



Welcome • Inform • Connect • Support

NEEDS ASSESSMENT
SUMMER 2017

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement and Thanks.....	2
Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Background.....	4
The Questions Asked.....	6
Awareness of Existing Resources.....	7
• Citizenship Process.....	7
• Immigration Questions.....	7
• Immigrant Rights.....	8
Desired: More Accessible Resources.....	8
How Can Cambridge Be More Welcoming?	9
Priority Needs.....	10
Conclusion.....	11
CIRC Focus Group Data.....	12
CIRC Individual Interview Data.....	15
Glossary of Acronyms.....	20

Acknowledgement and Thanks

Thanks are owed to many individuals who gave their time, energy and thought to this effort to understand the needs of Cambridge immigrants as they navigate the challenges of making a safe and secure life for themselves in Cambridge and America.

Particular thanks are owed to the Commissioners on the Commission for Immigrant Rights and Citizenship (CIRC) for their work in formulating and revising the questions. CIRC's eleven volunteer Commissioners are Leslie DiTrani, Sana Ghafoor, Alejandro Epstein-Santoyo, Karin Lin, Marcio Macedo, Roxana Maldonado-Garcia, Swati Sawant, Jennifer Sparks, Merline Sylvain-Williams, Melanie Torres and Yarlennys Villaman.

Thanks to Yarlennys Villaman and Sana Ghafoor for assisting with the Focus Groups and compiling the responses. Thanks to the following Commissioners for conducting individual interviews: Leslie DiTrani, Marcio Macedo, Roxana Maldonado-Garcia, Swati Sawant, Merline Sylvain-Williams, Melanie Torres and Yarlennys Villaman. Thanks to Marcio Macedo for assisting with organizing the interview data and special thanks to Karin Lin for organizing and analyzing the data from both the Focus Groups and the interviews into charts that made the information more accessible.

Thanks to Carole Sousa, Director of the Community Engagement Team (CET) and Priscila DeCalvache, Let's Talk Program Coordinator for the Public Health Department's Literacy Ambassadors, for helping to coordinate the Focus Groups with their outreach workers. Thanks to the CET Outreach workers Rabeya Akther, Carinne Bury, Maria Chavez, Seble Kidane, Ibrahim Mohamed and Tagesech Wabeto and CPHD Literacy Ambassadors Rabeya Akther, Jamila El Hamdouni, Qumrunnessa Huda, Miguelina Santiago, Shova Thapa and Merline Sylvain-Williams for taking the time to participate in the Focus Groups and for providing their insights and understanding about how Cambridge's immigrants identify resources and services in Cambridge.

Thanks to Sabrina Acloque, Lee Gianetti, Karin Lin, Crystal Rosa and Liz Speakman for reviewing drafts of this report and helping refine it with their insights and editorial skills.

This Needs Assessment effort was encouraged and supported by Deputy City Manager Lisa Peterson, who recognized that CIRC needed to understand its immigrant constituents' needs before it could focus its work most effectively. Finally, I want to thank Mayor E. Denise Simmons and City Manager Louis DePasquale for their commitment to the work of CIRC and their ongoing support for CIRC's efforts to assist immigrants who live and work in Cambridge.

Executive Summary

The fifty-five people who participated in the two Focus Groups and interviews with CIRC Commissioners represent twenty-three different countries, from Africa, Asia, North, South and Central America (including the Caribbean), Europe and the Middle East. Twelve men and forty-three women participated. All participants were Cambridge residents, residing in a range of neighborhoods throughout the City. Although results were derived from a relatively small sampling of immigrants, the participants' responses reflected a spectrum of local resources and a range of understanding regarding what is (and is not) available to support immigrants and their adjustment to life in Cambridge.

Participants' answers reflect both the wide range of resources immigrant folk access for services and information, and the prevalence of certain resources as essential. Some immigrant respondents tended to reach out to significant persons in their local/regional immigrant community, while others tended to look to government agencies, immigrant-focused non-profits, regional immigrant serving organizations and the internet for information.

