



**NEW AMERICANS TASK FORCE
Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 21, 2023**

I. Welcome

Task Force Chair Helany Sinkler could not attend the meeting due to a previously scheduled conference, and Annette Karanja co-hosted the meeting.

a.

Present

Alejandra Balcázar, Alejandra Flores Miller, Annette Karanja, Bella Owens, Bruce Lewandowski, Cassie Miller She/Her, Catalina Rodriguez Lima, Cindy Kolade Casa, Della Leister, Dr. Truphena Choti, Jennifer Hernandez, Jessica Cordova, John Mason, Kevin Meadowcroft, Laura Brown, Laure Covert, M. Sylena Bangudi, Mahro Ershadi, Maricruz Abarca, Mary Clay, Matthew Bernardy, Mitch Posner, Nick Staigerwald, Nidia Gentry, Orlando D Lilly, Rachele Lawton, Ramona Brown-Carter, Riccy Amador, Susana Barrios, Tasha Gresham-James, Tim Suryodaya, Valerie Rivera-Maldonado, Zainab Chaundry

Absent

Alfredo Santiago, Cate Scenna, Helany Sinkler

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Della suggested an edit to correct the public safety representative in minutes. Della moved to approve meeting minutes, and Mary Clay seconded the motion. The task force approved the minutes.

III. Future Meeting Schedule: Third Thursday of the month at 9 am – 11 am or 3 pm – 5 pm

A poll will be sent out to decide between having meetings on the third Thursday of the month in the morning or the afternoon.

IV. Subcontractor Update

The RFP for the subcontractor will be released at the end of the month. The subcontractor will conduct community outreach and synthesize data from the community listening sessions and surveys. The subcontractor will coordinate with support from the task force one community listening session in each councilmanic district and distribute the community surveys. We expect to have 1000 people complete the survey. The subcontractor will issue a report explaining their findings.

V. Resetting Commitments & Expectations

- What is the vision and mission of the task force?

The task force was established to create a New American integration and inclusion plan to respond to the needs of immigrants/refugees in Baltimore County. The multisector strategic plan will identify and analyze barriers facing immigrants and their efforts to access the following and make recommendations to address those barriers such as business resources, education, health care, recreation, public assistance, workforce development, and other critical services and aspects of community life.

- What is our timeline?

The task force will convene from June 2023 through December 2023. The task force and subcommittees will meet monthly. Throughout September and October, the task force will be

supported by a contractor who will assist the task force in providing comprehensive coordination of community engagement and outreach to identify community issues/priorities and develop a report summarizing the data. Task force members will support the contractor by participating in various outreach activities in person/hybrid. Throughout November, the task force will draft the plan incorporating the contractor's findings. In December, the task force will make final edits.

- What is our deliverable?

The task force will produce a final report/strategic plan to the County Executive by March 31, 2023. The plan will include actionable and measurable objectives to make Baltimore County a more welcoming and inclusive place for all who call it home.

- Expectations & Accountability

Task force members will dedicate 6 hours each month to task force-related work divided between meetings, outreach activities, research, or drafting. A way to think about the task force's work is equivalent to that of a graduate-level course. To hold each other accountable, names of task force members who miss more than three meetings will be left off the final report.

Teams shared drive will be moved to Google Drive to accommodate access.

VI. Outreach & Research responsibilities

In addition to working with the subcontractor, we will need to designate task force members to support completing the strategic plan in a few different roles.

- In-person Outreach
- In-person Listening Session Support
- Research
- Drafting

VII. Subcommittee Breakout

Topic: What three issues will be addressed in the survey or listening sessions? What three things will we hear the most? What are some goals we have?

Issues brought up at listening sessions

Education: Bullying and intimidation when it comes to accessing resources/ community members feeling that they are unheard in the school system. Lack of language access and culturally competent staff in front-facing positions.

Economic Development: Overview of what resources currently exist and could be improved. How do we support highly educated immigrants in becoming recertified in their fields here? Addressing barriers of transportation and childcare

Connected & Safe Communities: We'll see questions about safety and access to health care. The sub-committee wants to ensure that the surveys allow folks to pick more than one issue at a time.

Equitable Access: Additional responsibilities include ensuring that communications align with the task force, that everyone is using the same messaging, and that the media and the community are receiving the same messages, possibly creating a FAQ. How the report will be shared with the community.

Civic & Community Engagement: Ensure equitable access to the survey and the listening session across the board by working with trusted community leaders.

Three Potential Goals

Connected & Safe Communities Increasing community engagement and creating QR codes to ensure accessibility across the various communities. Creating a welcome center to support immigrant integration

Civic and Community Engagement: Ensuring people know their rights and creating access to immigration legal services, tenant rights, and access to public benefits. Creation of a community hub or center where culturally competent and language-accessible services could be provided. Continual engagement of trusted community leaders from the New American community.

Education: Creating private-public partnerships to provide language access across businesses and nonprofits. Including a biliteracy seal for students who can pass a test increases job opportunities for multilingual students. Expanding paid internships and meaningful volunteer opportunities to young people. Ensuring that all communication is in plain language

Equitable Access: Drafting a comprehensive Language Access Plan and creating an office dedicated to working with immigrants within the County government to ensure equitable access to resources, the office can serve as a hub for resources, message sharing, foster relationships, and technical expertise on working with immigrants. Additionally, creating a body of community members to help the office and to monitor the progress of the office, such as a commission.

Economic Development: Provide entrepreneurial resources such as micro-loans, financial resources, or technical assistance. Creating opportunities for sustained employment and workers' rights. Increasing accessibility to multilingual County resources and information.

VIII. **Community & Organization updates**

Cindy- CASA is having a community resource event on August 26 at their Baltimore City Office. They'll be recognizing students who are receiving scholarships and will be providing some medical screenings.

Susana- Latino Racial Justice Circle- Inviting folks to the LRJC Fundraiser with Centro Sol on September 19

Nick- Dundalk Renaissance: Dundalk Renaissance will host a housing resource fair on September 16.

John Mason- Baltimore Co DEWD Eastern Yacht Club networking event August 24

Cassie- BCPL Conversations program has started at the Reisterstown and Owings Mills Branch.

Valerie- Esperanza Center: Esperanza Center provides resource navigation to County residents.

Alejandra – Towson U: TUS is creating a 1st generation subcommittee and hiring a coordinator.

TU is bringing entrepreneur mentors to the school to talk to Latine students. The College of Health Care is offering opportunities to students to connect with folks in the health care field.

Riccy- Baltimore County OCE: Hispanic Heritage Festival & Resource Fair, October 14 at the Reisterstown Regional Park.

Nida: Baltimore County Health: For outreach support, please complete the form found [here](#)

IX. **Closing**

Thank you to everyone for joining the call. Special thanks to Annette for co-hosting the meeting.