



WE BELONG HERE

An initiative for immigrant and community engagement



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INTRODUCTION

Within the past 15 years, immigration to the United States has reached levels matched only by those of the early 1900s. Global company operations and the birth of the digital age are among the factors that have weakened country borders and made immigration to America and to other countries a new norm.

America is rooted in immigration, with cities including New York City, Hartford, Miami, San Antonio and Boston still containing large immigrant populations. Despite this deep history and the many contributions immigrants have made, misconceptions continue to exist among the receiving community that can nurture hostility, distrust, discomfort, frustration and/or apathy.

Other parts of the country without a history of immigration are now seeing more immigrants making their homes in the community, increasing the risk of fear and misunderstanding.

In turn, immigrants often feel intimidated, fearful and unworthy in their new communities. Language barriers, experiences, laws or customs in their homeland or a lack of education can exacerbate these feelings. All these misconceptions and emotions can compromise a community's stability, resulting in violence, crime and a diminished quality of life.

To increase mutual understanding and appreciation – and ultimately strengthen the city – the Hartford Public Library began an initiative in 2010 to build networks of trusting relationships and address the need for immigrant civic integration.

Funded by a three-year Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grant, the initiative aims to facilitate the transition of newly-arrived immigrants into the community, nurture strong relationships between long-time immigrant residents and the receiving community and implement programming that will encourage immigrants to become more involved in civic efforts and the overall community.

Under this initiative, the library plays two roles: as a connector for immigrants to resources, services and programs that can help them thrive in America and become involved in their communities, and as a catalyst for conversation and collaboration between immigrants and the receiving community.

This initiative has been named We Belong Here. Serving also as a rally cry, the name suggests inclusion and connection and reinforces two ideas: first, that immigrants are encouraged to leverage the library's resources to become acclimated to their surroundings and engaged in their communities and, second – on a larger level – that both receiving members of the community and immigrants belong in America and are welcome in your city or town.



TOOLKIT BACKGROUND & FRAMEWORK

This toolkit is designed for libraries and other community organizations that want to implement We Belong Here and create a more welcoming and supportive environment that leads to a stronger community.

The toolkit provides a step-by-step guidebook for bringing the We Belong Here initiative to life in your community. The four key areas include:

1. POSITIONING

In order for your initiative to be successful, everyone involved must understand its positioning and carry out the brand vision in everything they do. This toolkit outlines the key components of a strong brand positioning and provides a positioning statement for We Belong Here.

2. MESSAGING

How you communicate your initiative to immigrants and the receiving community is just as critical to its success as the actual engagement strategies and tactics that comprise it. The wrong messaging can reinforce, rather than reduce, fear and intimidation among immigrants and create more misconceptions or downright fail to elicit involvement within the receiving community.

3. STRATEGIES & TACTICS

The possibilities for implementing your initiative are vast; however, they should center around four key strategies: utilizing technology in this digital age, particularly to reach younger generations; providing a way for immigrants to share their stories with one another and the receiving community; forming strategic alliances with organizations in the community and recruiting their leaders as ambassadors; and hosting public events to bring people together.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

When used correctly, advertising, media and social networks are powerful tools for spreading your messaging, raising awareness of your We Belong Here initiative and programming and igniting conversations and action. Together, they can also help counter resistance and change perceptions among both immigrants and the receiving community. This toolkit identifies the best media for advertising; outlines tips for effective public relations outreach; and provides a primer on using the most effective social networks to foster discussion.



BRAND POSITIONING

A brand positioning statement serves as the roadmap to your brand, or initiative, bringing focus to the look and voice of campaign materials, to personal interactions with program participants and partners and to the development of engagement strategies and tactics.

The positioning statement details the target audience to whom a brand is directed; the brand's clear benefit to that audience; and the ways in which that benefit is delivered. It also sets the tone for how the brand is perceived moving forward. Every decision made about the brand should support and reinforce the positioning statement.

This positioning statement for We Belong Here meets the above criteria, identifying whom the initiative is targeting (anyone who values family, culture, growth and quality of life); the benefit to participants (mutual learning and enrichment, as well as improved quality of life); and the ways those benefits are delivered (through programs and services that bring people from different backgrounds together).

Based on your initiative, you may find that replacing or adding words make your statement more powerful. Once the statement is finalized, everyone involved in your We Belong Here initiative should know and understand it so that they can bring it to life in the work they do.

BRAND POSITIONING STATEMENT FOR WE BELONG HERE

For communities that value family, culture, growth and quality of life, the **We Belong Here** initiative consists of programs and services that bring U.S.-born citizens and immigrants from a range of backgrounds and countries together to learn from one another, share their experiences and enrich their personal stories, ultimately helping to strengthen our communities.



