



STRATEGIC WELCOME PLAN
for the City of Akron and County of Summit

PHASE I
Established April 2017

THE 5-PARTNER “GATEWAYS FOR GROWTH CHALLENGE TEAM”

(AKA PROJECT TEAM)

THE STRATEGIC WELCOME PLAN PROCESS WAS A PARTNERSHIP OF FIVE ORGANIZATIONS. THE PARTNERSHIP MET ON A REGULAR BASIS TO OVERSEE THE ENTIRE PROCESS THAT LED TO THE WRITING AND PUBLICATION OF THIS PLAN.

The International Institute of Akron (IIA) as the lead organization

Susan Berg Herman, Director of New Initiatives and Gateways for Growth Challenge Project Manager and Elaine Woloshyn, Executive Director

IIA is one of the largest refugee resettlement agencies in Ohio, and is affiliated with 31 nation-wide partner agencies in the network of Washington D.C.-based U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI). IIA professional staff and volunteers include persons from all over the world. IIA's mission is to contribute to the well-being of the community by creating and implementing programs and services to assist the foreign-born to integrate into our society, to promote public awareness of the value of ethnic diversity, and to encourage international communication. IIA has served in Akron, Ohio for 100 years. Current services include low-cost immigration and legal assistance, refugee resettlement, employment counseling, ESOL instruction, cultural orientation, financial literacy, citizenship, interpreting and translation. IIA has a growing focus on economic and community development that stems from the expressed desire of varied stakeholders for IIA to help expand opportunity in Akron's traditionally immigrant North Hill neighborhood, accelerating progress in a neighborhood already experiencing population and entrepreneurial growth.

City of Akron

Annie McFadden, Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Horrigan

Akron is the fifth largest city in Ohio with a population of over 197,000. The city is governed by the Mayor and City Council with the assistance of various departments, agencies and commissions. Akron consists of 24 neighborhoods, many of which retain unique architecture and characteristics, a product of Akron's quick growth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Originally known as a worldwide powerhouse in rubber manufacturing until the mid-twentieth century, Akron has now diversified its business sectors, with major corporations like Goodyear, Gojo Industries, First Energy and Huntington Bank as key employers. Akron continues to evolve into a highly-creative and innovative center for excellence, with economic focuses in manufacturing, education, healthcare, and biomedical. The city has been a known haven for new Americans for generations. Akron continues to be a proud supporter in the welcoming movement, as history has shown that the city truly benefits from a diverse population.

County of Summit

Drew Reilly, Executive Assistant to County Executive Shapiro

Summit County sits in the Northeast region of the state of Ohio. The County is home to thirty-one different municipalities, ranging from large cities to small townships. Located immediately south of Cuyahoga County (Cleveland Metro), it is also surrounded by Portage, Stark, and Medina Counties. As of the 2010 census, Summit County is home to 541,781 people, making it the fourth most populated County in Ohio. The Summit County Executive's Office serves as the administrative branch of Summit County government. Overseeing a budget of nearly half a billion dollars, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro also oversees 9 different departments, including: Administrative Services, Communications, Community and Economic Development, Finance and Budget, Human Resources, Job and Family Services, Law, Insurance and Risk Management, Sanitary Sewer Services and the Medical Examiner. Providing a breadth of services to the County, the Executive's Office is also the overseer of the County's budget. The Executive's Office is a proud partner of the Welcoming project, working to assist and provide for all citizens of Summit County, regardless of place of birth or national origin.

Asian Services in Action, Inc. (ASIA)

Michael Byun, CEO

Founded in 1995, ASIA Inc. and International Community Health Centers (ICHC) envisions that individuals, families, and communities are at optimal health and well-being. ASIA Inc. believes in a "no wrong door" approach that goes back to the traditions of American settlement homes that welcomed people of all race, creed, and ethnic background. ASIA is an organization committed to service to ensure language and cultural background are not barriers. ASIA and ICHC honor, respect, heal and empower over 30,000 New Americans they serve each year so these New Americans can fulfill their hopes and aspirations.

Global Ties Akron

Michelle Wilson, Executive Director

Global Ties Akron brings 40 years of experience in welcoming the world to the local community and creating opportunities to celebrate and build mutual understanding of Akron's diverse populations. Global Ties Akron programs include developing professional exchanges for world leaders through U.S. Department of State leadership and educator exchanges; developing curriculum and educational programs for youth; and offering Global Concierge Services to welcome international students, scholars and immigrants. Global Ties Akron programs strengthen academic, corporate, organizational, and personal ties between Northeast Ohio and the World.





