi-lingual.
- For write-in responses that listed multiple countries of origin, only the first country listed was counted in analysis, based on the rationale that a person cannot have more than one single place of birth.

The Elected Officials stakeholder section was written in narrative format only, due to being sourced from only qualitative data, and explored stakeholder-specific interview topics not covered elsewhere in the report. Narrative was structured around common themes, with supporting quotations drawn from the interview notes. District or precinct numbers were de-identified.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider allocating financial resources to professional researchers to design future public participation plans and tools: Although TCHHS/VS, Research & Planning Division staff applied best practices in participatory process, survey methodology, and qualitative data collection, based on knowledge and principles learned through professional training and experience in community planning work, R&P staff are not professional researchers or evaluators, which presents inherent limitations.

Consider allocating financial resources to professional researchers to implement future public participation processes: Reliance on volunteer efforts to implement qualitative research both influenced some design decisions towards less rigorous methods and resulted in significant variance in fidelity to planned models upon implementation. Subsequent gaps and inconsistencies in data collected likely impacted the depth, utility, and generalizability of results.

Consider allocating financial resources to professional researchers to analyze the results of future public participation processes: Although TCHHS/VS, Research & Planning staff applied best practices in qualitative and

quantitative data analysis and are skilled and experienced at producing data products of all types, R&P staff do not have access to advanced or sophisticated data analysis software.

FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE INFORMATION

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