MESSAGING

The following messaging forms the foundation for We Belong Here's communications – both written and spoken – with immigrants and the receiving community. These core messages all support your brand positioning as well as nurture an understanding of your work, including the reason it is vital to the health of the surrounding community, what you hope it will achieve and the programming and resources that make up We Belong Here.

While this messaging specifically references Connecticut, Hartford and Hartford Public Library, it can be easily altered to remain relevant for states, cities and organizations in other areas of the country.

GENERAL MESSAGING

- > We all come from different places, but we all strive for the same thing – a better life for ourselves, our family and future generations. For centuries, immigrants have come to America to find that better life and become active in – and contributors to – their community.
- > But if immigrants and those born in the U.S. fail to work together and support one another, our communities suffer and our vision for a better life falters.
- > The library provides key support to residents new to America by linking them to programs and services available at both the library and within the region.
- > These resources help them acclimate to their new home and position them for success within the community.
- > We Belong Here initiatives at the library connect individuals of different backgrounds and countries together to learn from one another and foster mutual understanding, as well as share their experiences and enrich their lives. We do this through:
 - Our Cultural Navigators program, which pairs immigrant “mentors” who have been in America for at least six years with those who have recently moved to the country. These mentors help new residents adjust to the area, providing key insight and guidance around available resources, mass transit, navigating the state and city government systems and more.
 - Community Dialogues, which bring immigrants and the receiving community together to discuss and develop solutions for an issue of common interest.
 - Cultural programs at the library that bring together people of different backgrounds to share and experience one another's traditions and customs, helping to foster a mutual appreciation of cultures.
 - Engaging influential local community, business and educational leaders as ambassadors of our work, promoters of We Belong Here and partners in our programming.

MESSAGING

MESSAGING FOR THE RECEIVING COMMUNITY

- > The United States' history is rooted in immigration. Somewhere on our family tree, we all have a story about coming to America. In a way, we are all immigrants.
- > Your city or town and its suburbs have that same history, serving as homes for people from hundreds of countries.
- > Over the past 15 years, immigration to the U.S. has increased, with the number of new residents reaching the same heights as in the early 1900s.
- > Welcoming immigrants and ensuring they receive the information and guidance they need to successfully settle here is more important than ever for the overall health of our communities.
- > Unfortunately, immigrants often feel disconnected from their communities. Language barriers, deep-seated distrust or fear of authority figures or government and intimidation are only a few of the reasons for this feeling.
- > Communities in which people feel connected and empowered are generally healthier and experience less crime.
- > Immigrants are a critical part of our “human capital,” bringing different experiences, skills and knowledge to our workforce, communities and schools that strengthen our economy and quality of life.
 - A new report by the Fiscal Policy Institute shows that the share of U.S. small businesses owned by immigrants has expanded by 50 percent since 1990.
 - In 2010, the foreign-born share of the workforce had grown to 16 percent, and immigrants made up 18 percent of small business owners.
 - The most common types of businesses – restaurants, doctors' offices, real estate companies and stores – contribute to the economic health of the community.

- > Others want to contribute but feel they have not yet earned a voice, or had an opportunity to use their voice, here in America. We must help them develop that voice. If we don't, we could miss out on great ideas, insight and talents as we face challenges on a local and national scale.

MESSAGING FOR IMMIGRANTS

- > Regardless of your background, the country in which you were born or your previous experiences, you have a voice and a right to be heard and involved in your community.
- > The library is a great place to start. It's a safe, welcoming, free place to access resources and services that can make adjusting to your new home easier. It is also a great place to meet others in your community. Anyone can use the library.
- > Attending community meetings, volunteering, utilizing local resources, joining area organizations, sports teams or clubs or participating in your child's school events are just a few of the other ways to become involved.
- > Communities are strongest when everyone within them works together and supports one another.
- > Community involvement connects residents to each other, forming relationships that enrich your life and allow for mutual learning. It also sets a positive example for children, encouraging them to contribute – and succeed – in the world around them.
- > [For libraries using the Language Line:] The library uses the Language Line, which provides translation services in hundreds of languages and enables library staff to communicate with and accommodate all patrons.

IMPLEMENTATION: STRATEGIES & TACTICS

STRATEGY: BUILD STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Building strategic alliances with local organizations that have common goals and a vested interest in your initiative is critical. Whether it is an organization with a high immigrant membership or a company with a great diversity program, forming mutually beneficial partnerships is key. Provide them with the initiative's messaging and any marketing materials you have developed and ask them to help spread the word. In turn, include these organizations on your list when providing immigrants with referrals for services or resources, and help support the work they are doing. You may want to partner with one or two organizations for an event targeting immigrants, or pool your resources to create an engaging booth for a community festival. In partnering with these groups, you are building a larger team of ambassadors for the initiative.