DANIEL HORRIGAN, MAYOR

County of Summit · The High Point of Ohio



October 10, 2017

Dear Fellow Citizen –

We are pleased to present you with, the “Strategic Welcoming Plan for Akron and County of Summit: Phase One.” This document is the culmination of sixteen months of work by the City of Akron, the County of Summit, Asian Services in Action, Global Ties Akron, and the International Institute of Akron. However, there is more work to be done. As leaders, we know that welcoming the foreign-born to our community comes with challenges, and opportunities. This Welcoming Plan is our first step towards becoming a truly welcoming place. Immigrants and refugees are a vital part of our community. They bring fresh perspective and new ideas, start-up businesses, and they contribute to the vibrant diversity we all value. Communities across the country are constantly competing to attract the human capital that will allow them to thrive in a global economy. More importantly, communities around the world are grappling with how they will live their values in an age of growing migration. Akron and Summit County have a proud history of expanding to make room for new ideas and traditions.

In 2015, the City of Akron and Summit County passed resolutions proclaiming us to be a welcoming community. Shortly after, we were chosen as a *Gateways for Growth Challenge winner*, through which we created this community-wide plan to welcome and further integrate immigrants and refugees. Enclosed you will find an approach to Welcoming that is uniquely Akron, and uniquely Summit County. Our collaborative approach to this process is a key factor to Akron and Summit County being chosen as one of only five communities in the United States to receive grant funding for this effort. This report includes an analysis of the current environment, across sectors, of the foreign born community and service providers. More importantly, it also includes a road map to Phase Two of collaborative implementation for Welcoming Akron + Summit County. Welcoming is about developing a true respect and appreciation for our neighbors, creating policies and programs that support inclusion, and making sure that everyone - newcomer or longtime resident - feels they belong.

We encourage all our neighbors and fellow citizens to join in on this open, collaborative process. There is room for all of us at the table. What matters most is that we all want the same thing – the freedom to speak, to pray, and to raise our children with hope. There is nothing more American, nothing more Summit County, and nothing more Akron. Whether our new neighbors have come from a few counties over or a country halfway across the world, let us work to create a community of hope for all those who call Akron and Summit County home.

Sincerely,

Dan Horrigan
City of Akron Mayor

Ilene Shapiro
Summit County Executive

Table of **CONTENTS**

BACKGROUND

3	INTRODUCTION
4	NATIONAL TRENDS
6	LOCAL TRENDS
7	PROCESS METHODOLOGY
8	CONTRIBUTORS
9	TIMELINE OF EVENTS
10	WHAT WAS LEARNED

STRATEGIES/RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

12	VISION
12	GOALS
12	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

SUMMARY OF GOALS AND STRATEGIES

14	OUTCOMES
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APPENDIX

BACKGROUND

“Cities become great because they intentionally design themselves to be places that attract and incorporate diverse people, ideas, and talent and ensure that their residents, regardless of background, can participate, thrive and belong.”

- Welcoming America

INTRODUCTION

There has never been a more important time to talk to our community about what it means to be a welcoming place. Welcoming aims to develop a true respect and appreciation for our neighbors, creating policies and programs that support inclusion, and making sure that everyone - newcomer or longtime resident - feels they belong and has the tools they need to succeed. Communities across the country are constantly competing to attract the human capital that will allow them to thrive in a global economy. Newcomers play an important role in growing our population, supporting our workforce, diversifying the academic environment at our local universities, and starting small businesses that create jobs – all drivers of economic prosperity.

The Akron/Summit Strategic Welcoming Plan is a city and countywide initiative to intentionally build economic and social collaboration between the newcomer and longtime resident. It began in 2015 when Summit County Council and Akron City Council passed resolutions proclaiming this to be a welcoming community. Shortly after, International Institute of Akron applied for a competitive award to support the development of a welcoming plan through Welcoming America and New American Economy’s Gateways for Growth Challenge.



Mayor Horrigan and the late County Executive Russ Pry agreed to co-chair the welcoming effort. In March of 2016, Akron/Summit County was chosen as one of 20 communities to receive the Gateways for Growth award and one of only five communities across the United States to receive a \$12,500 matching grant. The City of Akron, County of Summit, Akron Community Foundation and Margaret Clark Morgan Foundation all came together to contribute the required \$12,500 match funds.