As the Commission on Immigrant Rights & Citizenship (CIRC) reflects on the responses provided by the participants in the Focus Groups and interviews, it will focus its efforts on addressing the expressed need for more readily accessible information in more locations, through a range of formats and in more languages. CIRC staff are mindful that many immigrants seek information from resource providers who provide a safe and welcoming environment and enable them to ask questions, clarify their needs, and obtain resources without being stigmatized as "outsiders."

Upon hiring an Immigrant Services Liaison in summer 2017, CIRC will be better positioned to address the needs of Cambridge immigrants, through direct outreach to immigrant residents in places where they feel safe, supporting them as they seek information about existing services and resources in Cambridge and metro-Boston.

CIRC will work to: offer an enhanced web presence and social media postings about immigrant services, highlight local and regional events supporting immigrants, provide print materials translated into predominant foreign languages, generate cable-tv Public Service Announcements (PSAs), and organize informational gatherings where immigrants can get to know others in the community who are making the adjustment to life in the US. CIRC will continue to coordinate "Know Your Rights" (KYR) trainings on an ongoing basis, as requested by host organizations, and will work with the City Manager's Office and Law Department to coordinate a monthly Legal Screening Clinic, provided by volunteer Immigration Attorneys. Through these efforts, CIRC staff will play their part in furthering Cambridge's historic role as a sanctuary and support for immigrants in uncertain times.

Introduction

The following report presents an analysis by the Commission on Immigrant Rights & Citizenship (CIRC) of the most pressing needs of Cambridge's immigrant communities, particularly with regard to legal rights, citizenship and local resources for this information, based upon responses provided at two Focus Groups and through a series of thirty-three individual interviews with Cambridge immigrants, conducted in the winter/spring of 2017.

The purpose of this needs assessment is to:

- Identify the priorities of needs expressed by members of the immigrant communities in Cambridge
- Focus the efforts of the CIRC Commissioners and staff on the matters of most urgent need
- Help the Commission on Immigrant Rights & Citizenship make informed decisions about future projects

This report was written by CIRC Executive Director Nancy Schlacter and Commissioner Karin Lin, based upon input provided in interviews by CIRC Commissioners with Cambridge resident immigrants, and two focus groups with City staff, from the Department of Human Services' Community Engagement Team (CET) and the Department of Public Health's Literacy Ambassadors, whose primary work is outreach to immigrant communities in Cambridge. All participants in the focus groups are themselves immigrants.

Background

An escalation in anti-immigrant rhetoric during the 2016 Presidential campaign brought heightened attention to the concerns of Cambridge's immigrant population, particularly with regard to their rights, legal options within the US Immigration system, and personal safety. City leaders spoke out in reaffirmation of Cambridge's long-standing Sanctuary City position, rejecting the xenophobic bombast that branded certain election campaigns. In response to the increasingly negative tone in the national election, during the summer of 2016 the City recruited, interviewed and appointed Commissioners to the newly formed Commission on Immigrant Rights & Citizenship (CIRC).

In September 2016 the Commission on Immigrant Rights & Citizenship (CIRC) first met, convening its eleven volunteer members, all Cambridge residents, who reflect a range of personal immigrant experiences and/or a lifetime of work in immigrant serving organizations. The Commissioners were tasked with clarifying the most pressing needs that Cambridge

resident immigrants identified with regard to City services, access to resources, information about citizenship, and information about legal rights.

CIRC staff and Commissioners developed initial questions to explore these needs and conducted two Focus Groups in January 2017 with the Department of Human Service Program's (DHSP) Community Engagement Team (CET) Outreach Workers and the Public Health Department's (CPHD) Literacy Ambassadors. Both the DHSP's CET Outreach Workers and the CPHD's Literacy Ambassadors are themselves immigrants, who reach out to their communities about City services and resources available to parents and families in Cambridge.

Following the two Focus Groups, CIRC Commissioners refined the questions to hone in on the key information they hoped to glean from individual interviews with Cambridge resident immigrants. CIRC Commissioners conducted thirty-three individual interviews with Cambridge resident immigrants, from February through April 2017, and reported their results. CIRC Commissioners Karin Lin and Marcio Macedo analyzed the responses and identified common themes and concerns expressed by those interviewed.