Using Connecticut as an example, local organizations that could serve as possible partners include:

- > Private sector/corporate community
- > MetroHartford Alliance
- > Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (HYPE)
- > The Connecticut Forum and its Youth Forum
- > Greater Hartford Arts Council
- > Leadership Greater Hartford
- > CT Women's Council
- > Social services organizations
- > Schools
- > Capital Workforce Partners
- > CT Works
- > SAMA (Spanish Americans Merchants Association)
- > Hispanic Health Council
- > Dress for Success
- > Co-opportunity

Once you have formed these alliances and built relationships, you can then turn to the organizations' leaders for further engagement.

STRATEGY: ENGAGE LEADERSHIP

In order to build receiving communities that are welcoming to immigrants, it is critical to engage influential community leaders. Members of the community value the opinions of respected leaders; therefore, it is important to find community, business and educational leaders who are supportive of immigrant integration efforts and engage them in serving as ambassadors as well.

TACTIC: CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

Rather than expecting immigrants to come to us on our terms, we should meet with them in their neighborhoods. Many immigrants look to one or two key individuals in their communities for guidance and advice. These individuals are usually leaders of faith-based organizations or cultural organizations, or someone from their culture who has lived here for a while. Hospitals are another great place to tap into community leaders because they are often involved with initiatives around health care issues that are specific to certain cultures.

Connecting with these leaders and engaging them as ambassadors is imperative, because these are the people immigrants trust and listen to. They serve as a gateway to these immigrant groups. When looking for these leaders, immigrants who currently utilize the resources at your library may be ideal candidates. Provide these leaders with a kit of materials, including key messages and information/resources, so they may easily educate other members of their cultural group.

It is important to remember that connecting with community leaders is also critical in gaining support from the receiving community. Community members are likely to follow the lead of those they respect and trust, such as city officials. A community leader who supports your initiative and speaks on your behalf can help influence the behaviors of community members.

IMPLEMENTATION: STRATEGIES & TACTICS

TACTIC: CONNECT WITH BUSINESS LEADERS

When trying to elicit the support of the receiving community, it is also important to look to business leaders. Start by reaching out to those with immigrants as part of their workforce and/or customer base. These leaders are likely to have a strong interest in the work you are doing because it aligns with their business. Also consider looking to local chambers of commerce and welcome centers. Leaders at these organizations care about the community in which they live and work and are likely to support your efforts.

A significant barrier to the business community for some immigrants is the misconception that they are less worthy or don't fit in. When talking with community leaders, Hartford Public Library staff heard about a student from Peru who didn't think she could ever work for a large company like Travelers or even step foot in the door because she wouldn't be accepted. In order to give immigrants direct access to larger businesses and show them they could, in fact, potentially work there, the corporate community must demonstrate its commitment to diversity.

The library could host an event in which representatives from large companies talk to immigrants about the diversity of their employees, success stories of immigrants in their company, particular skill sets they look for and available job openings and/or internship programs, as well as answer their individual questions.

TACTIC: CONNECT WITH EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

Some immigrants have the same feeling of not belonging when it comes to applying to and attending educational institutions. They may feel they can't afford an education or be concerned they won't understand professors due to language barriers. Hosting an event similar to the one noted above at the library in which leaders from community colleges and/or state universities talk to immigrants about their programs and answer their questions would help immigrants feel they are more accessible and show them how these institutions could benefit them.

TACTIC: TWO-WAY INTERVIEWS

Two-way interviews are another way to foster conversation between immigrants and U.S.-born citizens. The interview would take place with two individuals, an immigrant and a member of the receiving community who have something in common. This commonality could be in relation to their stage of life, career choice, interests or previous experiences. Rather than a typical interview, this interview would allow both participants to ask and answer questions. An example of potential participants for this kind of interview would be two members of a local Chamber of Commerce, one of which is an immigrant and the other being an individual who was born in the U.S.

The two-way interview would provide the participants with an opportunity to meet, share information and demonstrate how, no matter where we come from, we can learn from one another. These interviews could be captured on video (if participants agree) and showcased on the library's website as well as the website(s) of the organization(s) the two individuals represent.

STRATEGY: BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL

Empowering immigrants is a key component of any effort to increase their community engagement. This empowerment can be nurtured through a mentorship program for immigrants new to America, as well as through organized collaborations between members of the receiving community and immigrants.