Receiving the Gateways for Growth Challenge award – including tailored research on the economic contributions of new Americans in Akron and Summit County, technical assistance from Welcoming America and New American Economy, and a matching grant - enabled our city and county to create the first ever community Welcoming Plan. This strategic Welcoming Plan outlines the vision, goals and strategies to move the city and county in a direction that maximizes the opportunity to grow in population, in diversity, in opportunity and be a welcoming community for all.

NATIONAL TRENDS

ZERO.

The number of major U.S. metros that grew between 1970-2013 without immigrants.

We're not producing enough innovators.

By 2018, the U.S. will face a shortage of...

230,000 STEM workers

76%

The share of patents at top patent-producing U.S. universities filed by immigrants.

Every foreign STEM worker with an advanced U.S. degree creates

2.62

American jobs

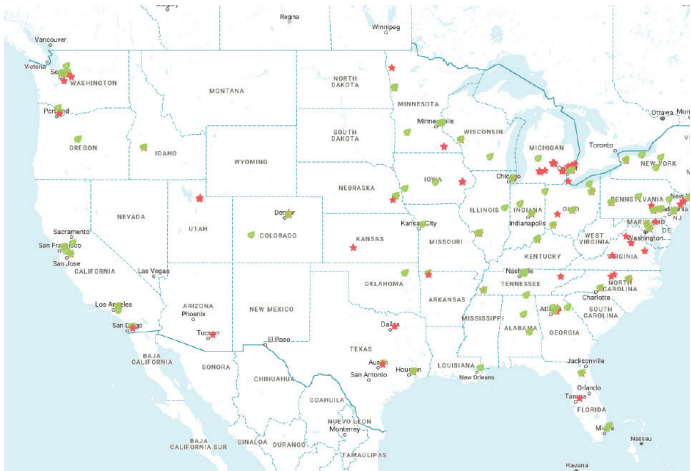


More than 40% of Fortune 500 companies were founded by the foreign-born or their children.



1 in 8 Americans

live in a community in the Welcoming America Network



● Local Government Partner ● Nonprofit Organization Partner

The Welcoming ROI

Competitive and Resilient Local Economies

Cities are more open and innovative, and better able to attract and retain global talent and investment

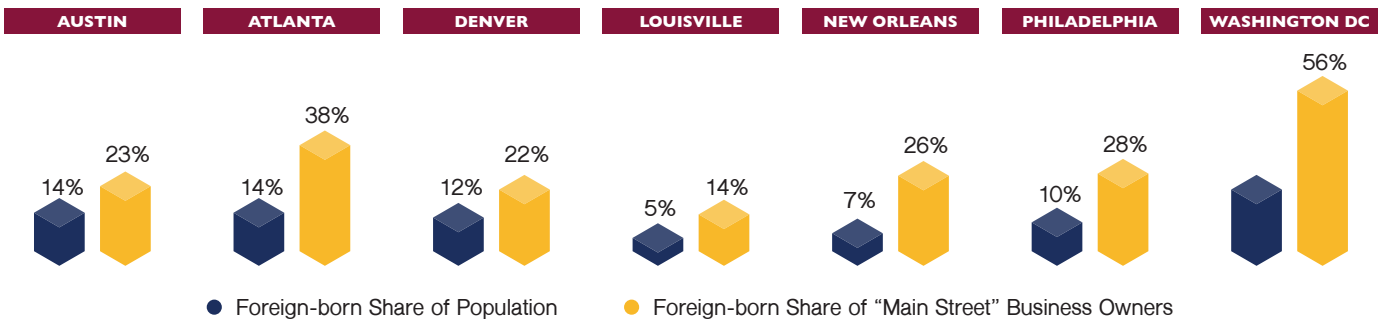
Stronger Civic Fabric

New Americans more active in civic life

Equitable Outcomes, Thriving Communities

More equitable access to services, educational, and workforce opportunities

In cities across the U.S. immigrants punch above their weight as entrepreneurs.



When 1,000 immigrants move to a county
46 manufacturing jobs are created or preserved.

That means the more than 40 million immigrants currently in the U.S. have
created or preserved 1.8 million manufacturing jobs nationally.

The foreign-born are more likely to fall in the
prime working-age range of 20-64.

