

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs: understanding and responding to immigration challenges in Minneapolis

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Background: Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

- City and Community input leading to creation of the office
- Operational starting July 2018
- Office Structure: 1 person office within larger Department of Neighborhood and Community Relations
- Mission(s):
 - Inform
 - Support
 - Advocate
 - Collaborate

MISSION OF OIRA

- Participate in development of city policies to positively impact immigrant and refugee populations in Minneapolis
- Collaborate with legal service organizations that provide immigration related legal services to Minneapolis residents
- Ensure that immigrant related concerns raised by community organizations are heard and acted upon by the city
- Inform immigrant and refugee groups of immigration related developments and ensure they have the information they need to act to increase their safety and security
- Participate in trainings informing the community on how individuals obtain immigration status
- Assist in the integration of immigrant and refugee communities in Minneapolis and beyond

Major Immigration Challenges *and* Opportunities

Bombardment of initiatives to reduce eligibility for immigration status in the US leads to fatigue, stress and overload:

- Immigrant Populations: every population—from asylum applicants to highly skilled workers are impacted in current administration
- Donors: Minnesota—consortium of funders supplied \$1 million in 2017—inability to repeat for 2018 though need is only more acute
- Immigration Legal Service Providers: need more staff to serve population
- Private Immigration attorneys—at/beyond capacity in provision of pro bono legal services

Major Immigration Challenges *and* Opportunities

Example of challenges: NPRM (Notice of Proposed Rulemaking) on Public Charge:

- Would significantly increase number of individuals denied permanent residence on public charge grounds
- Expands category of people government can obtain more public charge assessment information on to include nonimmigrants who extend/change status in the US
- Notice and Comment period ends 12/10/18

Opportunity: Collaboration and Novel Solutions

Challenging times create opportunities for collaboration in the developing new solutions:

- City/County development of novel ways to support immigrant populations (Example: immigration legal defense funding)
- Community organization activism working to help identify issue and solution, including activism by affected populations for affected populations (Unidos MN, National TPS Alliance, Release MN 8)
- Powerful opportunity for critical alignment of municipalities, statewide, and through our elected representatives to effectuate change that benefits Minnesota's immigrant populations
- Opportunities for businesses to be more active in support of immigration solutions: unique opportunity for increased visibility

Resources for additional information

- <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/oira>
- <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/>
- <https://www.ilcm.org/resources/document-library/>