TACTIC: CULTURAL NAVIGATORS PROGRAM

In order to facilitate the transition of newly arrived immigrants into the community, a Cultural Navigators program should be established. Hartford Public Library has already begun this program, recruiting volunteers from already existing, well-established immigrant programs at the library and other local organizations who want to help immigrants adjust to their new surroundings. These immigrant "mentors" are individuals who have lived in America for at least six years and have an interest in working directly with immigrant families to provide them

IMPLEMENTATION: STRATEGIES & TACTICS

with key insight and guidance. The ultimate goal of this program is to build trusting relationships of mutual understanding between long-term residents and immigrants.

Hartford Public Library has partnered with the Center for Applied Linguistics, a leading national publisher in the field of newcomer integration, to develop an interactive online tutorial for the Cultural Navigators. The tutorial's key modules include basics of cross-cultural communication; an overview of various immigrant categories and experiences, such as chronic post-traumatic stress syndrome; immigrant integration barriers and strategies for overcoming them; diverse belief systems; cultural variations in the perception of government, rights and responsibilities, education, health care and community involvement; and cultural influences on help-seeking behaviors and attitudes toward service providers. Each section generates a test to evaluate knowledge acquisition.

TACTIC: COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

Community Dialogues bring together members of the receiving community and immigrants who have been in the country for two to four years but have not yet ventured too far outside their community. These deliberative democracy dialogues bring individuals together to discuss and develop solutions for community issues of common interest and foster communication and relationship building.

Participants should include a broad representation from key sectors of the community, such as members of local immigrant communities – particularly the unofficial leaders of each neighborhood and faith-based organization leaders, members of the city or town department and council, library staff and members of neighborhood associations, as well as the Cultural Navigators noted above.

This group and Hartford Public Library plan to collaborate with Everyday Democracy to plan and conduct two dialogues over two years. The group will determine the focus of the dialogues. Possible topics include education, job creation, immigrant rights to vote locally or cultural competency in the workplace.

By working together on something that is important to both groups, individuals will get to know each other better, begin to build relationships and realize they can truly make a difference in their community. Immigrants and receiving community members are often intimidated to talk to individuals they don't know very well or those that are different from them. These dialogues will allow them to cross that barrier and connect on a more personal level with individuals they would not normally interact with.

STRATEGY: STORY SHARING

Everyone has a story. In Hartford, community members, immigrants and library staff all recognized and noted the need to provide immigrants – and the receiving community – with an outlet for sharing their stories and cultures. Your library can provide a safe, nurturing place where those stories can be told and people can connect through shared experiences. Every story is different, but the fact that we all have one reinforces the idea that we all have something in common, no matter where we were born.

TACTIC: STORY CLUB

The idea behind the story club is similar to that of a book club. Members would have the opportunity to share their personal stories, hear others' and engage in discussion. This monthly event would bring members of the immigrant and receiving communities together to learn from one another. All meetings would take place at your library.

Each meeting would have a particular theme, such as "My Family" or "My Country," so that members could decide if they want to participate and prepare the story they want to share. At the end of each meeting, members would brainstorm and choose the topic for the following month's meeting.

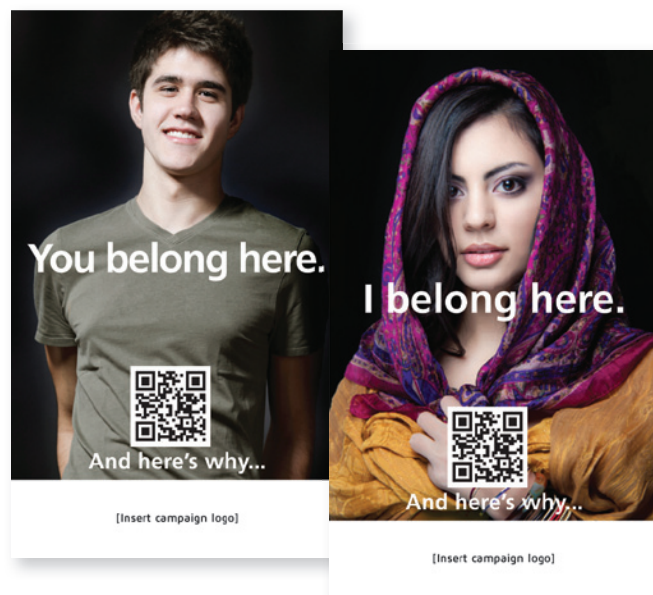
These meetings would also provide an opportunity to capture stories while they are being told (if the storyteller agrees) and bring them to life using video. These videos could appear on the library's website and social media channels to pique interest and encourage others to participate in future story club events.