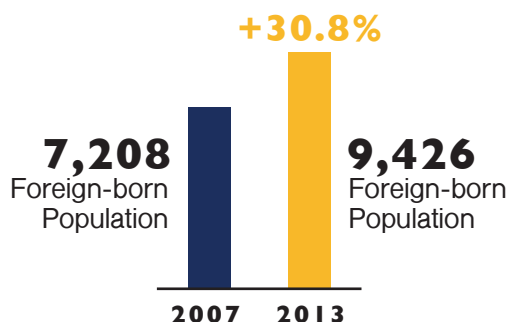
LOCAL TRENDS

A recent report from New American Economy, *Welcome to Akron*, shows the foreign-born are driving economic growth in Akron and are essential to our community's future success.

Key data points include:

Immigrants and refugees help offset Akron's population decline.

From 2007-2013, Akron's total population fell by 1%. Without a 30.8% increase in foreign-born, Akron's pop decline would have doubled.



Despite growth, foreign-born remain just under 5% of Akron's total population.

This remains far lower than the national average of 12.9% and the 18.1% average among Top 50 metro areas.

In Summit County, approximately 1,156 manufacturing jobs were created or preserved thanks to immigrants and refugees.

Foreign-born residents settling in Summit County increased the total housing value by \$207 million between 2000 to 2013.

They were less likely to be home owners, but more likely to own their homes without any debt.

FOREIGN-BORN HELD

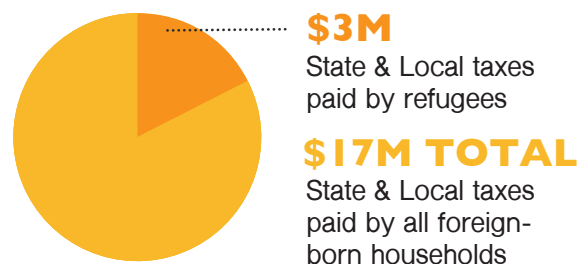
\$137M

IN SPENDING POWER IN 2013

Refugees held close to **\$23M** of that.

With population growth comes increased spending.

Akron's foreign-born population holds \$137 million in annual spending power and contribute \$17 million in state & local taxes each year.



Akron's foreign-born are more likely to have college and advanced degrees.

11.1%
Of foreign-born have an advanced degree

27.4%
Of foreign-born have a bachelor's degree

8.5%
Of the U.S.-born population does

18.2%
Of the U.S.-born population does

Akron's foreign-born are nearly twice as likely to be entrepreneurs.

In 2013, as a percent of the working-age population, refugees are 86% and immigrants are 80%. And although refugees only make up 1.3% of the population, they represented 5.6% of Akron's manufacturing workers and 6.7% of the city's service industries.

PROCESS METHODOLOGY

Taking into account the data and the collaborative culture of Akron and Summit County, it presents the opportunity to build intentionality around the economic and social rewards of celebrating our diversity through the “welcoming city/county model.”

Welcoming America defines a Welcoming City and/or County as one that:

“Plans: All relevant sectors, such as government, business, non-profit, and others, work together to create a welcoming community climate that supports long-term integration.”

“Commits: Municipalities commit to institutionalize strategies ensuring the ongoing inclusion and long-term economic and social integration of newcomers.”

“Builds Community: Newcomers and long-time residents find common ground and shared leadership.”

“Communicates: Messages of unity and shared values permeate the community through the media, through the voices of leaders, and among residents.”

“Sustains: Policies and practices are considered to ensure interactions between new & long-time residents remain positive ones and the community’s economic vitality remains strong.”

In order to progress from passing “welcoming” resolutions to taking action as an official “welcoming city and county,” the following three main tasks were completed over the course of one year to create a community welcoming plan:



In April of 2016 International Institute of Akron (IIA) organized and convened regular planning meetings with project partners: City of Akron, the County of Summit, ASIA Inc., and Global Ties Akron. Initial meetings between April through June 2016 accomplished the following:

- Reviewed what other “Welcoming” cities and counties had done throughout the U.S.
- Determined six sector areas in which to focus the planning:

