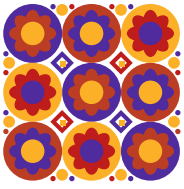


# Immigrant Integration Plan (2020-2030) Findings Report

Prepared by the City of Aurora  
Office of International and Immigrant Affairs



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# IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION PLAN

## Welcome Aurora | 2020 – 2030

### City of Aurora Office of International and Immigrant Affairs 2019 Survey

The City of Aurora's Office of International and Immigrant Affairs (OIIA) is updating its 5Year Immigrant Integration Plan that guides the OIIA's efforts to "to facilitate the successful integration of immigrants and refugees into Aurora's civic, economic and cultural life." The findings will inform development of OIIA's update by identifying the most important and critical issues facing foreign-born residents of Aurora. A key component of the Plan update was a survey of foreign-born residents living in Aurora, conducted in fall 2019 along with a second survey of stakeholders—professionals or volunteers providing support or services to Aurora's immigrant and refugee populations. Root Policy Research, a local policy research firm, assisted with survey design and analysis. This report presents the findings from both surveys.

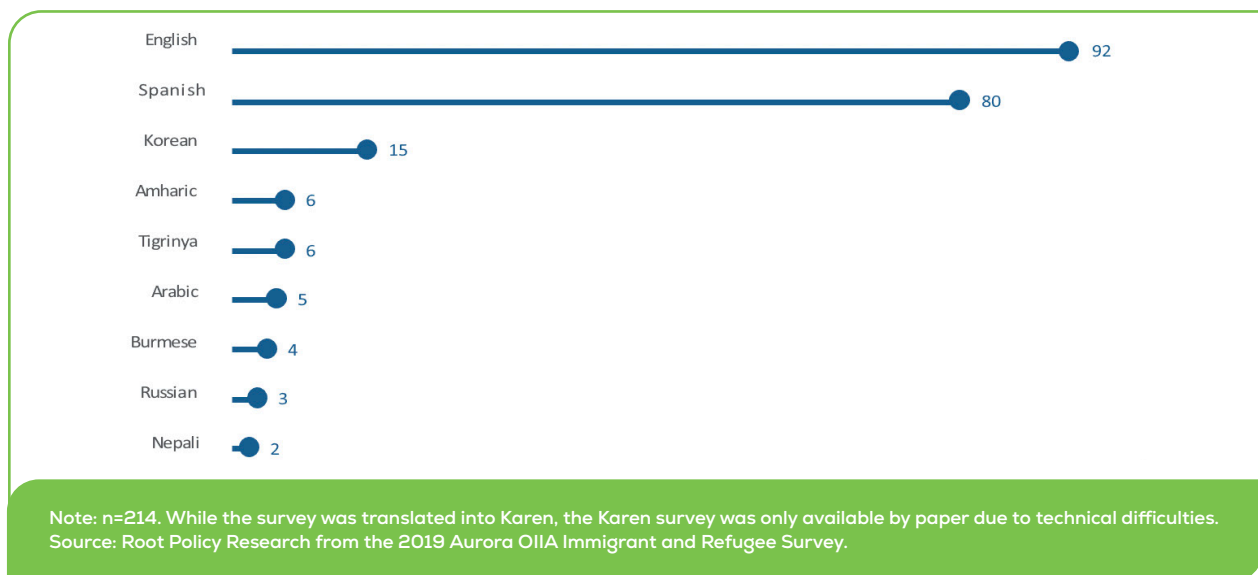
## Primary Findings

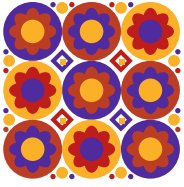
Key findings from both surveys include: OIIA has a positive reputation, and there is support for OIIA's efforts in the community. Foreign-born residents believe more outreach regarding OIIA's services would be beneficial. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, citizenship classes, cultural celebrations, and public libraries are all resources foreign-born residents find helpful or would like to learn more about. Foreign-born residents are very interested in programs to improve their health; stakeholders place less of an emphasis on improving health care outcomes, suggesting a disconnect in priorities. The Natural Helpers and Global Teen Police Academy are highly regarded and should be considered for expansion/reinstatement. Frictions in the labor market are pronounced for foreign-born residents, primarily due to language barriers.

## Methodology

In collaboration with OIIA, Root Policy Research (Root) designed the resident and stakeholder surveys. OIIA translated the resident survey into 11 languages: Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Karen, Korean, Nepali, Russian, Spanish, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese. The survey was available both online and in paper form. **Figure 1 presents the number of foreign-born survey respondents by the language used to complete the survey.**

**Figure 1: Survey Language of Foreign-born Respondents**



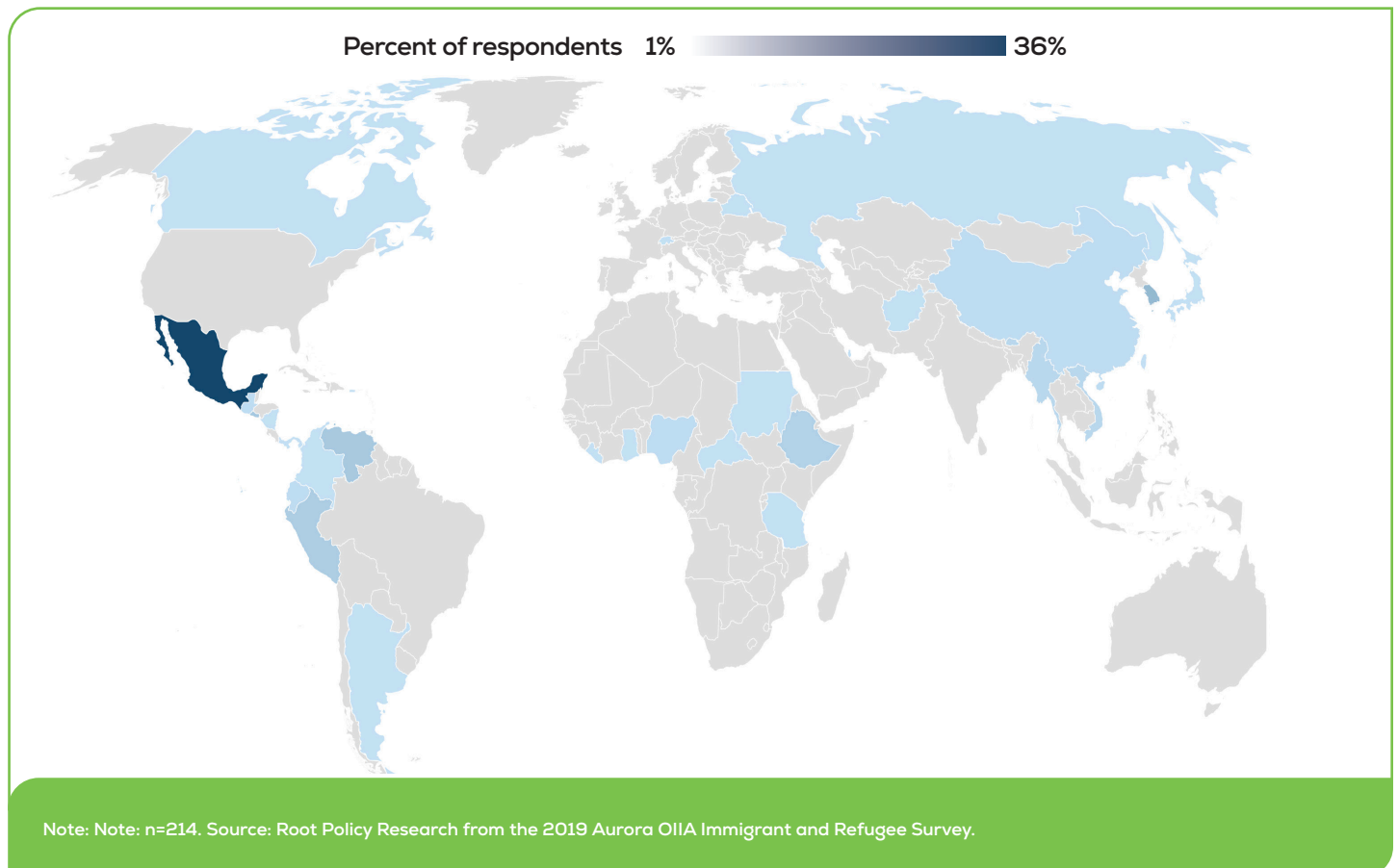


While the resident survey was open to all Aurora residents, OIIA's promotional efforts focused on encouraging foreign-born residents to participate. A total of 337 Aurora residents participated—214 are foreign-born. This is a meaningful number of responses, but it is important to note that the survey respondents do not represent a random sample of Aurora's foreign-born population. A true random sample is a sample in which each individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected for the survey. The self-selected nature of the survey prevents the collection of a true random sample. Important insights and themes can still be gained from the survey results, however, with an understanding of the deficiencies and differences of the sample from the larger population. A total of 56 stakeholders—professionals or volunteers providing support or services to Aurora's immigrant and refugee populations—participated in the stakeholder survey. These 56 responses provide meaningful insights into the needs and priorities of Aurora's foreign-born population based on the experience of service providers and advocates.