IMPLEMENTATION: STRATEGIES & TACTICS

TACTIC: INTERACTIVE POSTERS

To drive home the idea that we all have a story and elicit public engagement, a guerilla marketing campaign would consist of posters featuring a powerful close-up photo of an immigrant's face with the headline "I belong here" or a member of the receiving community's face with the headline "You belong here." Below the photo, "And here's why..." would be followed with a QR code to generate curiosity. Upon scanning the code, users would be led to an audio track or video that features the individual in the photo telling their story. The short 30- to 60-second immigrant stories would cover a variety of topics, such as why the individual came to America, what they want to accomplish – or have accomplished – here and their passions and/or dreams. Receiving community members would discuss the importance of creating a welcoming community, the ways in which they are welcoming to immigrants, contributions immigrants have made to their communities and/or stories about how an immigrant has affected their lives. These videos would live on the library website in their own section, or on a microsite. The video or audio track would end with a positioning of the library as a safe, accessible place to find resources and connect with others.

Those featured in the posters would represent a variety of ages, cultures and ethnicities. These interactive posters would be posted in various communities and neighborhoods and throughout your library, which would help create buzz and spark interest.



TACTIC: WE BELONG HERE CALENDAR

An additional way to share the "I belong here" and "You belong here" stories could be through a calendar. This calendar would feature six receiving community members and six immigrants. Each month would showcase one individual with their photo, short biographical information and a quote describing why they feel they or immigrants belong here in America and should be welcomed. Similar to the interactive posters, an additional option for the calendar would be to include a QR code for each individual. Upon scanning the code, users would be led to an audio track or video that features the individual in the photo telling their story.

STRATEGY: TAP INTO TECHNOLOGY

When immigrants arrive in America they are often confused about where to go for information. Many immigrants are unaware of available resources and services and do not know how to navigate the system. In order to create a central information source that can help immigrants succeed in their new environment, consider utilizing technology. While some immigrants are unfamiliar with technology or don't know how to use it, younger generations and those within the community – including at the library – can serve as guides.

TACTIC: MOBILE WEBSITE

A mobile website can be used to provide immigrants information on various topics, as well as local resource and service listings. The website would be accessible through smart phones and computers. A website is beneficial because, unlike physical locations, there is no closing time. This allows users access to the information at a time most convenient for them. In order to make sure that the majority of immigrants are able to use and understand the information on the website, it must be multilingual. It is important to remember that the need for multilingual resources extends far beyond Spanish.

IMPLEMENTATION: STRATEGIES & TACTICS

The website would contain a simplistic directory that would help point users in the correct direction depending on the information they need. The directory would consist of categories such as health services, finding employment and childcare.

When immigrants need information, they often look to those in their close-knit community who have been in America for a longer period of time, as they trust those individuals. This website would bring that personal advice to users through video testimonials featuring local individuals from various cultures talking about positive experiences they have had using resources in the area and sharing “insider” tips that would be helpful to immigrants new to the community. Related message boards would allow users to leave comments where they can share their tips and recommendations or any other information they find useful.

TACTIC: MULTILINGUAL KIOSKS

To extend the accessibility of the mobile website and establish your library as an information hub, multilingual kiosks would serve as the second phase to the mobile website development. For immigrants who do not have access to smart phones and/or computers at home, kiosks throughout the library would provide them the opportunity to access the listings, videos and insider tips from a place that is safe and welcoming.

TACTIC: Q&A INSTANT MESSENGER

Those new to the country may not know anyone in their community or feel embarrassed asking certain questions. An online question-and-answer instant messenger service would provide them the opportunity to ask other immigrants questions and receive firsthand advice and guidance. The online service would be accessible on your library’s website.

This service would be multilingual, allowing users to feel comfortable using their first language. Furthermore, this would be a 24-hour service, enabling users to ask questions any time day or night and receive an answer within 24 hours. The service would be designed so that users could type any question they may have regarding a variety of topics such as public transportation, health care services

or career services. Once the user types and submits his or her question, someone would respond accordingly with helpful information in the same language as the user.

If your library chooses to implement a Cultural Navigator program and recruits a large group of immigrants willing to serve as mentors, volunteers for this service would likely come from that group. Each volunteer would sign up for “shifts” of two- or three-hour blocks. During that time, they would answer the questions they could and send questions in other languages to the appropriate volunteer.