1) Education & ESOL

4) Health Services

2) Youth Services

5) Social Services & Transportation

3) Workforce and Economic Development

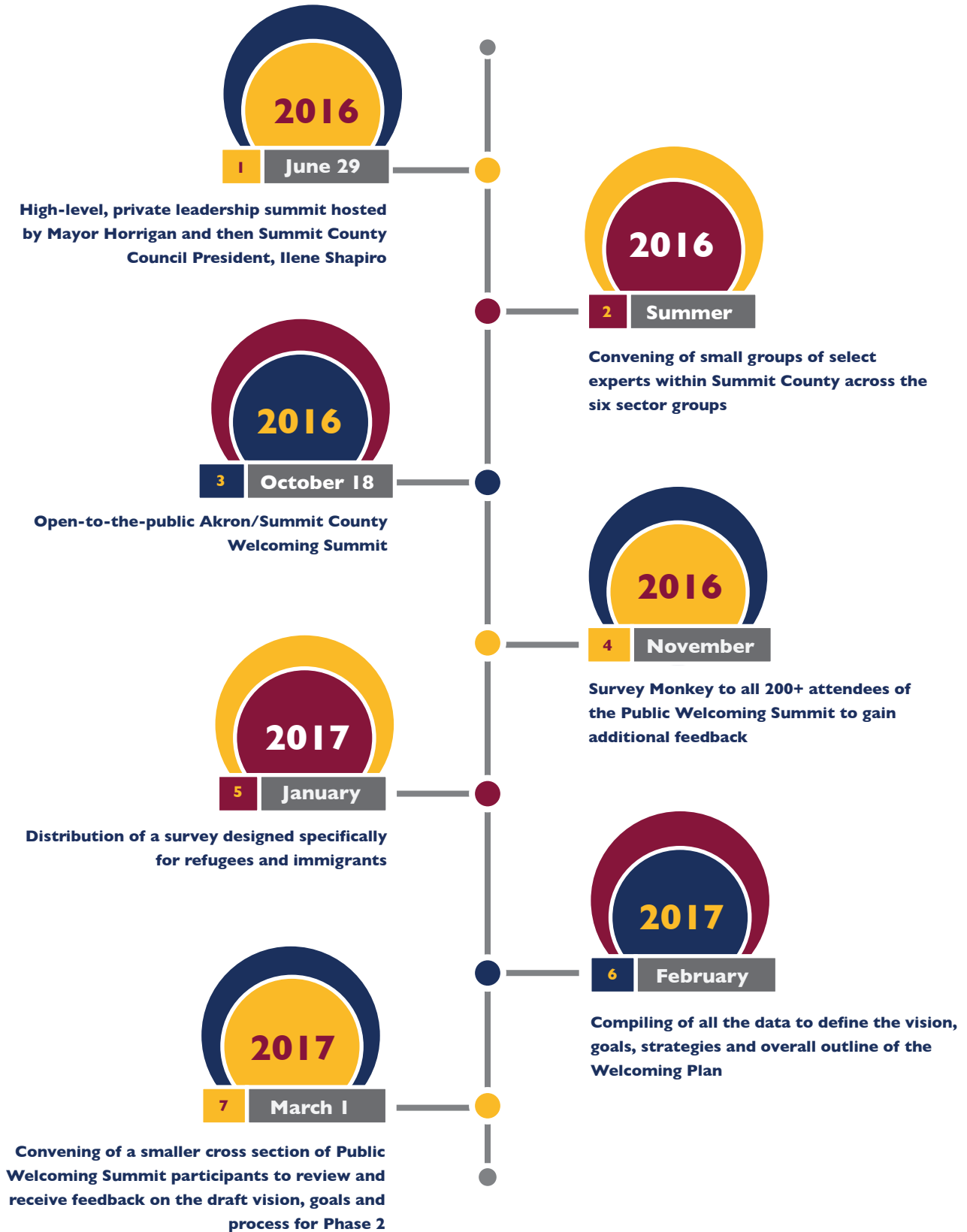
6) Government Services and Public Safety

- Reviewed and publicized New American Economy’s research report, *Welcome to Akron*, which details economic impact of refugees and immigrants living in Akron that was funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation with program support by IIA
- Prepared for a Leadership Summit in June to explain and unveil the project to area leaders

CONTRIBUTORS

Our planning process sought out varying perspectives and differing opportunities and channels to provide input. Agencies represented throughout the process and actual attendance lists can be found in the Appendix.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS



WHAT WAS LEARNED

The project team analyzed the data from all of the events, meetings, and surveys and summarized the feedback into the below chart. This chart indicates by sector, non-duplicative action areas of opportunity, to those who engaged in one or more of the welcome plan events.