## Respondent Profile

This section describes the foreign-born survey respondents, and, where applicable, compares their responses to those of Aurora residents born in the U.S. and/or stakeholder survey respondents. Aurora is a very diverse community; foreign-born survey respondents originate from over 30 different countries. Overall, according to 2018 Census data, about one in five Aurora residents are foreign-born. The survey respondents represent many segments of Aurora's foreign-born population. Country of origin. **Figure 2 highlights the countries of origin of foreign-born respondents. As is expected given that Aurora has large clusters of Latin American and Asian immigrants, most of the foreign-born survey participants were born in Mexico (36%), followed by South Korea (10%), El Salvador (6%) and Venezuela (6%).**

Figure 2: Countries of Origin



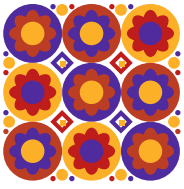
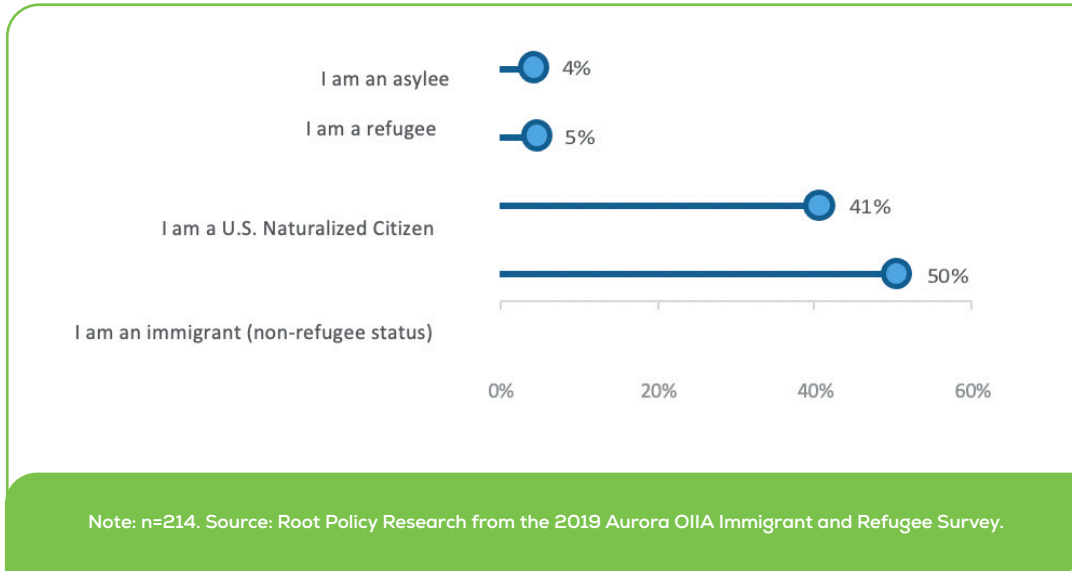
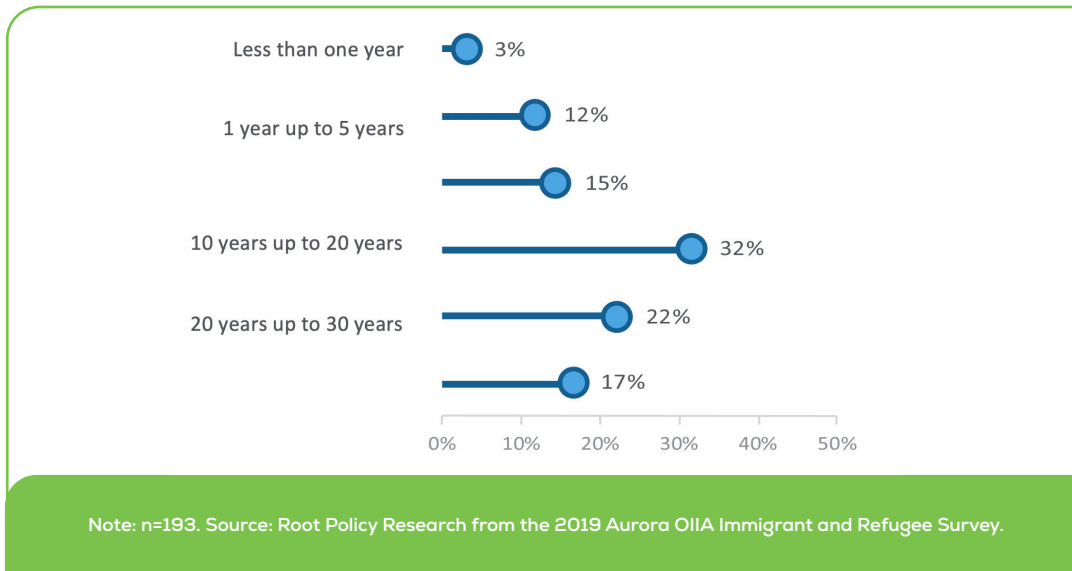


Figure 3: Migration Status

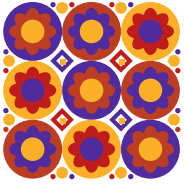


As shown in Figure 4, foreign-born respondents are well-established in the U.S.; most of them (70%) have been living in the U.S. for 10 or more years.

Figure 4: How Long Have You Lived in the U.S.?

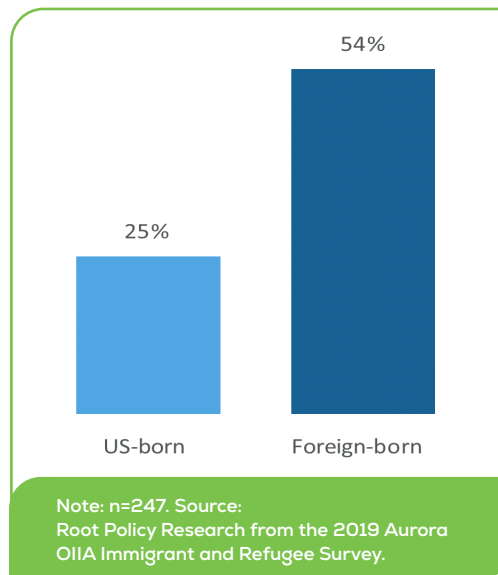


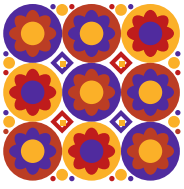
Children in the home. A significant difference between U.S.-born and foreign-born respondents was the proportion of respondents with children under the age of 18, as shown in the Figure 5. Foreign-born respondents are twice as likely to have children living in their home (54% compared to 25%). Overall, around 34 percent of households in Aurora have one or more children living in their home, according to 2018 ACS estimates. Given the high proportion of foreign-born respondents with children, it is not surprising that foreignborn survey respondents were younger than their U.S.-born counterparts, with an average age of 41, compared to an age of 49 for U.S.-born respondents.



### Figure 5: Percent of households with children under age 18 currently living at home

Stakeholder profile. A total of 56 respondents participated in the stakeholder survey. Almost 80 percent of them indicated that their organization provides services, programming, training, housing, or other supports to refugees and/or immigrants living in Aurora. Figure 6 presents the types of organizations and service areas represented by stakeholders. The greatest proportion of stakeholder organizations offer civic engagement/civic participation (30%), citizenship classes/efforts (27%), and English as a second language/language access services (27%).