TACTIC: 211 TRAINING

In addition to creating new services that will be beneficial to immigrants, it is important to expand and improve the services currently available, such as 2-1-1. Callers can speak with a highly-trained call specialist who can provide information and/or referrals on a variety of services, including utility assistance, food, housing, child care and crisis intervention.

Consider aligning with 2-1-1 in order to ensure it offers multilingual assistance and consistent information that is useful for the immigrant population. This includes working with upper management at 2-1-1 responsible for hiring in order to discuss diversity training and the multilingual needs of the community.

TACTIC: PROMOTE THE LANGUAGE LINE

If your library uses the Language Line, it should be leveraged and promoted. Community members and leaders alike identify language as being one of the biggest barriers to civic involvement for immigrants. The Language Line, which provides translation services in hundreds of languages, offers a way for library staff to effectively communicate with immigrants. The library should promote this service on its website, at its branches – particularly near widely-utilized public computers – and on program materials to make immigrants feel more welcome and less intimidated about visiting the library or participating in its programming.

IMPLEMENTATION: STRATEGIES & TACTICS

STRATEGY: HOST PUBLIC EVENTS

Events that allow immigrants to share their cultures and express themselves are encouraged. In addition to hosting events at the library, it is important to host events in immigrants' communities and neighborhoods.

TACTIC: LIBRARY EVENTS

The library is an ideal place for public events, as it features wide, open spaces and a safe, free, easy-to-access environment. One event that would provide an excellent opportunity for immigrants to express themselves and share a part of their culture would be an art installation project and unveiling event. This project would recruit and bring together artists from different backgrounds to create a mural that represents the various cultures and ethnicities in your city or town. Artwork representative of these cultures would provide immigrants a sense of ownership and belonging at the library. Website and social network updates on the progress of the mural would raise awareness of the project and generate excitement.

Once the mural is complete, an unveiling event would bring all of the cultures together once again to celebrate the finished piece. This art installation project would further establish your library as a cultural hub, welcoming and accepting of all individuals and cultures.

Another event could complement the interactive posters detailed in the "Tap into technology" section. Attendees of this event would be given a plain T-shirt featuring the words "I belong here" and asked to write their own reason for why they belong here in America. This activity would allow individuals to express themselves and connect with others on a personal level. The overall goal of this event would be to create a sense of belonging for all attendees and reinforce the idea that they do belong here in America. Their writings could also help spur conversation between members of various cultural groups. Those who want to could have their photo taken while wearing their T-shirt or explain what they wrote in a video diary entry. These stories could then be archived on the library's website.

Additional ideas for library events include food-centered events or a multicultural fair that features different cultures' clothing, crafts, music and dance. The library may also want to consider hosting an off-site sporting event, such as a soccer match, that will garner significant immigrant participation and fanfare.

TACTIC: EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

In order to reach out to immigrants where they are most comfortable, it is important to host events in their communities. Community members and leaders should be given the opportunity to get involved and take ownership in the event. Possible events include a neighborhood block party or barbecue/picnic. Library representatives would work with an individual who is seen as a leader in the community to plan and execute the event. It is important to allow this individual to take charge of event coordination, including inviting people and determining food options and other event details.

By organizing this event, immigrants are given the opportunity to interact with and get to know the people who live in their neighborhood. On the day of the event, library representatives should be in attendance to meet with community members and engage in informal conversations. This will help the library build trust and familiarity with the immigrants from that particular community. Once a relationship is established, immigrants in that community will likely be more receptive when you reach out to them for future events or programs.

Your library representatives should also make an effort to attend community sporting, faith-based, school and social group events in order to build relationships with immigrants where they are most comfortable.

CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

In order to create change and engage individuals in your efforts, it is important to get the word out about your initiative. When promoting your work and its goals, remember that your messaging must be clear and consistent across all media. The campaign communications plan should incorporate a mix of media, including social media, earned media and paid media.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Utilizing social media channels as part of your campaign communications has endless possibilities. Social media, when used effectively, can help promote your campaign by cultivating networks of individuals with common interest, building awareness and creating a buzz. It is a relatively cost-effective medium, but does require time to manage and update. Keeping this in mind, it is recommended you start out with just one or two social media platforms, then slowly expand your efforts. Facebook, Twitter and a blog are ideal places to start, based on their audience profiles and strengths.

FACEBOOK:

The largest social network, Facebook encourages informal, conversational engagement and is a great medium to share news and information. It provides the best opportunities for business-to-consumer interaction and generates the most conversions. Facebook has become the preferred way to share content, second only to email, allowing organizations to extend the reach of their news and information. It allows for photo and video sharing, discussions and polls – all in user-friendly formats. The Timeline format allows organizations to highlight new programming, initiatives and news through prominently-displayed apps (formerly tabs); highlighted, or enlarged, images on their wall; and pinning, which places posts at the top of the wall for up to one week.