Education & ESOL

- Address standardized test issues that don't accommodate ESL and English Language Learner students K-higher education

- Address needs of students who complete high school in their native country then arrive in U.S. & diploma/education is not recognized

- Determine how to close the educational gaps for students with limited or interrupted formal education

- Address English and technology classes for parents & post high school students (who may not go on to college program)

- Empower greater welcoming attraction and support for international undergraduate, graduate students, scholars and education professionals. (University of Akron, Stark State and other area institutions of higher education or specialty training programs)

- Address need to better educate K-higher education instructors and professionals with cross-cultural education and better understanding of needs and challenges of diverse ethnic populations.

- Provide additional resources and programs to create awareness and appreciation of our refugee and immigrant populations in educational institutions and throughout the Akron community.

- Make it a priority in University setting to educate students with needed cross-cultural skills. Suggestions included

(1) Create a designated international dorm/s on campus - encouraging American and International students to room together keep open year round to accommodate international students so they do not need to find alternate housing during breaks.

(2) Create student enrichment and well thought programming that creates meaningful opportunities for American students and International students to learn from one another.

Health Services

- Address mental health barriers

- Generate more home-based options

- Increase access to physicians willing to work with refugees while also decreasing wait times for appointments

- Increase providers' knowledge of unique health trends affecting the refugee population

- Explore affordable "alternative medicine" options (non-western)

Transportation & Social Services

- Address improved general use of public transportation

- Increase transfer of knowledge about refugees & immigrants to transportation providers

- Increase number of social service providers using language access lines to serve non-English speaking clients

- Educate social service providers to improve cultural competency

- Develop culturally appropriate substance abuse treatment programs

Government & Public Safety

- Making government services accessible and communicate their availability to refugees

- Address landlord victimization

- Housing availability & affordability (tie immigrants/refugees into newly released Housing Report)

- Resource & outreach regarding general neighborhood ordinances (good neighbor kinds of requirements)

STRATEGIES/RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

VISION

Cultivate an Akron and Summit County community that:

- Is culturally inclusive, promotes diversity and is economically competitive;
- Attracts, welcomes, and retains new Americans; and
- Invites and encourages full civic engagement of new and long-term Americans.

GOALS

- 1) Enhance the network of public and private partners that serve and empower new Americans to facilitate their integration into the Akron community.
- 2) Adopt initiatives and policies in public and private institutions that are delivered in a way that allows for equitable participation and in a way that is respectful of the religion, culture, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, age and sexual orientation of members of both immigrant and receiving communities.
- 3) Empower and guide new Americans through identified ethnic community leaders, to understand and navigate public and private service systems
- 4) Increase cultural and linguistic accessibility to all community and government services

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Phases of Implementation

There are three initial phases of implementation. Phase I was completed in the last year by the project team with the award of the Gateways for Growth Challenge grant. This grant provided the means to create a community-based process for future work. Phase II is the immediate next step (November 2017 to December 2018) through each sector convening on at least a quarterly basis. Each sector creates a list of objectives and tasks and a work plan to implement moving forward as it relates to the above vision, goals and strategies. Phase III is to be determined and will be based on the outcome of Phase II.



PROCESS PLAN
& DESIGN



SECTOR - SPECIFIC
ACTION STEPS



TBD

The Refugee Health Task Force Model

The Akron/Summit County Welcome Plan is a consensus of varying perspectives gained through differing channels to provide input. It has been geared to focus on six sector areas: Economic and Community Development, Youth Services, Health Services, Government & Public Safety, Social Services & Transportation, and Education & ESOL. This written plan is a framework for action and completes Phase I. For Phase II, it is recommended by the project team that the Akron Refugee Health Task Force (RHTF) be used as the model to implement the plan moving forward by end of 2018.

Organized and hosted by Summit County Public Health, the RHTF formed approximately five years ago to address questions and issues arising around refugee health. The RHTF's core purpose is to coordinate care, resolve issues, disseminate information, share ideas, and request information. The RHTF is a reproducible model for other sectors, making it an ideal next step. To ensure consistency of the model and of this plan, a toolkit will be developed and provided to each sector task force.