**Figure 6: In what type of industry or organization do you work?**

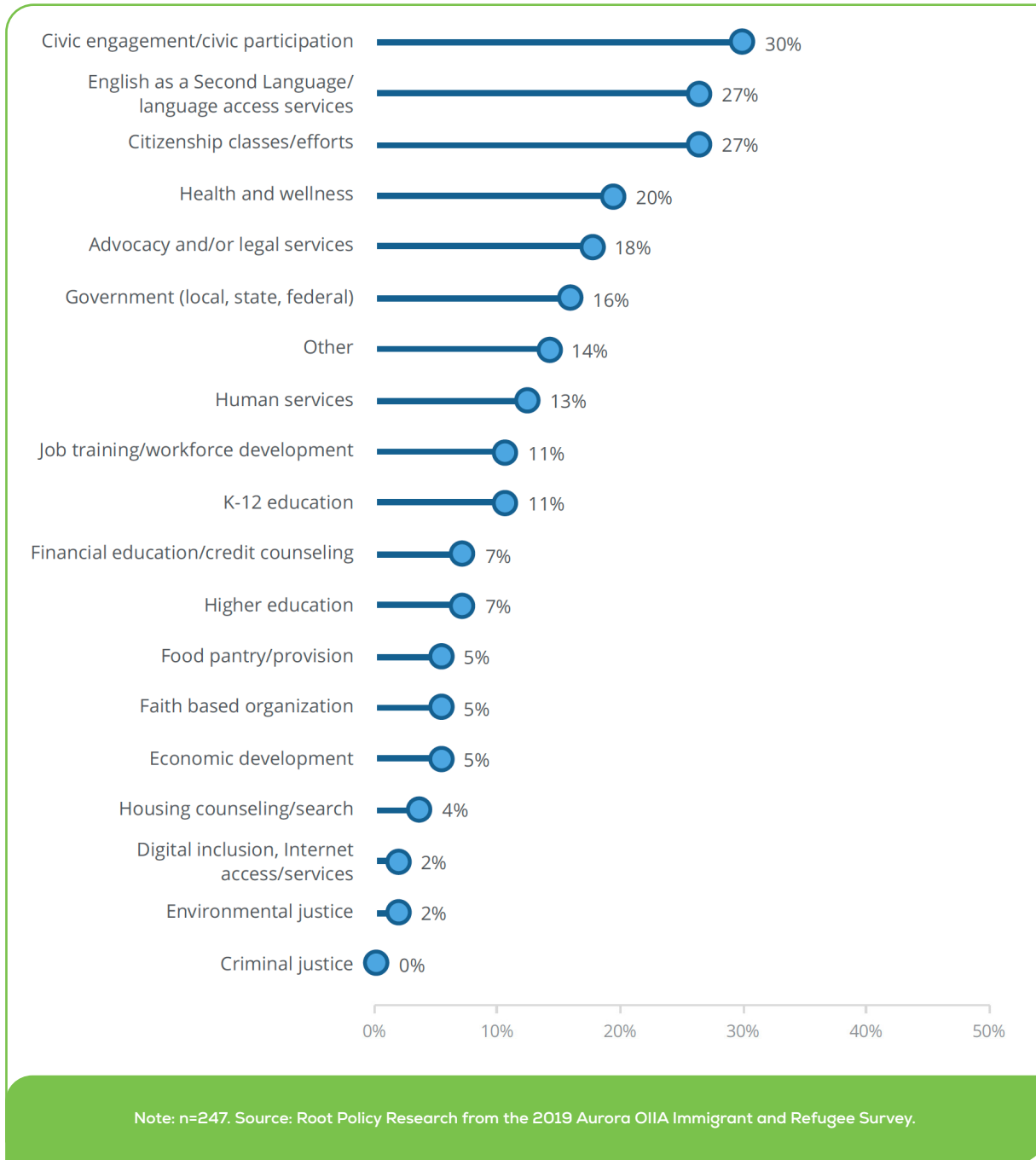


Figure 7 shows that nearly all (89%) stakeholders work with immigrants and a majority (69%) with refugees. Other segments of the population served include residents with limited English language skills and low income residents.

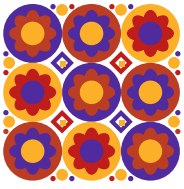
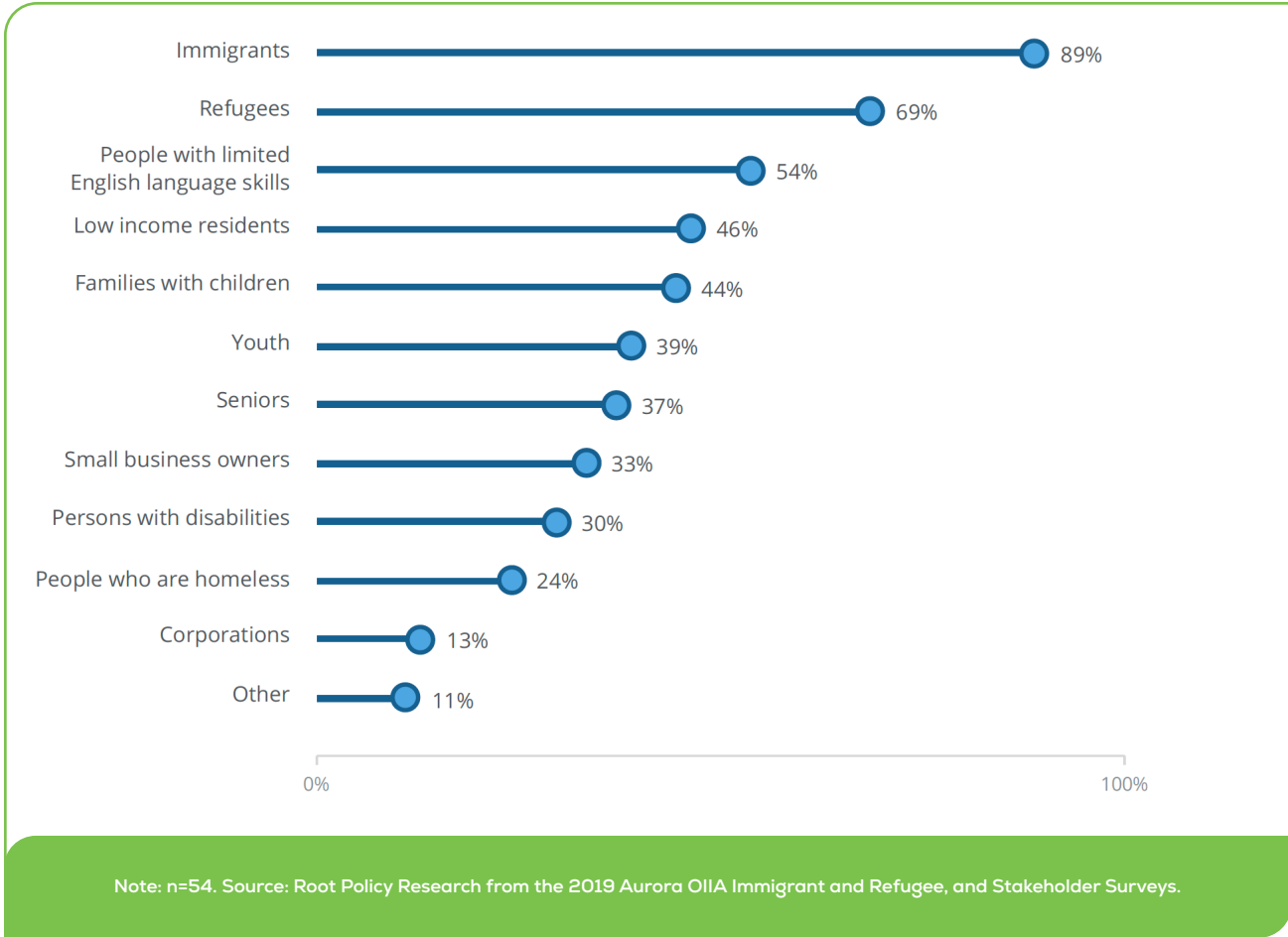
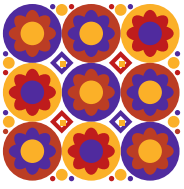


Figure 7: What population(s) do you work with?



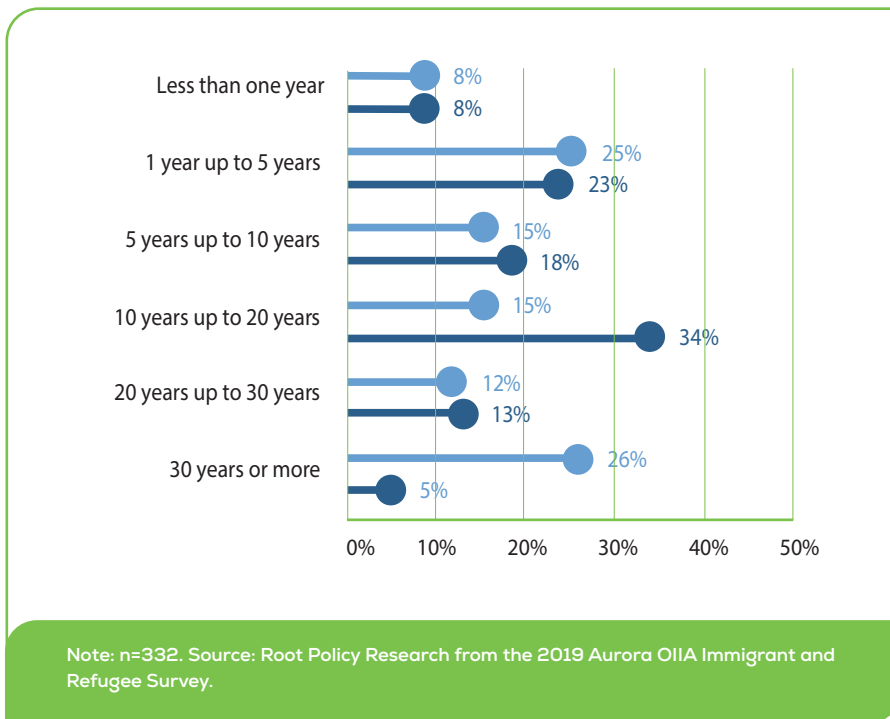
## Living in Aurora

While one in four U.S.-born respondents have lived in Aurora for over 30 years (26%), many immigrant respondents are also well established in the community, with over 50 percent of the foreign-born residents indicating they have lived in Aurora 10 years or more. According to 2018 ACS estimates, around 75 percent of Aurora's foreign-born population entered the U.S. before 2010. This implies that the immigrant community settled in Aurora upon arrival to the U.S. or soon after, and once settled, decided to remain in Aurora.



### Figure 8: How long have you lived in Aurora, CO?

Why choose Aurora as a place of residence? U.S.-born and foreign-born residents value similar characteristics when choosing a place to live, with slight differences in the order of importance of those characteristics. Given the high proportion of foreignborn respondents with children in the home, it is not surprising that the top reason for living in Aurora is that the city is a “good place to raise a family.” Being close to family or friends, affordability, and that Aurora is an “immigrant/refugee friendly” community are also important to the city’s foreign-born population. Figure 9 below shows the reasons for choosing to live in Aurora ranked in order of importance to U.S. and foreign-born residents.