Currently, the network is widely used by adults of all ages. Facebook is an ideal platform for connecting with immigrants, the receiving community and related organizations, services and clubs.

When using Facebook:

- > Keep posts short and use related photos and videos to grab attention. Post no more than two or three times each day to avoid “fan fatigue.”
- > Be topical – Share and comment on timely, related news stories.
- > Use the Events app to promote initiative-related events and perhaps partners’ events in the community.
- > Connect with local social service and health organizations, city departments and officials, social cultural groups and media outlets to make them aware of your presence and encourage reciprocity. Do this by “liking” their pages and commenting on their posts when relevant.
- > Create a series (e.g. Meet-Up Mondays in which you feature Q&As with people involved in the initiative – either as facilitators or participants). Themed content delivered on a consistent basis sets audience expectations and gives them a reason to return to your page.
- > Pose questions or use the polling feature to elicit engagement and get a better grasp of your audience’s interests, perceptions and opinions.

TWITTER:

A micro-blogging platform, Twitter allows for real-time communication. It is best for building connections, establishing yourself as an information source and acting as a news distribution outlet. This outlet is most popular among young adults (18-29), African Americans and Hispanics and urban dwellers. Twitter is best used to reach these groups, as well as local media outlets, companies, organizations and officials.

CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

When using Twitter:

- > Remember each post has a 140-character limit. Avoid going over this limit; otherwise, your message could get cut off.
- > Post daily and often. Space out posts to avoid becoming background noise or clutter.
- > Retweet interesting posts by those you follow or comment on them. This is key in establishing connections and growing your network to reach influencers.
- > Reciprocate Twitter follows as appropriate to expand your network and reach.
- > As on Facebook, follow local organizations, city departments and officials and media outlets to make them aware of your presence and encourage reciprocity.
- > When commenting on hot topics, be sure to use that topic's established hash tag (e.g. #USimmigration) to ensure the post shows up when that tag is searched.
- > Hashtags can also be used to host Twitter chats. Plan and promote a 30-minute Q&A with We Belong Here facilitators or participants. Allow followers to send their questions, and pose questions to your followers as well. Use the hashtag #WeBelongHere, and encourage your followers to do the same.
- > When mentioning a person or company/organization, include their handle (@name) so they can immediately see they were mentioned. Most likely, they will retweet your tweet.
- > Live tweet from initiative-related events to build excitement and pique curiosity. To live tweet, simply create a running feed of updates from the event – highlights, quotes from speeches, attendees' reactions, etc.
- > To bring the voices of your initiative to life, engage a guest Twitterer for the day to share his or her perspectives or information. This could be a member of a cultural group, Cultural Navigator or initiative volunteer, for example.

BLOG:

Blogs are an effective way to establish the “voices” of your initiative, demonstrate expertise and communicate with audiences in a more conversational way. Blogs provide a platform for giving readers an inside, behind-the-scenes look at your program and sharing feature story content. When written and promoted effectively, they also enhance search engine optimization and act as a magnet to your website – sites with blogs have 97 percent more inbound links and 55 percent more website visitors. The blog should be multilingual so that it is user-friendly for a variety of audiences.

When developing your blog:

- > Establish a publication schedule. Post daily, weekly or monthly and adhere to the schedule. Consistency is key.
- > Allow readers to post comments, and respond in a timely manner.
- > Include a bio for each blogger. People want to know who is sharing the information. Consider engaging members of various cultural communities to guest post so that you feature a range of perspectives on a particular topic or an archive of stories. Those members will likely promote their posts to their communities, bringing readers to your blog.
- > Use it as a way to share news – but don't write your entry like a press release. Instead, ask yourself what unique angle the blog entry can take. If it's a new program you're introducing, for example, interview a volunteer or participant about his or her experiences.
- > Organize your posts into categories so that users may easily access the information by interest versus just by date.
- > Drive people to your blog through strategically placed links on your site and other social networks. Offer readers the opportunity to subscribe via email or RSS feed.

CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

EARNED MEDIA

It is important to utilize earned media as a way to get information out to the public. This component of your campaign revolves around generating coverage by newspapers, radio, television and other outlets.

MEDIA TRAINING FOR SPOKESPEOPLE:

Before releasing any news, identify the individuals who will be spokespeople for your campaign. Once you choose these representatives, invest in hiring a professional to provide media training (a two-hour session will make a noted difference). Media trainers can help improve the communication and presentation skills of the individuals who speak on behalf of your campaign, including teaching them how to deal with difficult or controversial questions and how to steer the interview to ensure all points they want to cover are indeed covered.

