



Mayoral Immigrant & Latino Affairs Offices

A City Practice Brief

Spring 2009

As the immigrant population in American cities continues to grow, many mayors and local officials have increasingly expressed their interest in better addressing the needs and concerns of their immigrant communities. Several cities and towns across the country have already put offices in place to serve their immigrant communities. While many of the cities with dedicated immigrant affairs offices are large and have the resources to implement such an initiative, a number of smaller cities and towns have also created or modified positions to help tackle local immigrant integration challenges.

Many cities and towns across America have community groups that tend to the needs of their immigrant populations. The examples listed below, however, are offices and positions within the city government itself. Representation within the ranks of local government in conjunction with community-born representation will more solidly bridge the needs gap for residents.

For more examples, visit the City Practice database, online at www.nlc.org → ABOUT CITIES → CITY PRACTICE RESOURCES.

Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

City: **Baltimore, Maryland**

Population: 651,154

For more information, contact: Anna White, Immigrant Program Coordinator
(410) 396-4905
www.baltimorecity.gov/government/intl/

Since 2002, the Immigrant Program Coordinator in the Mayor's Office of International and Immigrant Affairs has worked to promote the importance of retaining Baltimore's foreign born populations and attracting new Americans and immigrants to the area. The position seeks to establish working relationships and personal bonds with Baltimore's immigrant communities to promote involvement from them. Some of the responsibilities of the office include: developing new services for Baltimore's immigrant communities that will better incorporate them into the city, providing access to public resources for immigrants and information on organizations that may be of service to them, educating the Baltimore immigrant communities and foreign language speakers of the services available, and making recommendations to the mayor and others in Baltimore city government on important issues, policies, programs relating to immigration. The offices of international and immigrant affairs has a network of over 200 community leaders and representatives from city agencies, social service providers, and philanthropic community that address issues and concerns pertaining to the Baltimore immigrant communities. Their goal is to provide directions and coordination to this network in responding to immigrant needs and requests.

Mayor's Office of New Bostonians

City: **Boston, Massachusetts**

Population: 589,141

For more information, contact: Reverend Cheng Imm Tan, Director
(617) 635-2980
www.cityofboston.gov/newbostonians

Boston's mayor created the Mayor's Office of New Bostonians (MONB) in 1998 to encourage full participation by the city's new immigrants and others from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The MONB works in conjunction with private, community groups to provide ESOL classes, immigration clinics, community outreach initiatives, and vital, basic information to immigrant Bostonians. The office also holds its yearly New Bostonians Community Day to help the communities better understand and access city resources and to better understand how city government works and ways in which to participate.

Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

City: **Houston, Texas**

Population: 1,953,631

For more information, contact: Benito Juarez, Senior Community Liaison
(713) 775-2309
www.houstontx.gov/moira/

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA) was established in May, 2001. MOIRA is the first of its kind in the city's history and is dedicated to facilitating a smooth transition for the immigrant and refugee communities living in the city of Houston. The policy of MOIRA is to encourage access by all persons residing in the city of Houston, regardless of nation of birth or current citizenship status, to the full benefits, opportunities, and services that are provided and administered by the city of Houston. The office advises the mayor of Houston on immigrant issues and encourages and assists residents looking to gain citizenship. MOIRA also works closely with community-based groups to promote participation in Houston's political, economic, social, and cultural life.

Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

City: **New York, New York**

Population: 8,008,278

For more information, contact: Guillermo Linares, Commissioner
(202) 788-7654
www.nyc.gov/html/imm/html/home/home.shtml

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs was created to promote the well-being of immigrant communities by recommending policies and programs that facilitate successful integration of immigrant New Yorkers into the civic, economic, and cultural life of the City. The office serves as a tool toward synergy for different facets of immigrant life in the City. Its mission is tailored to fit the immigrant integration needs of immigrant residents, community-based organizations, and New York City government agencies.

Office on Latino Affairs

City: **Washington, D.C.**

Population: 572,059

For more information, contact: Mercedes Lemp, Director
(202) 671-2825
<http://ola.dc.gov>

Since 1976 the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA) has served the Latino community of the District of Columbia. Working with the Mayor, the City Council, the diverse governmental agencies of the District, community organizations and the private sector, OLA serves as the community liaison informing them about the different services available in the areas of health, education and social services. OLA administers the grants assigned by the Mayor to the different community organizations, and collaborates with a wide range of DC government agencies to ensure the proper implementation of the DC Language Access Act.

Office of Multicultural Affairs

City: **Chattanooga, Tennessee**

Population: 155,554

For more information, contact: Beverly Cosley, Director
(423) 643-6706
www.chattanooga.gov/3234_MulticulturalAffairs.htm

The City of Chattanooga Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) serves as the primary liaison with the Chattanooga City Council, the Office of the Mayor and the community on matters affecting African American, Hispanics and other socially and economically disadvantaged groups. The OMA was established to encourage understanding and goodwill, to promote justice, and to eliminate discrimination between and among the citizens of Chattanooga because of race, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability or ethnicity. Their mission is "to foster an environment that reflects the equal treatment and participation of all segments of Chattanooga's diverse, culturally-rich communities in the areas of civic, economic, educational, and social development." In the quest for equal opportunity and increased civic engagement, the OMA seeks to make the City of Chattanooga a better place to live, work and play.

Latino Programs and Outreach

City: **Bloomington, Indiana**

Population: 72,254

For more information, contact: Melissa Britton, Latino Outreach Coordinator
(812) 349-3860
<http://bloomington.in.gov/latino>

Latino Programs and Outreach is a division of the Community and Family Resources Department of Bloomington, Indiana. It was created to serve the community's rapidly growing Latino immigrant population. Staff serve as the liaison between department and community organizations providing support to the Spanish speaking population. Additionally, they provide direct services (referrals, interpretation and translation) to Spanish speaking community members and promote diversity and cultures.

Multicultural Services Initiative

City: **Alexandria, Virginia**

Population: 128,283

For more information, contact: JoAnn Maldonado Roosa, Coordinator
(703) 838-0709
<http://alexandriava.gov/humanservices/info/default.aspx?id=8378>

Since 2000, the Office of Multicultural Services Initiative (MSI) has been meeting the needs of the City's growing and changing culturally diverse communities. The MSI goals are to ensure that Alexandria's culturally diverse residents have access to all city services and resources, ensure that the Alexandria government delivers services in a culturally sensitive and competent manner, and to encourage Alexandria's culturally diverse residents to participate in the life of the city and its government. MSI assessed the city's demographics using the census and other data. Also, MSI encourages the use of certified interpreters and translation services and has itself created a Quick Guide of City Services and translated it into several languages.

Office of Multicultural Affairs

City: **Memphis, Tennessee**

Population: 650,100

For more information, contact: Nakeisha Jenkins Green, Manager of Multicultural Affairs
(901) 576-6506
www.cityofmemphis.org/framework.aspx?page=436

The Office of Multi-Cultural and Religious Affairs (OMRA) will improve the quality of life for all Memphians by taking a leadership role in encouraging ethnic and religious communities to contribute to Memphis' development as a harmonious, productive and culturally rich city, and to assist these communities in accessing the opportunities and benefits provided by the city.

This brief was developed by Ricardo Gambetta, Immigrant Integration Project Manager, and Daniel Cisneros, Immigrant Integration Project Intern, National League of Cities.

City Practice Briefs contain examples from NLC's City Practice database, available at www.nlc.org. Series editors: Bruce Calvin and Larry Foxman. For more information contact the NLC Municipal Reference Service at (202) 626-3130 or email mrs@nlc.org.



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