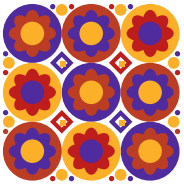
### Figure 9: What are the most important reasons why you chose to live in Aurora?

Awareness of Aurora community programs and services. Participants in the survey assessed the extent to which they believe they are informed about selected City of Aurora services and programs. As shown in Figure 10, compared to U.S. born residents, foreign-born residents are more informed about the Aurora International Impact Fund, Health Powers Life, and Natural Helpers Program and are less informed about Community Gardens, Aurora Rhythms Concerts on the Lawn, and the Aurora Youth Commission. The programs that foreign-born residents are most aware of are Aurora Global Fest, and Natural Helpers.

US-born	Foreign-born
● Affordable place to live	● Good place to raise a family
● Close to work/spouse's work	● Close to family/friends
● Liked neighborhood/subdivision	● Affordable place to live
● Close to family/friends	● Immigrant/refugee friendly
● Job opportunities	● Good public schools
● Immigrant/refugee friendly	● Liked neighborhood/subdivision
● Good place to raise a family	● Close to work/spouse's work
● Good public schools	● Friendly
● Other	● Job opportunities
● I was born here/grew up here	● Safe/less crime

Note: n=293 respondents. Source: Root Policy Research from the 2019 Aurora OIIA Immigrant and Refugee Survey.



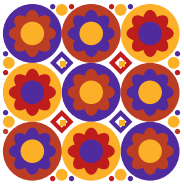


**Figure 10: Awareness of City Programs and Services**

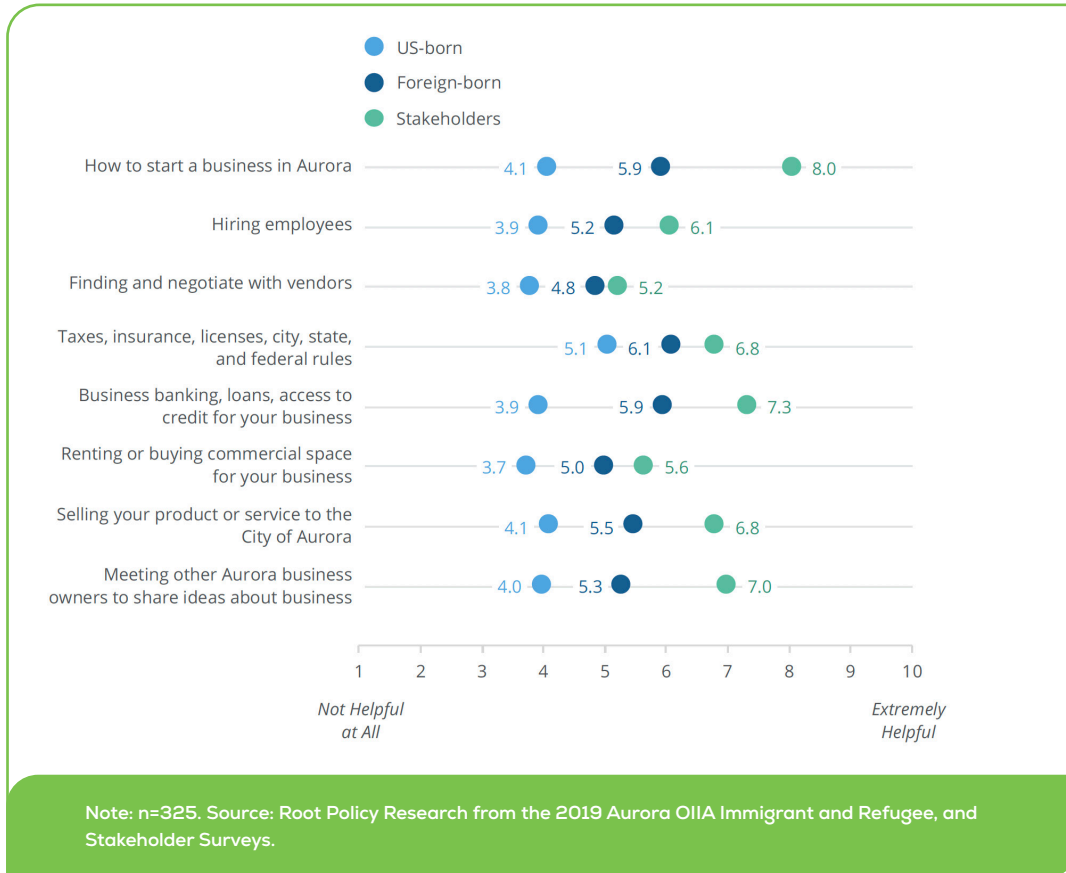


## Potential Programs and Services

Survey respondents rated the types of services or programs that would be most helpful to them or to a member of their family. The types of programs or services considered encompassed a wide range of topics, from starting a business and employment services to civic life, to family health and financial wellness; these are discussed in turn below. For context, the ratings by U.S.-born residents and stakeholders are included in the analysis along with those of foreign-born residents.

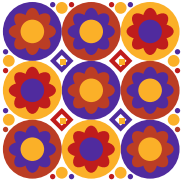


**Figure 11. Programs and services to start or expand a business to learn about...**



## Programs and services to start or expand a business.

As shown in Figure 11, foreign-born residents are, on average, more interested in programs and services to start or expand a business than U.S.-born residents. Stakeholders place an even higher emphasis on how important such services would be for the populations they serve. Other comments by foreign-born residents noted assistance with marketing and public relations would be helpful services. Stakeholders seem to have a good idea of the needs of the immigrant population citing marketing, access to capital, and help in developing business plans as other important resources.



## How can the City of Aurora best help you meet your goals if you want to start or expand a business in Aurora?

When prompted to describe how the City of Aurora can best help them meet goals if they want to start or expand a business in Aurora, U.S. born residents agreed with foreign-born residents. Ways in which the City can help the immigrant population start or expand businesses in Aurora include:

- ▶ Business classes in their native language;
- ▶ Affordable commercial space;
- ▶ Access to low interest rate loans; and
- ▶ Simplify or help with procurement process, licensing etc.

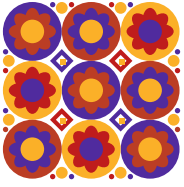
In addition, a respondent wrote that more events such as the Global Fest would be helpful, and two others cited the Impact Fund—“OIIA should continue their partnership with CEDS and increase funding for the Aurora International Impact Fund.” Stakeholders for the most part agreed with the services listed above and four stakeholders mentioned expanding the Impact Fund.

Special note on loans. Although Figure 11 above does not show that foreign-born residents are particularly interested in learning about business banking, loans, and access to credit, in the open-ended section, comments about loans were pervasive. Respondents mentioned they would like more information about loans and how to apply for loans and other specific services such as:

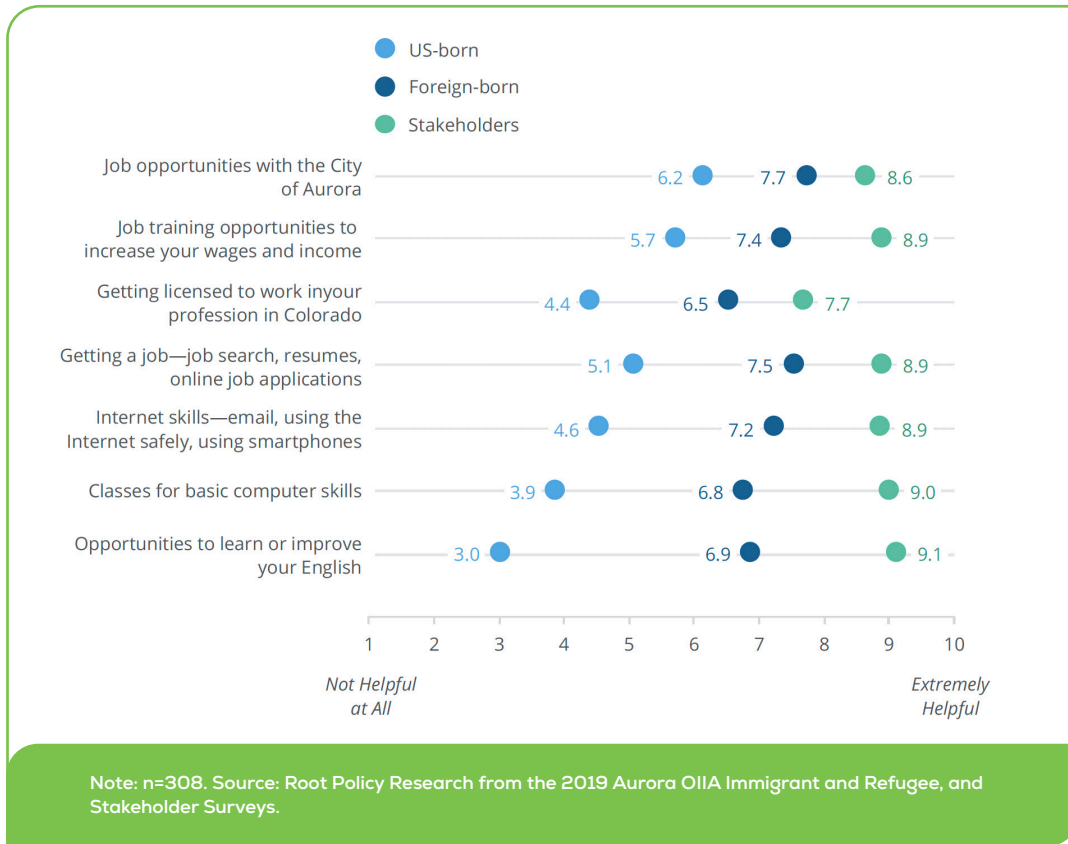
- ▶ Loans targeted specifically for immigrants and small business owners;
- ▶ How to qualify for bigger loans; and
- ▶ What to do when a bank has rejected a loan application.