How It Works

Without specific funds immediately available to implement the plan long term, the RHTF model offers the best way forward. It is a decentralized approach that will require the following:

- One Partnership Team member/organization embedded in each sector task force. Partner organizations will assist in facilitating sector convenings for one year to nurture self-sufficiency and sustainability of each group, creating a workplan for each that aligns with the vision, goals and strategies in this plan. The intention would be for the project team member to identify another organization that agrees to volunteer to convene the sector (as Summit County Public Health has done for the RHTF) beyond 2018.
- The project team will have the responsibility of chairing and coordinating quarterly meetings for the first year across the six sectors, creating the agendas and reviewing the minutes from each. The project team would continue to meet in between each series of quarterly meetings to monitor duplication, manage repeating themes and evaluate against the welcome goals and strategies.
- A yearly convening (similar to the Public Welcome Summit held in October 2016) would be held to bring all six sectors in one place. November 2017 would mark a kick off to the implementation of this plan followed by a convening in late 2018 to review accomplishments towards goals and frame objectives in addition to next steps, metrics, the ongoing process and new opportunities.

SECTOR TASK FORCE GROUPS

Education/ESOL

Project Team Agency = Global Ties Akron

Youth Services

Project Team Agency = ASIA Inc.

Economic & Workforce Development

Project Team Agency = IIA; Willing convener moving forward is Akron/Summit County Library's Micro Business Center

Health Services

Project Team Agencies already involved = ASIA and IIA; Current convener is Summit County Public Health

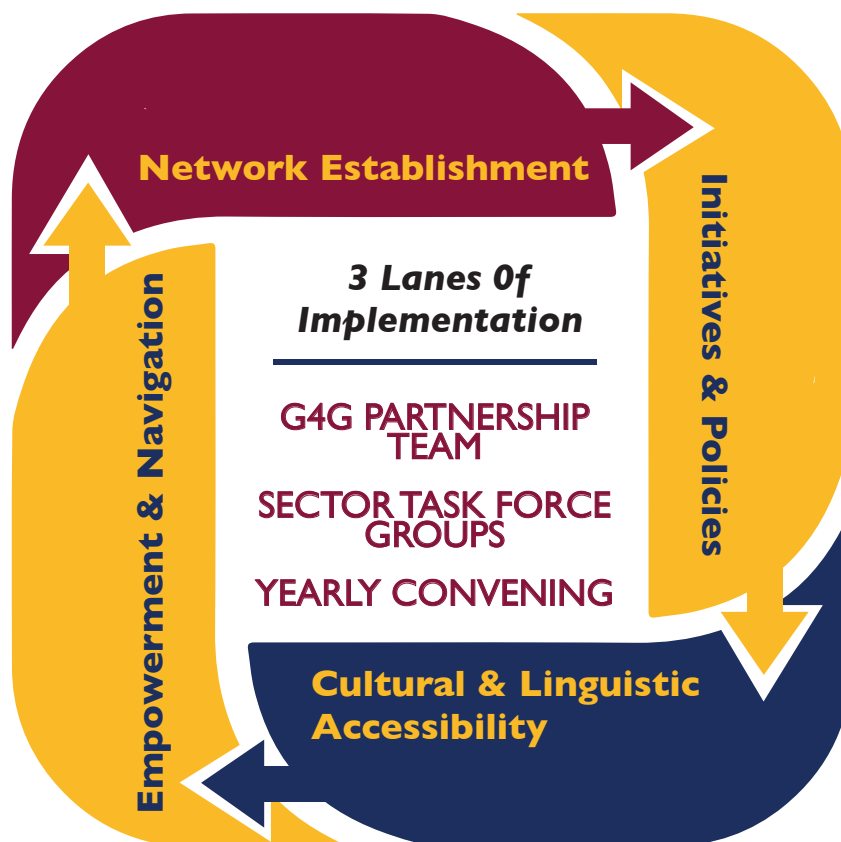
Social Services & Transportation

Project Team Agency = Summit County

Government Services & Public Safety

Project Team Agency = City of Akron

SUMMARY OF GOALS AND STRATEGIES



WE WILL KNOW IT IS WORKING WHEN (PROJECTED OUTCOMES)

- Each task force sector has identified objectives to meet the above goals and strategies and the activities to achieve them
- There is an increase of refugee and immigrant participation in this process
- There is increased use by all stakeholders of Welcoming terminology
- There is an increase in opportunities for open dialogue on race, equity and inclusion connected to an increased level of empathy
- There is a growth of stakeholders actively participating in this process and developing action and measurable results to the above goals and strategies