To find media training professionals in your area, use Google or LinkedIn and search for “media trainer” and your city or state. The investment is worth it – when that interview request comes in, you’ll be confident putting your spokespeople in front of the camera or microphone.

GETTING YOUR NEWS OUT:

Public relations efforts include, but certainly are not limited to, writing and distributing press releases. Creating a press release provides you with the opportunity to share important information in a brief one- or two-page document. Key elements of a standard press release include the organization’s/ initiative’s logo, a contact name, phone number and email address for the spokesperson, a header that will draw in the reader and a possible sub-header featuring other important information, followed by the information you want to share and a brief description of your organization. It is key when writing releases to present yourself as a professional and credible source to the media outlets that receive your release. Avoid using superlatives or editorializing – just give the facts. Double-check all information to avoid factual errors and proofread for typos.

Before distributing your release, identify the appropriate outlets and reporters that will have an interest in your initiative. Consider whether your news is appropriate for all outlet types. While a press release may suffice for a newspaper or radio news show, a TV station will likely want to know what visuals you can offer and whom they can speak with on camera. Your release should be accompanied with this information when sent to TV stations. Identifying reporters can be done with a simple visit to the “Contact Us” or “About Us” sections of each news outlet’s website. These sections also often detail how the outlet prefers to receive press releases. Building relationships with the media doesn’t happen overnight, but it will happen if you continue to send them accurate, well-presented news of interest and provide them with any additional information or sources they might need.

PAID MEDIA

Paid media should be used to supplement earned and social media. Although paid media tends to be expensive, it can be highly effective in reaching both broad and highly targeted audiences, including those who may not be reached with your earned or social media efforts. The following media are recommended for reaching both the receiving community and immigrants.

TELEVISION:

Combining visuals with messaging, television is a powerful advertising medium. Depending on budget, you can choose to advertise on cable television or network television. When deciding between these two options, it is important to understand the difference between the two. Network television features a mix of local programming, such as news broadcasts and nationally syndicated programming. This option is more costly but allows you to reach a broad audience, especially during news programming time slots. Advertising on cable television has a less broad reach but can be highly targeted to audiences based on age, gender, ethnicity and more. Cable television channels such as Telemundo or Univision would be appropriate for reaching the immigrant population.

CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

RADIO:

Similar to television, radio is a medium that can be highly targeted to your intended audience. With radio advertising, you usually have a captive audience listening in their cars or at home. In order to reach the immigrant population, consider a targeted radio buy that includes bilingual and cultural stations. News stations and public radio are best for reaching influencers and community leaders within the receiving community.

PRINT:

When determining where to place print advertising, examine prospective outlets' editorial content and circulation penetration. Together, they will provide you a good sense of that outlet's audience. Recommended publications include free community weekly papers and cultural newspapers that are widely read by the immigrant population.

OUT OF HOME ADVERTISING:

This form of paid advertising, which includes bus wraps, interior bus ads and bus shelters, is great for getting your message out broadly in the community, specifically in urban areas. Many immigrants use public transportation to travel from place to place. Additional options include billboards, posters and mall displays.



CONCLUSION

MEASUREMENT

As you plan your initiative, remember to consider metrics for every program, event, etc. Make sure to track event attendance and program participation. If you use technology, use Google Analytics to measure traffic to the website or bit.ly to measure QR code scans. Use free tools like Social Mention, Klout and Twitter Search to measure and evaluate your social media influence and engagement. Evaluate advertising effectiveness by steering audiences to a unique URL in your ads as the call to action.

Using detailed measurement techniques will allow you to evaluate each component of your initiative and adjust your strategy to maximize long-term, sustained impact.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

While this toolkit provides a framework for implementing a We Belong Here initiative in your community, a wealth of additional resources and background materials exist. The following websites are great places to start:

WELCOMING AMERICA

welcomingamerica.org

RECEIVING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

welcomingamerica.org/resources/rci

EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

everyday-democracy.org

With immigration to America at record heights, **the time to implement a We Belong Here initiative is now.** Strengthening our communities and positioning ourselves for continued success in facing local challenges will only happen if mutual understanding and respect, along with collaboration, are nurtured between immigrants and receiving communities.

To do this, partnerships with community organizations, businesses and government entities, community leader engagement, open dialogue, availability of resources, opportunities for cultural expression and events around common interests are necessary. **It won't happen overnight; however, change – when guided by passion and intention – is possible.**