This Report reflects the scope of the responses to the questions asked in both the Focus Groups and the individual interviews, though the questions were somewhat different between the two approaches.

The Questions Asked

The Focus Group questions included the following:

1. Do you have ideas about how to find out about the citizenship process in the US?
2. What resources do you use to find out about your rights as an immigrant in the US?
3. How do you learn about your legal rights in America?
4. Do you have people or programs or organizations that you trust to ask questions about your rights?
5. What do you think would make it easier for you to learn about your rights?
6. Are there resources for immigrants that you would want the City of Cambridge to provide that they are not providing now?
7. How could the City of Cambridge make immigrants feel more welcome?

The individual interview questions were somewhat different and included certain demographic information (age/range, gender, neighborhood of respondent and country of origin), as well as the following questions:

1. Where do you get your immigration questions answered?
2. How could the City of Cambridge help immigrants feel more welcome?
3. What would make it easier for you to learn about your immigrant rights/options?
4. What resources for immigrants are you interested in seeing more of in Cambridge?

Given similarities between the questions posed, we have grouped the responses into three overarching categories, as follows:

1. How aware are you about existing resources?
2. What resources do not exist that you wish did?
3. How can Cambridge be more welcoming to immigrants?

Awareness of Existing Resources

Focus Group participants and individual interviewees described a range of “go to” resources available through non-profit organizations in Cambridge, metro-Boston and beyond, as well as through local and federal governmental programs in Cambridge and Boston, family, friends and knowledgeable persons from their countries of origin. Many sought initial information through the internet. The responses reflected on the following general areas of inquiry.

- Citizenship Process

Information about the *citizenship process* was found through immigrant-serving non-profit organizations such as the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS), the Islamic Center of New England (ICNE), the Islamic Society of Boston, Political Asylum and Immigrant Representation Project (PAIR), the International Institute of New England (IINE), Irish International Immigrant Center (IIIC), Catholic Charities, Concilio Hispano, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) and Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC), all of which provide a range of services, including citizenship information.

In addition to the non-profit resources, many respondents noted that municipal programs, including the Cambridge Community Learning Center (CLC) and the City of Boston’s Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement (Boston MOIA) offered classes and/or useful resources for citizenship information.

Respondents also noted that they searched the internet for information, including the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website, in addition to reaching out to family members and knowledgeable persons from their countries of origin.

- Immigration Questions

Persons seeking answers to *immigration legal questions* cast a wide net for information. Answers to questions regarding immigration legal processes, legal status, defense to deportation and detention were sought from a range of sources, with many respondents noting that online resources were often a first step. Family, friends and other immigrants were typically sought out, as were immigration attorneys, immigrant serving organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), MIRA and Centro Presente. Churches with immigrant populations serve as a resource, as does the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic. Among other sources noted were CEOC, consulates, Community Legal Services and Counseling Center (CLSACC), legal clinics and Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) family support workers.

- Immigrant Rights

For information regarding *a person's rights as an immigrant* in the US, respondents noted Google searches, Know Your Rights (KYR) training workshops, City resources such as CLC, Community Engagement Team (CET) staff, the Multi Service Center (MSC), Boston MOIA, non-profits such as CEOC and IIRC, workplace resources, others in their immigrant community, immigration attorneys, library resources, consulates, information in the media (particularly if in their native language), and immigrant organizations serving particular communities (i.e. Moroccan – El Huda).

When asked which people, programs or organizations Focus Group respondents *trusted* for answers to questions about their rights, many mentioned City staff including the Co-Directors of the CET, CET Outreach Workers, staff at the CLC and Center for Families, Cambridge Police, the Human Rights Commission, MSC staff and DHSP staff.

In addition to City staff, Focus Group respondents noted *trusting* staff at Transition House, Centro Presente, Concilio Hispano, MIRA, CEOC, International Institute of New England (IINE), Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services (CASLS) and GBLS, Harvard Legal Aide and CLSACC. Some mentioned others in their faith communities as trusted resources for this information.

Desired: More Accessible Resources

Respondents were asked (1) what would make it easier for them to learn about their rights and (2) what resources were desired that did not currently exist. These related questions surfaced related responses.