## Programs and services about jobs or career goals

The same pattern of greater interest among foreign-born residents than U.S.-born residents holds for programs or services about jobs or career goals (Figure 12). Among foreign-born residents, programs or services to learn about job opportunities with the City of Aurora, getting a job, and training opportunities to increase wages and income would be very helpful. Stakeholders place an even higher emphasis on how important such services would be for the populations they serve. When asked to specify other program or services that would be helpful, the different needs of U.S.-born versus the foreign-born population were highlighted. U.S.-born residents described needing services such as financial education, how to use a smartphone, how to pay taxes, and how to dress for success; while foreign-born residents noted access to loans and connecting employers with workers. Stakeholders suggested classes on banking basics, procurement, deals/negotiating, and emotional Intelligence (social/soft skills).



**Figure 12: Programs or services about jobs or career goals to learn about...**



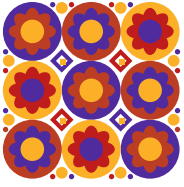
## How can the City of Aurora best help you get a job or pursue a career in Aurora?

When prompted to mention how can the City of Aurora best help you if you want to get a job or pursue a career in Aurora U.S. residents noted business classes, training programs, and job fairs. Foreign-born residents also mentioned:

- ▶ Job fairs;
- ▶ Business classes;
- ▶ Help going back to college; and
- ▶ Guidance regarding work using the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

Stakeholders suggested:

- ▶ Training/workforce development;
- ▶ ESL classes; and
- ▶ Marketing support for businesses.



## Programs and services about participating in Aurora community life.

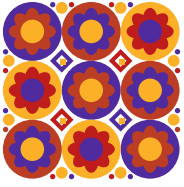
As shown in Figure 13, foreign-born residents are extremely interested in learning about citizenship and English as a second language (ESL) classes. Interestingly, when asked to specify other programs or services about participating in Aurora community life they would like to learn about, U.S.-born residents generally agreed with foreign-born residents. Foreign-born residents indicated desire for:

- ▶ Community gatherings; and
- ▶ Overall, more information about existing programs.

In particular, one respondent stated that the “Global Fest needs more inclusion, 3 countries do not represent Latin America.” Another respondent mentioned wanting to learn more about gardening programs and other programs geared toward persons with disabilities. Stakeholders mentioned amenities such as trails, bike paths, Aurora history museum, and youth sports. One stakeholder stated that “Aurora is doing great work in this regard. I think the Natural Helpers program is a good example.”

**Figure 13. Programs or services about participating in Aurora community life to learn about...**





How can the City of Aurora best help you if you want to participate more in the Aurora community? When asked, “how can the City of Aurora best help you if you want to participate more in the Aurora community?” most U.S.-born residents mentioned the city should do more outreach about their programs. Foreign-born residents emphasized:

- ▶ More outreach; and
- ▶ More support for organizations that focus on serving the immigrant community. There is a perception among

the foreign-born respondents that Aurora and OIIA’s efforts are focused on the refugee population, to the exclusion of immigrants. One respondent recommended to “Expand the Natural Helpers program across the city.” Another wrote, “The City of Aurora is already doing a great job with all of its programs for the community!” Stakeholders mentioned that there should be increased diversity in city boards and commissions and one also recommended to “Expand the Natural Helpers Program across the city.”

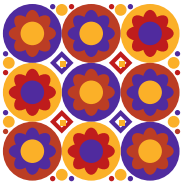
Programs and services about health, finances, and safety. On average, foreign-born residents consider programs and services to learn about physical, mental, and financial well-being to be very helpful. Information about safety and crime prevention is also helpful, but slightly less so than other options.

As shown in Figure 14, U.S.-born residents are slightly more interested in safety, and less interested on the rest of the resources. Stakeholders’ assessment of what would be most helpful to their clients seem to be in line with foreign-born residents with one exception— foreign-born residents are more interested on the City of Aurora’s Neighborhood Watch and other crime and safety tips than stakeholders assess.

When asked to specify other programs or services about health, finances, and safety they would like, U.S.-born residents mentioned a safe haven for Gang Violence for Neighborhood Trauma, suicide prevention for youth, and training on when to use the ER. Foreign-born residents mentioned the need for programs or services related to:

- ▶ Suicide prevention; and
- ▶ Crime prevention.

One foreign born resident stated there is a need for financial support geared toward women who are looking for long-term contraceptive methods. Stakeholders mostly mentioned the need for better outreach. One stakeholder suggested that “APD should work with OIIA to bring back the international police teen academy.”



**Figure 14. Programs or services about health, finances, and safety to learn about...**

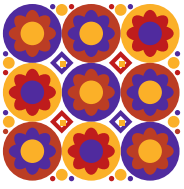


## How can the City of Aurora best help you if you want to improve you or your family's health, finances, or safety?

When prompted to mention how can the City of Aurora best help you if you want to improve your or your family's health, finances, or safety, U.S.-born residents cited more outreach/workshops. Foreign-born residents mentioned:

- ▶ More outreach/workshops;
- ▶ More access to classes (such as ESL, financial literacy, credit); and
- ▶ Crime prevention.

Two respondents noted the success of the International Police Teen Academy and suggested bringing it back, and one resident mentioned there is a need for health clinics given that many undocumented immigrants do not have health insurance and are not eligible for government subsidies. Stakeholders mentioned more outreach/workshops and one said the city should expand the Natural Helpers Program.

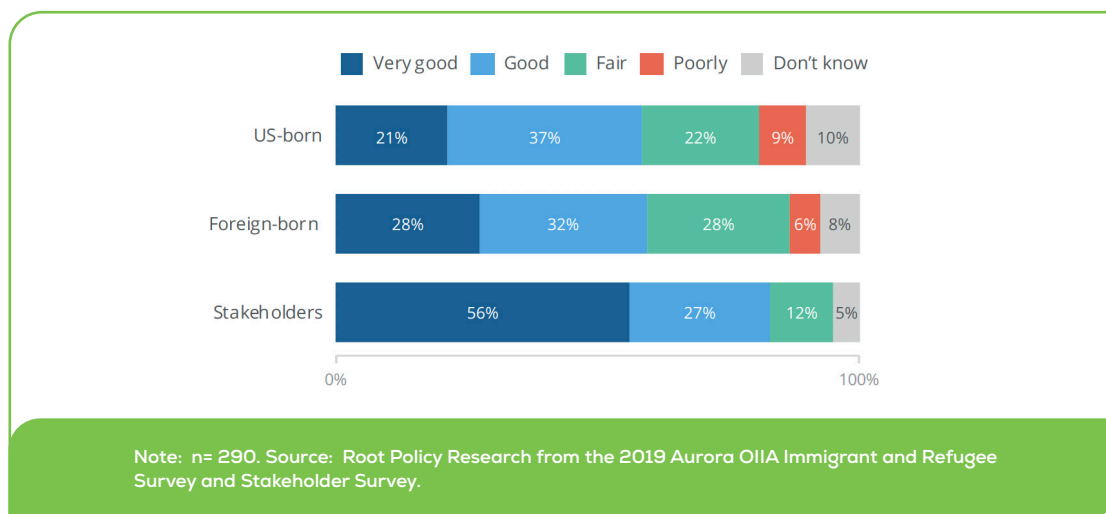


## Immigrant and Refugee Integration in Aurora

Survey respondents were asked to read the following definition of integration used by OIIA: “Integration is a long-term process, through which immigrants and host communities communicate effectively, function together and enrich each other; create economic opportunities, and have mutual respect and understanding among people of different cultures.” Based on this definition, respondents rated how well they think the City of Aurora is doing to promote the integration of immigrants and refugees into the Aurora community.

As shown in Figure 15, more than one in four (28%) foreign-born residents feel the city is doing a “very good” job while only 6 percent feel it is doing a “poor job”, similar to responses of U.S.-born residents. It is interesting that there are only small differences in how foreign-born and U.S.-born residents perceive Aurora’s successful promotion of immigrant and refugee integration. Stakeholders overwhelmingly have a positive attitude towards the city’s efforts; more than 80 percent of respondents think the City is doing “very good” or “good” and none rated the City’s efforts poorly.

**Figure 15.** Figure 15. How well do you think the City of Aurora is doing to promote the integration of immigrants and refugees?

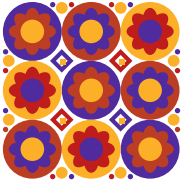


## What can the city of Aurora do better to support the integration of immigrants and refugees into the Aurora community?

