



**NEW AMERICANS TASK FORCE  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, June 15, 2023**

**I. Welcome**

- a. During the roundtable introductions, folks introduced themselves with name, pronouns, organization, "walk up" song.

**Task Force Members present**

Alejandra Balcázar, Annette Karanja, Bella Owens, Betty Symington, Cassie Miller She/Her, Catalina Rodriguez Lima, Cate Scenna, Cindy Kolade, Della Leister, Giuliana Valencia-Banks Helany J. Sinkler she/her, Javier Rivas, Jennifer Hernandez, John Mason, Laura Brown Laure Covert, Maricruz Abarca, Mary Clay, Nidia Gentry, Orlando D Lilly, Rachele Lawton Ramona Brown-Carter, Simon Ramirez, Susana Barrios, Tasha Gresham-James, Tim 'Suryodaya Timsina', Valerie Rivera-Maldonado, Zainab Chaudry, Adriana Buttrum for Richard Amador, Shapreice Shears-Motley for Mitch Posner, & A M. Sylena Bangudi, for Nan Ross

**Task Force Members absent**

Alejandra Flores Miller, Bishop Bruce Lewandowski, Mahro Ershadi, Matthew Bernardy & Dr. Truphena M. Choti

**Non-Task Force Members present**

Ain Leyba-Tripps, Andrea Natal, Wambui KamauC Williams, Dinorah Olmos, Donna Batkis Emily Chavez Robalino, Hiram Marco Nuñez, Jeannette Suarez, Jennifer Aiosa Jessica Cordova, Joshua Greenberg, LeRoy Bryant, Nick Staigerwald he/him/they Riccy Amador, Simon Ramirez, & Viviana Lozano

**II. Commitments & Definitions**

The commitments and definitions outlined during the meeting will guide how we accomplish the task force's work and how we engage with one another and the community at large.

Laure Covert suggested defining asylum seeker and asylee. Catalina Rodriguez-Lima suggested adding mix-status family.

**III. What is Gateways for Growth**

The Gateways for [Growth Challenge](#) (G4G) is a competitive opportunity for localities to receive research support and technical assistance from the [American Immigration Council](#) and [Welcoming America](#) to improve immigrant inclusion in their communities. Through Gateways for Growth, Baltimore County received a catered research report about [New Americans in Baltimore County](#). Della, Major Lilly, and Laure shared feedback on the report and how it can be used to create policies, programs, and programs to support the needs of the New American community.

**IV. Charge of Task Force**

Helany led a discussion about what they envision for the Task Force.

### **Key points from the discussion:**

1. Capitalize and expand on nontraditional outreach methods to reach the community
  - a. Meet the community where they are
2. Ensure an inclusive framework - ensure proper representation of marginalized, traditionally underrepresented groups and consider the intersectionality of groups.
3. Centralized access to services
4. Information/welcome sessions - need for additional education on housing rights, healthcare access, and awareness.
5. Better awareness of services and mapping them out, Stronger collaboration with service providers in the county to comprehensively meet the needs of the community - schools, healthcare, libraries
  - a. Ensure the welcome resource guide is comprehensive
  - b. Visit centers, research other service providers
6. Formal recognition of the New Americans Taskforce by local county government
7. Include community members' input - empowering the community to keep the work forward.
  - a. Nothing about us without us
8. Learn and build upon efforts from other local jurisdictions, such as Baltimore City - there is no need to reinvent the wheel.
9. Focus on systemic challenges, barriers - language access, data collection, customer service, and inclusive services/programs.
  - a. Remain steadfast in our work and recognize our collective responsibility to make progress.
10. Build bridges for New Americans - work towards ensuring they earn a living, sustainable wages - go beyond "job finding" and aim for "career building" and building generational wealth.
11. Access to information in their language during mental health emergencies
12. The task force's charge is to create a New American integration and inclusion plan that includes all immigrants and refugees regardless of their immigration status and nation of origin.

### **V. Goal Setting**

As the task force moves forward, it will break out into subcommittees to address:

- Civic Engagement/Community Engagement
- Connected, Safe, and Healthy Communities
- Economic Development and Entrepreneurship
- Education
- Equitable Access

Are there other things missing?

### **VI. Proposed Work Process**

Giuliana led a discussion on the work process for the task force. The entire task force and the subcommittees will meet monthly. A subcommittee chair will lead each subcommittee. The chairs, Giuliana and Helany, will meet monthly with the subcommittee chairs. In the fall, the task force will be supported by a contractor to provide support to conduct community listening sessions and surveys.

Helany discussed the process for joining a subcommittee. Task Force members are asked to consider which subcommittee they want to join. Meeting minutes will include a survey for folks to choose what subcommittee they want to participate in.

Annette suggested attending community festivals, BCPS events, and other opportunities to discuss the task force with community members.

**VII. Closing**

Helany led in closing the task force's first meeting with gratitude for everyone's commitment to the task force and recognition that the work would take time.

Giuliana thanked everyone for their attendance and encouraged feedback. She reminded folks that scheduling for the next meeting will be done via a doodle poll and that the meeting notes will include a survey for folks to choose subcommittees.