With regard to *ease of learning*, multiple Focus Group respondents mentioned KYR trainings and similar live workshops which include Q&A sessions to clarify the information, support groups and focus groups, guides to resources and rights information, with material provided in the immigrant's native language. Individual responses included information from public schools, flyers and literature, social media and online resources, and presentations through faith based organizations. A few Focus Group respondents noted that information available through faith-based organizations was easier for some immigrants to access, due to congregants' trust in their Pastors or Imams. Another Focus Group participant noted that immigrant community organizations for particular communities (i.e. El Huda for Moroccans, MAPS for Portuguese speakers) offer information in culturally sensitive ways attuned to their particular community.

Individual interviewees noted that it would be *easier to learn* about immigrant resources and rights if more information was available through a centralized online portal; in a classroom setting; on local television; through a regular newsletter; through outreach programs; through

an informational clearinghouse; through workshops and through flyers with basic information located throughout the city. Workshops and clinics about updated or new information would be easier if held on a regular basis, in dispersed locations such as local libraries. A “go to” web resource with updated information would also be an easier way to access information.

When asked about *desired resources*, many Focus Group respondents noted the ease of the walk-in programs available at Boston MOIA, language-specific resources, better visibility and ease of access to existing information (including places where people can bring food and family members when accessing information) and more focus groups on immigrant issues.

Individual interviewees noted additional *desired resources*, including support groups and “rescue homes” in cases of emergency (i.e. sanctuary spaces for undocumented folks, concerned about ICE enforcement, detention and deportation), more citizenship classes in Cambridge, more USCIS information at libraries, more ESOL courses at schools and libraries, assistance with job placement, more local places for assistance with filling out immigration (and other) paperwork, places for older immigrants to seek information (other than the internet), more tax assistance, and more information about choices that could impact decisions on whether to pursue a green card or citizenship.

The responses to both *ease of learning* and *desired resources* questions revealed an interest in a centralized resource that can direct immigrants seeking a range of information to the broad range of resources that already exist in Cambridge and regionally. They described versions of a place where print resources (flyers, pamphlets, event postings) can be obtained, links to resource sites can be readily located, where immigrant-focused events and workshops can be posted, and where opportunities to meet with other immigrants from one’s own and other immigrant communities can be identified. One Focus Group respondent mentioned “Find It Cambridge,” but many individual interviewees were not aware of it.

How Can Cambridge be more welcoming?

Many Focus Group participants and individual interviewees noted that they feel Cambridge is a very welcoming city and that they feel safe and supported in Cambridge, noting that Cambridge’s history as a Sanctuary City lends to their perception of it as welcoming. Many respondents noted that the availability of KYR trainings, Cambridge-based legal clinics and City programs about immigration concerns supported the feeling of welcome. Respondents noted that pro-immigrant, anti-hate statements and posters provide a feeling of welcome, as does the existence of local anti-discrimination laws and a local anti-discrimination agency (Cambridge Human Rights Commission). Some respondents mentioned that cultural exchange events welcome and encourage folks from different backgrounds to learn about one another and their shared challenges in adjusting to life in America and help immigrant parents better understand their American-educated/acculturated children.

Individual interviewees noted the intentional work by Cambridge Public Schools to make undocumented students and their families feel welcome and supported. Respondents mentioned that having more information available in their native languages and multi-lingual services would be more welcoming. A few respondents mentioned that more affordable housing, a municipal ID program and a newsletter regarding immigration news would lend a sense of welcome, too.