When prompted to suggest what could the City of Aurora do to better support the integration of immigrants and refugees into the Aurora community, U.S.-born residents again suggested more outreach, cultural events, community pop-up events, and ESL and support classes. Two respondents mentioned more diversity within the city government. Foreign-born residents mentioned:

- ▶ More outreach;
- ▶ More funding for OIIA and other organization that work with immigrants;
- ▶ Cultural events, community pop-up events, and sports leagues;
- ▶ English classes; and
- ▶ More diversity within the city government.





Stakeholders strongly support more funding for OIIA and immigrant integration efforts in general. They also mentioned more community engagement programs and more outreach. Stakeholders were also asked “If you could wave a magic wand and have the greatest possible positive impact on immigrant and refugee integration into Aurora’s civic, economic, and cultural life, what would you do?” Stakeholders mentioned:

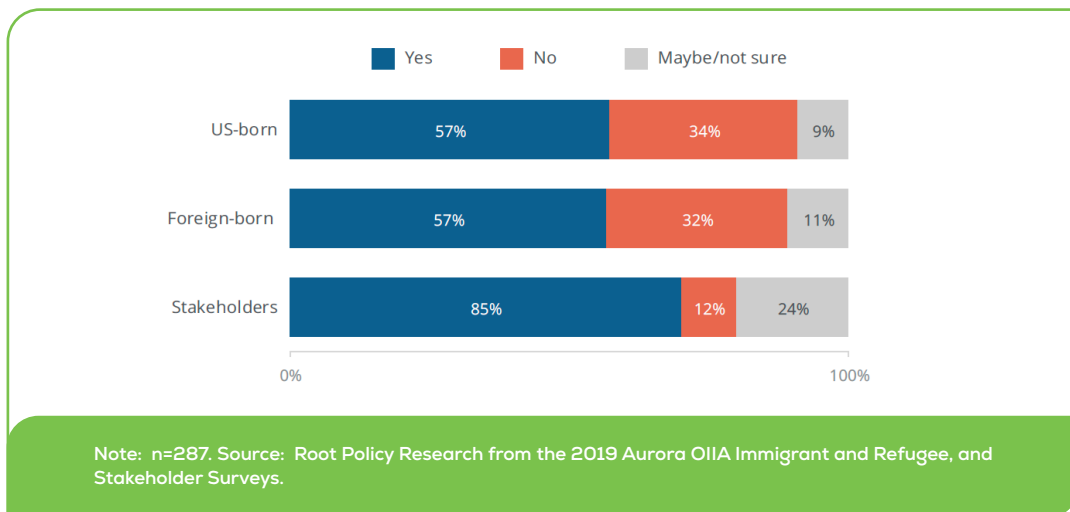
- ▶ More funding for OIIA;
- ▶ More support from City Council and Mayor’s office; and
- ▶ Increase access to English classes.

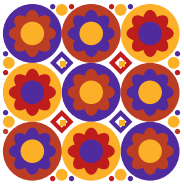
**Examples of stakeholder comments include:**

- “For me, seeing refugee and immigrant-owned businesses mixed in with typical ‘American’ businesses along Havana illustrates what integration should look like. The more refugees and immigrants have the opportunity to participate in local events and showcase their culture/products, live in different areas of the city, and become business owners, the quicker and easier their integration will be. I’d like to see more refugee and immigrant influence in Stanley Marketplace. While it was meant to bring Aurora and Denver (Stapleton) together, it currently has mostly upscale, expensive shops that appeal to Stapleton residents. Bringing more refugee, immigrant, and minority-owned businesses into the mix, as well as low-cost activities that anyone can enjoy, would truly make Stanley Marketplace a bridge between Aurora and Stapleton.”
- “Some kind of high-level, diverse group of refugee & immigrant participants on a committee actually endowed with money and decision-making power to really lead this work at a neighborhood level. In some sense, I’d think of it as the action team for the OIIA, which is doing great work, but doesn’t really have the ‘boots on the ground’ to execute on its vision.”

There seems to be a discrepancy in outreach regarding the City’s efforts; while over 80 percent of stakeholders had heard about Aurora’s Office of International and Immigrant Affairs prior to receiving the survey less than 60 percent of foreign-born and U.S. born residents had heard of it.

**Figure 16. Share of respondents who had heard of Aurora’s Office of International and Immigrant Affairs**





## Comparison ranking of programs

Figure 17 shows an overall ranking of the most and least helpful programs as ranked by foreign-born residents, foreign-born residents who answered the survey in a language other than English, and stakeholders. Stakeholders place a higher importance on resources aimed at improving computer skills, job search, and internet skills than foreign-born residents, while residents are more interested in programs related to improving their health and recreational opportunities than stakeholders.

**Figure 17. Ranking of Programs—Top 10 Most Helpful and Bottom 10**



## Labor Market Frictions

Figure 18 shows the breakdown of employment status among survey respondents. Foreign-born residents are more likely than U.S.-born residents to be self-employed.

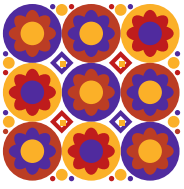
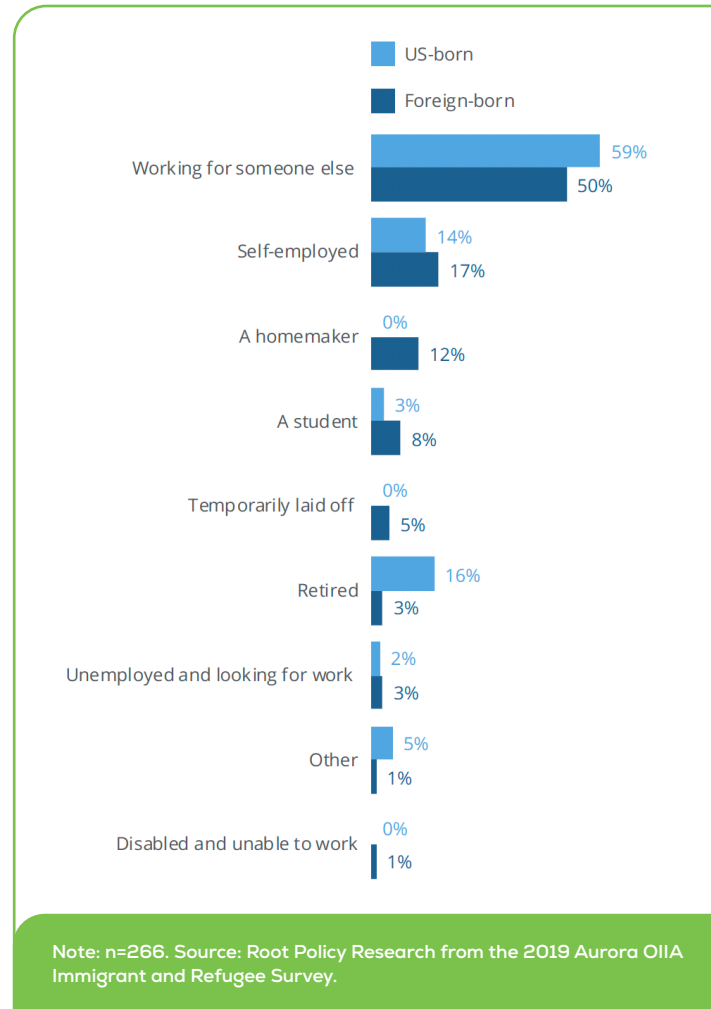
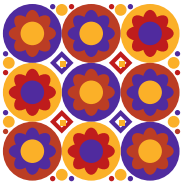


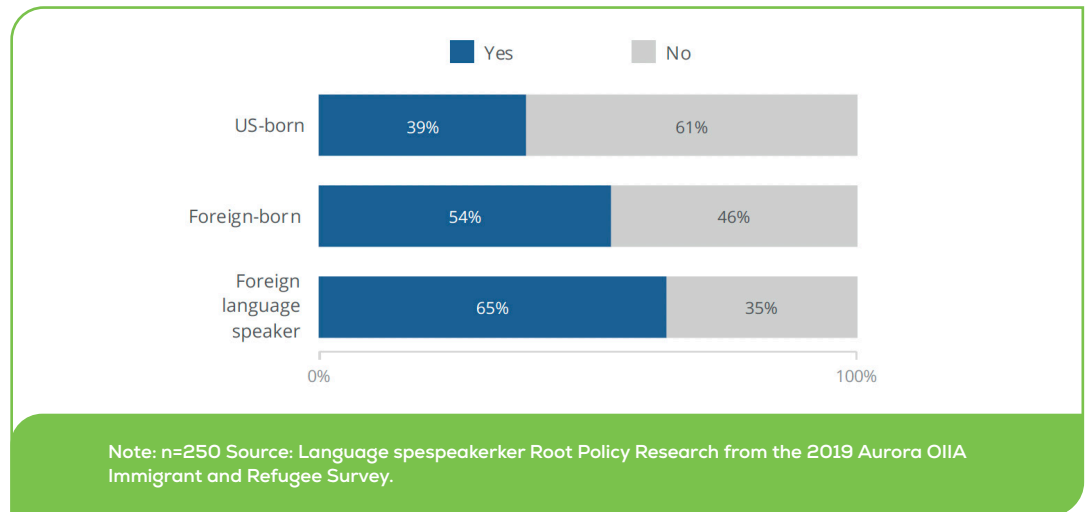
Figure 18.  
Occupation



From the questions regarding the helpfulness of programs to start/expand a business and programs about jobs and career goals, **the survey revealed a pronounced mismatch between the current occupations of immigrants and their desired career paths.** Figure 19 shows that given the opportunity, 39 percent of U.S.-born residents would change the type of work that they do, while more than half (54%) of foreign-born respondents indicated they would change the type of work they do if given the opportunity. Moreover, looking at the subset of participants that responded to the survey in a language other than English, 65 percent indicated they would change the type of work they do if given the opportunity.



**Figure 19. Share of respondents who would change occupations**



U.S.-born residents who would like to change their occupation if they had the opportunity would like to do some form of community work or non-profit work that would give them the opportunity to help others or that they would like to open their own business.

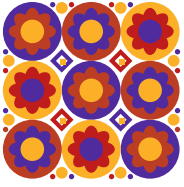
Given the opportunity to change their occupation, foreign-born residents were much more career focused, and noted all sorts of preferred occupations including:

- ▶ Baker
- ▶ Hairdresser
- ▶ Self-employed
- ▶ Teacher
- ▶ Financial advisor
- ▶ Accountant
- ▶ Elected official
- ▶ Hotel management
- ▶ Health care worker
- ▶ Customer service
- ▶ Photography
- ▶ Office management

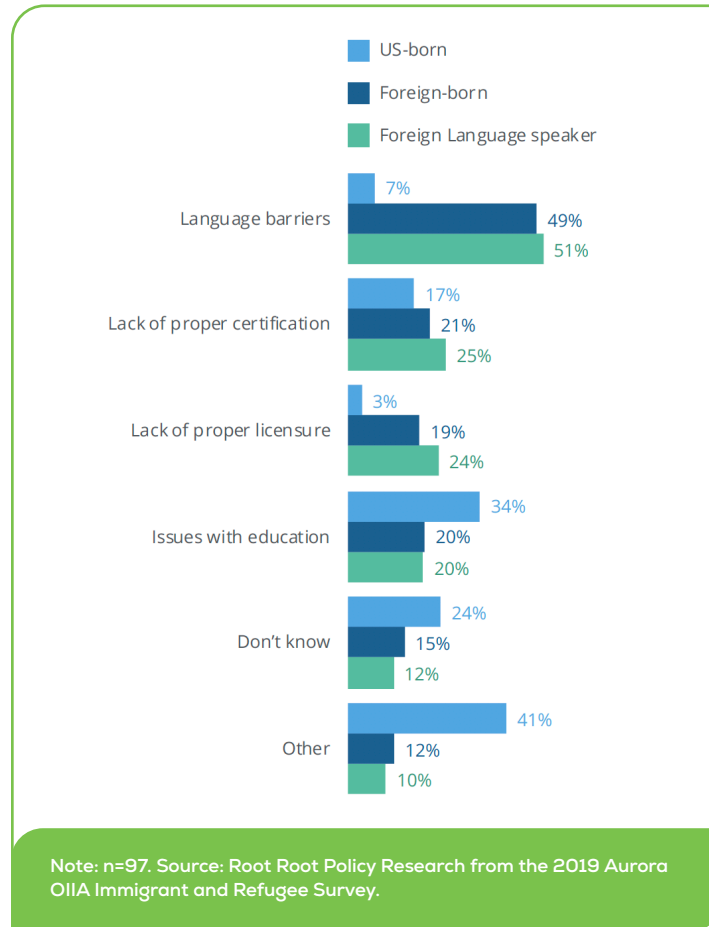
This implies that targeting efforts towards better matching immigrants' skills with employment can have a major impact on immigrant integration. In Colorado, the median income in households with foreign-born residents is around 80 percent of the median household income for all Colorado residents, according to 2018 ACS data. If efforts could close this gap by just 50 percent, this would imply a 10 percent income growth for foreign born households. This magnitude of income gains can have especially big impacts for families that have children living in their homes, and immigrant households have a higher likelihood of having children in their households.

## Language barrier

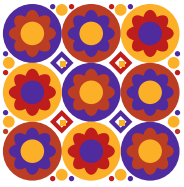
When asked what is keeping them from pursuing this work, Figure 20 shows that language barriers are a big impediment for foreign-born residents, followed by lack of proper certification, issues with education, and lack of proper licensure. This implies that foreign-born immigrants have valuable skills that are being kept from being efficiently applied to their proper field/occupation due to these barriers. In the broader economic literature this skill mismatch is typical among immigrants and has been found to be a big component toward the income disparity found between natives and immigrant groups. Other barriers noted by both U.S.-born and foreign-born residents mostly focused around financial resources. Given that most immigrants have been living in Aurora for over 10 years, survey results indicate that immigrant integration in Aurora is a slow and longterm process.



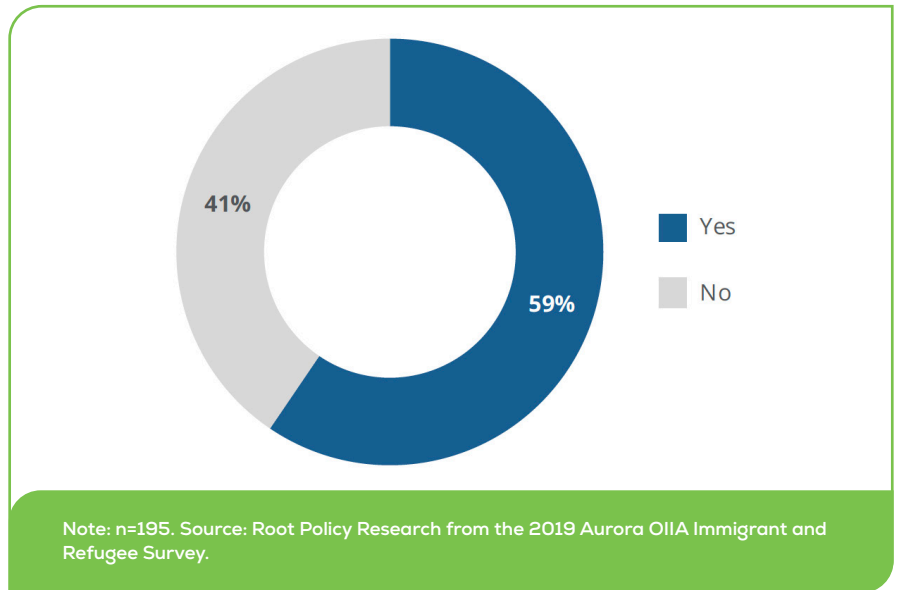
**Figure 20.**  
**What is keeping you from pursuing this work?**



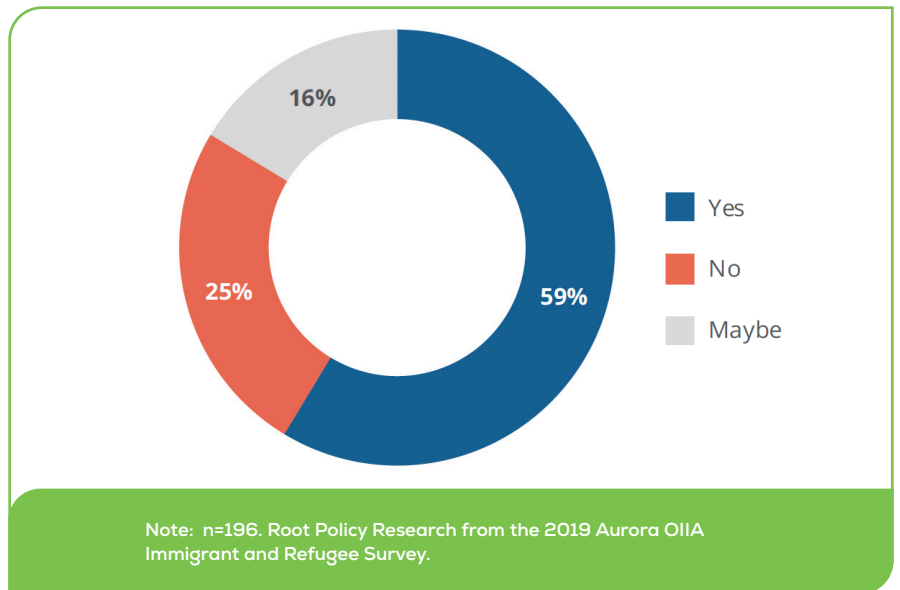
Almost 60 percent of foreign-born residents indicated they have attended classes to improve their English (Figure 21) and 75 percent are inclined to attend ESL classes (Figure 22). As shown in Figure 23 almost one in five foreign-born residents speak their native language at work and less than 25 percent speak English at home. Native language retention is important for immigrants and learning a new language takes a time and is therefore related to length of time in the country. The percent of foreign-born residents who speak English at home and have been in the country for less than 10 years is significantly lower than for those who have been in the U.S. longer than 10 years (14% compared to 27%). Foreign-born residents who have been in the U.S. less than 10 years are less like to speak English at work than residents who have been in the U.S. longer than 10 years (75% compared to 85%).