Priority Needs

Focus group participants and individual interviewees alike noted their desire to live in Cambridge, due the array of services available, their sense of security and welcome, and the many opportunities to access local resources. Nonetheless, as expressed by both City immigrant outreach staff at the Focus Groups and individual immigrant interviewees, certain themes pertaining to particularized needs of immigrants recur, regardless of the formulation of the questions asked. These include:

- Easier access to a range of resource information impacting immigrants, in a variety of formats (online, in person, flyers, newsletters, social media, local television, guidance about programs and services)
- Locally available legal clinics and legal assistance (similar to Boston MOIA, IIIC and Catholic Charities legal clinics, and CLSACC and IIIC's legal services)
- Access to legal resources and information regarding citizenship, immigration laws and impacts of changes in the law, in a variety of locations and formats
- Welcome efforts that gather immigrant communities around topics of interest and express cultural differences in a positive way, accessible to families with children. A number of respondents noted that events where families can attend with children and where culturally appropriate food is available or can be brought can enhance the sense of welcome.
- Information available in languages of origin/Language access
- Assistance with job placement, taxes, affordable housing

Conclusion

The Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship (CIRC) sought direct input from Cambridge's immigrant community regarding what they felt the City could do to enable them to become more informed about their rights and the resources available to them, access useful information and connect them to others with shared concerns, and how the City might help them to feel more welcome in Cambridge, where they chose to live.

The insights and information provided by the 55 participants in this effort will inform the work of CIRC going forward. CIRC's coordination of Know Your Rights (KYR) trainings throughout the city was just the beginning. CIRC will work to fulfill its mission of providing a centralized resource for information affecting the lives of immigrants in Cambridge, whether through its eventual web presence, social media postings, print materials, the work of its Immigrant Services Liaison, outreach and welcoming events, informational panels, a City-based legal screening clinic, Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and more. Many respondents noted their efforts to obtain information online and CIRC understands that creating and maintaining a robust web presence will aid those who seek localized resource information through this 24/7 option.

The work of the Immigrant Services Liaison, an outreach worker for CIRC, will enable the Commission to get information about City and local resources out to the immigrant community in places where folks gather and feel safe, connecting them to the many opportunities available within Cambridge and building connections among Cambridge's immigrant folks and the City staff who may be able to assist them in their integration into life in the US.

Summary of CIRC Focus Group Interviews CET Outreach Workers and CPHD Literacy Ambassadors

Respondents: 12 total

Origin	# respondents
Bangladesh	3
Dominican Rep.	2
Ethiopia	2
Haiti	2
Morocco	1
Nepal	1
Saudi Arabia	1

Question 1: Do you have ideas about how to find out about the citizenship process in the US?

Answer	# responses	Notes
Organizations	6	MIRA, MAPS, Islamic Center, PAIR, Int'l Inst. New Eng., IIIC, GBLS, Concilio Hispano, CEOC
City resources	5	CLC, Boston MOIA
Other immigrants	3	Nepali, Haitian, and Moroccan communities
Other	2	USCIS website, family

Question 2: What resources do you use to find out about your rights as an immigrant in the US?

Answer	# responses	Notes
Online	4	Google, web searches
Workshops	3	KYR trainings

City resources	3	CLC, CEOC, Boston MOIA
Immigrant Community	3	
Lawyer	2	
Library	2	
Other	2	Workplace, IIC, Haitian radio

Question 3: How do you learn about your legal rights in America?

Answer	# responses	Notes
It's hard / I don't know	5	
City resources	3	CLC, CEOC, CET
Personal experiences	2	
Consulate	2	
Other	4	Media, online, workplace, organizations (El Huda)

Question 4: Do you have people or programs or organizations that you trust to ask questions about your rights?

Answer	# responses	Notes
City resources	5	CET Co-Directors, CLC, Center for Families, Cambridge Police, Human Rights Commission, MSC, DHSP staff at 51 Inman
Organizations	3	CEOC, Transition House, Centro Presente, Concilio Hispano, MIRA, CASLS, GBLS, CLSACC, Harvard Legal Aid, IINE, ABCD
Friends	2	
Community leaders	2	
Other	2	Church, online, lawyer

Question 5: What do you think would make it easier for you to learn about your rights?

Answer	# responses	Notes
Workshops	5	2
Support and focus groups	2	
Guide to resources/rights	2	
Language-specific material	2	
Other	4	Public schools, flyers, literature, social media and online, faith organizations

Question 6: Are there resources for immigrants that you would want the City of Cambridge to provide that they are not providing now?

Answer	# responses	Notes
Walk-in program like MOIA	4	
Language-specific resources	2	
Better visibility of existing resources	2	
Better access for existing resources	2	Place where people can bring food and/or families
More focus groups	1	

Question 7: How could the City of Cambridge make immigrants feel more welcome?