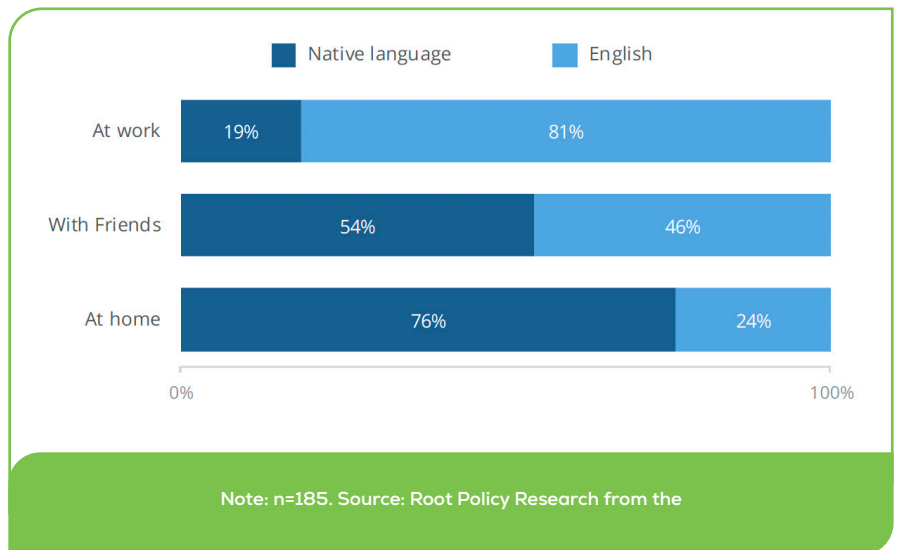
**Figure 21.** Have you attended classes to improve your English?

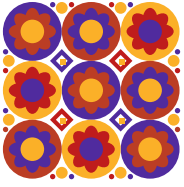


**Figure 22.** Would you like to attend classes to learn or improve your English?



**Figure 23.** Language you speak most often





## Focus Group Findings

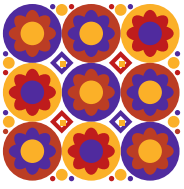
In addition to the resident and stakeholder surveys, OIIA commissioned a series of focus groups with immigrants and refugees and community stakeholders. The Community Campus Partnership (CCP) facilitated the focus groups and key informant interviews. CCP found that the greatest priorities for the immigrant and refugee community are employment/jobs and learning English, similar to the survey findings. Other issues raised in the focus groups align with findings from the surveys, and include:

- ▶ Capital is always an issue to start a business,
- ▶ More ELA and citizenship classes are needed in the community,
- ▶ Affordability and accessibility of the ELA classes is an issue,
- ▶ Housing affordability is becoming an issue,
- ▶ Lack of information about existing city services and resources is an issue,
- ▶ The city should continue to invest in and expand programs like Natural Helpers and collaboration with faith-based and other organizations that work closely with the refugee and immigrant communities,
- ▶ More mental health referrals need to be made,
- ▶ The city should increase resources to Office of International and Immigrant Affairs to expand scope of work and reach into the community; and
- ▶ The city should implement multi-cultural Neighborhood Watch program in partnership with Aurora Police Department.

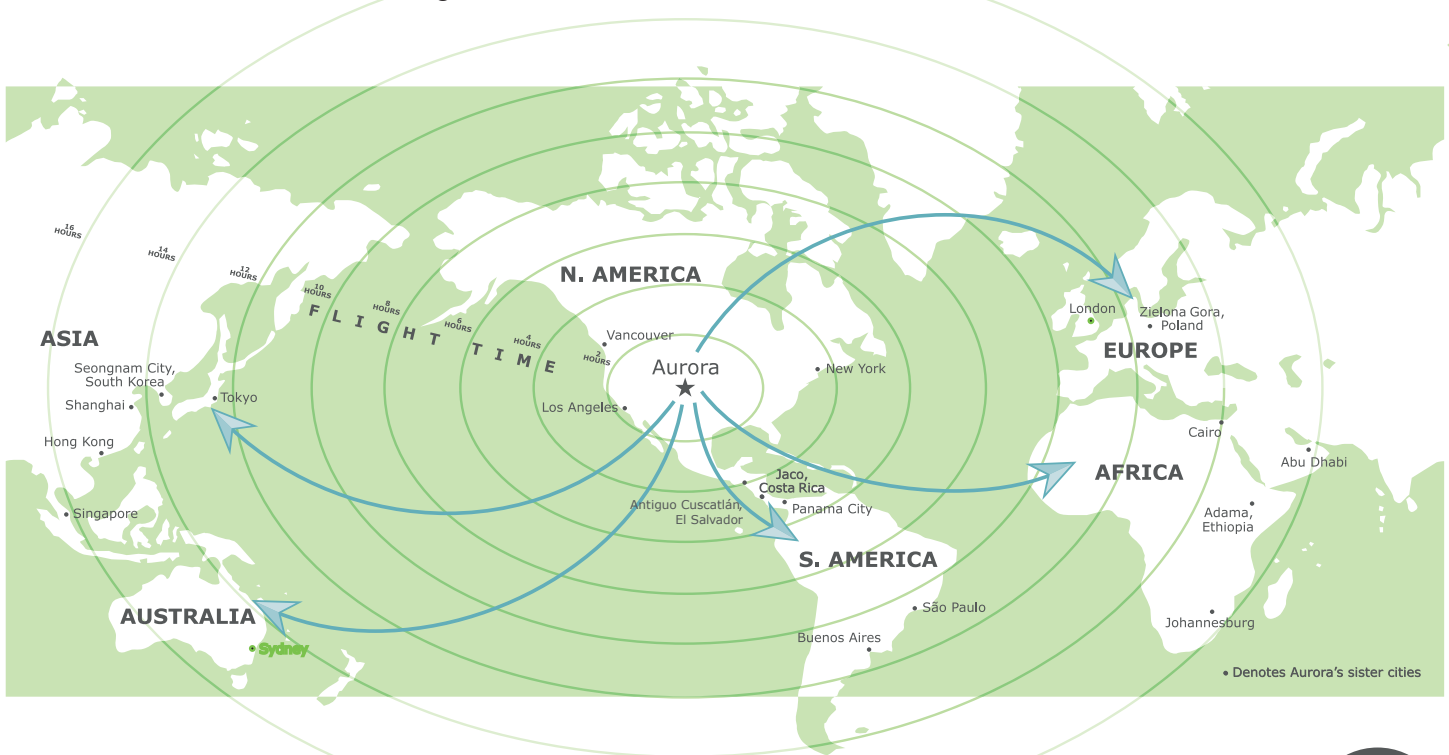
## Recommendations

Findings from the resident and stakeholder surveys suggest the following opportunities for OIIA to incorporate into the 5-year plan:

- ▶ Increase outreach. Concentrate efforts specifically in schools and places of faith, perhaps pair outreach materials with existing home visiting programs. Some suggestions from respondents include:
  - *“Keeping me informed through newsletter in water bill.”*
  - *“Mas informacion por correo electronico. Que exista una web donde se pueda inscribir para recibir informacion (More info via email; a website where you can subscribe to receive more information)”*
  - *“Tal vez teniendo mas información en las redes sociales TV, radio, FB etc (more info on social networks)”*
  - *“Keep informing me and plan to talk to me face-to-face.”*
- ▶ Increase investment into ESL classes. Note that the foreign-born population in Aurora is well established but learning a second language at a later stage of life is difficult and requires a time commitment that few adults have the luxury of providing, especially if they have families. There is a need to devise class schedules that are affordable, accessible, and provide commitment mechanisms that allow residents to attend classes for a longer period. Consider setting up a Scholarship fund and daycare services that lower the costs of attending classes for adults. Ideally a Guided Pathway model should be implemented. These models address individual barrier—childcare, transportation, scheduling conflicts, and financial hurdles—and create a clear path through coaching and mentoring for an adult to reach their individual English improvement goals, which can range from improving conversational skills to learning more technical terms needed for career advancement.



- ▶ Invest more in health programs. Expand the Natural Helpers Program in order to disseminate information regarding current health programs.
- ▶ Increase funding for OIIA and other programs. The long-term viability of immigrant affairs offices requires the offices to be well established; therefore, it is important to take advantage of the current favorable perception of the program in order to expand and secure support and technical assistance from other local organizations. The City of Aurora could consider reviewing the grant application process for Citizen and Assimilation Grants from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Upon reviewing the list of recent grant recipients, several Cities and organizations in Colorado have been recipients of the grant—such as the Colorado African Organization in Denver and the City of Littleton. This could increase the capacity and reach of naturalization efforts in Aurora.
- ▶ Reduce labor market barriers and access to capital. Consider programs to match stakeholders to other potential resources, employers, grants, or certification training. Consider expanding connections to effective programs such as:
  - Those offered by Colorado Enterprise Fund, and to work with banks with offices in Aurora to explore small business lending offerings that are affirmatively marketed and/or tailored to immigrants.
  - Partner with localized economic development efforts such as programs offered by Arapahoe county<sup>4</sup>. These include services for job seekers and job providers and links to the Aurora-South Metro Small Business Development Center, which offers consulting services and business classes in Spanish.
  - Consider setting up a fellowship program that can provide career guidance and help mitigate the costs associated with switching occupations.



One of Aurora's biggest strengths is its people.