Many responses with almost no duplicates.

Summary of CIRC Individual Interviews

Respondents (33 total):

Age	# respondents
Under 18	2
18-30	8
31-40	7
41-50	12
51+	2
Unknown	2

Gender	# respondents
Male	11
Female	22

Neighborhood	# respondents
East Cambridge	8
Central	8
Cambridgeport	2
North Cambridge	6
Area 4	3

Unknown	6
---------	---

Origin	# respondents	Notes
North America	11	DR 5, Haiti 4, Mexico, Puerto Rico
Central America	4	El Salvador
South America	4	Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru
Europe	5	Spain 2, UK, France, Greece
Middle East	2	Lebanon, Palestine
Asia	5	India 4, China
Africa	2	Sudan, unspecified

1. Where do you get your immigration questions answered?

Answer	# responses	Notes
Online sources	21	
Family/friends	10	
Lawyers	8	
Organizations	3	ACLU, MIRA, Centro Presente
Other immigrants	3	
Church	2	
Harvard	2	

Other	7	CEOC, consulate, school, clinics, CLSACC, news, family support worker
-------	---	---

2. How could the City of Cambridge help immigrants feel more welcome?

Wide variety of answers; listed below in decreasing order of mentions

- (Legal) clinics / other city programs about immigration (6)
- Cambridge is already very welcoming! (5)
- Pro-immigrant, anti-hate crime statements, posters, etc. (4)
- Cultural exchange event (4)
- Anti-discrimination laws (2)
- Staying a sanctuary city (2)
- Affordable housing (2)
- Multilingual services (2)
- Schools making (esp. undocumented) children and parents feel safe (2)
- English classes (2)
- Office in City Hall (with dedicated staff person) to help immigrants (2)
- Services for new immigrants (2)
- Legal aid
- Help immigrant children and parents get on the same page culturally
- Municipal ID
- Collaboration with churches
- Newsletter on immigration news

3. What would make it easier for you to learn about your immigration rights/options?

Our respondents provided thoughtful answers to this question, addressing services they desire and at time expressing preferences on how these services are delivered. Therefore in this summary, we break down answers based on (a) what types of services they would like to see, and (b) how they would like it to be provided.

What services are desired:

Answer	# responses*	Notes
Information	17	Various types in various formats
Social services	7	

Workshops	4	
Clinics	4	

How services are delivered:

Answer	# responses*	Notes
In person	18	
Fliers	7	
Online	5	
Newsletter	2	
Media	2	

* - due to method of survey, total number of response is greater than number of respondents

4. What resources for immigrants are you interested in seeing more of in Cambridge?

Responses to this question offered a wide range of responses and some overlap with question 3.

Below is the breakdown of types of resources *desired*:

Answer	# responses*	Notes
Information	10	Various types in various formats
Social services	10	Included: improved access to city services, and more ESOL access, help with job placement

Workshops	3	KYR, classes
Services in language/culture	5	
Legal	4	
Housing	3	
Clinics	1	

* - due to method of survey, total number of response is greater than number of respondents

Glossary of Acronyms

ABCD	Action for Boston Community Development
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
CASLS	Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services
CEOC	Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee
CET	Community Engagement Team
CIRC	Commission on Immigrant Rights & Citizenship
CLC	Community Learning Center
CLSACC	Community Legal Services and Counseling Center
CPHD	Cambridge Public Health Department
DHSP	Department of Human Service Programs
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GBLS	Greater Boston Legal Services
ICNE	Islamic Center of New England
IIIC	Irish International Immigrant Center
IINE	International Institute of New England
KYR	Know Your Rights Trainings
MAPS	Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers
MIRA	Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
MOIA	Boston Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement
MSC	Multi Service Center for the Homeless
PAIR	Political Asylum and Immigrant Representation Project

PSA Public Service Announcement

USCIS United States Citizenship and Immigration Services



A publication of the City of Cambridge
Commission of Immigrant Rights and Citizenship
51 Inman Street, 2nd Floor
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 349- 4396
www.cambridgema.gov