



Building Trust with Immigrant Communities

Best Practices for Law Enforcement
Agencies in Smaller Cities and Towns



LAW ENFORCEMENT IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE

About the Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force

The Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force (LEITF) is a dedicated law enforcement effort around common-sense immigration reform, consisting of Chiefs, Sheriffs and law enforcement leaders across the country



POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM

About the Police Executive Research Forum

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) is an independent research organization that focuses on critical issues in policing. Since its founding in 1976, PERF has identified best practices on fundamental issues such as reducing police use of force; developing community policing and problem-oriented policing; using technologies to deliver police services to the community; and evaluating crime reduction strategies.

PERF strives to advance professionalism in policing and to improve the delivery of police services through the exercise of strong national leadership; public debate of police and criminal justice issues; and research and policy development.

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- *Community Policing in Immigrant Neighborhoods: Stories of Success (2019)*¹
- *Refugee Outreach and Engagement Programs for Police Agencies (2017)*²
- *Local Police Perspectives on State Immigration Policies (2014)*³
- *Voices From Across the Country: Local Law Enforcement Officials Discuss The Challenges of Immigration Enforcement (2012)*.⁴

Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Community Partner Model	7
Hosting Community Events	12
Using Social Media	14
Translation Services	17
Conducting Outreach	19
Distinguishing Between Local/Federal Agencies	22
Leveraging Available Resources	24
Conclusion	27
Endnotes	28
Appendix	29

Introduction

This publication focuses on the challenges and solutions identified by small-town police departments for developing relationships with immigrant communities. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), in collaboration with the Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force (LEITF), conducted interviews of 14 police chiefs and sheriffs in small to medium-size jurisdictions that have created successful partnerships with their immigrant community members.⁵

Law enforcement agencies encounter a number of barriers when attempting to establish relationships with immigrants: language barriers, cultural differences, and in some cases, mistrust of law enforcement agencies because of immigrants' experiences with corrupt or brutal police agencies in their countries of origin.

Addressing these challenges requires time, personnel, and resources. Small jurisdictions often have fewer resources than big-city departments, but this report outlines low-cost, innovative strategies that have proved successful.



"We have the same problems as a larger sheriff's office, but not on the same scale. As a sheriff of a smaller county, it is easier for me to personally engage with the community and have my messages spread more quickly. It is important to use that to our advantage."

Sheriff Eli Rivera
Cheshire County,
NH Sheriff's Office

Community Partnership Model

Bridging cultural differences can be a challenge for immigrants and police. For example, immigrant children may be unfamiliar with following traffic signals and crosswalk markings to safely cross the street, or immigrants from some nations may be unaware that domestic violence laws in the United States are stricter than in their countries of origin.

One method for building communication and awareness of these types of cultural issues is to reach out to established community leaders in immigrant communities. If police chiefs and officers can form a good relationship with a community leader, the leader can vouch for the good faith of the police department, introduce the police chief and officers to others in the community, and help to identify issues that should be addressed.

Partnering with cultural organizations, religious groups, local business owners in immigrant communities, advocacy groups for immigrants and refugees, and other

community organizations provides police with important connections to members of



“When I was a rookie cop and detective, I was hearing informally about home invasions in Vietnamese communities. But victims weren’t reporting these crimes officially to the police. It came down to lack of trust.

“So I started making relationships with members of the Vietnamese community, and learning about their culture. It turned into lasting friendships. We were able to establish mutual respect and communication, so they would trust us and report crimes to us.”

Chief Michael Utz
Garden City, KS Police
Department

these communities. These connections build trust and promote information-sharing in both directions. Engaging with community leaders also gives police opportunities to learn about cultural issues and customs in each community.

The police chiefs and sheriffs whom PERF



interviewed said that partnerships can be established in simple, cost-effective ways.

- The Twin Falls (ID) Police Department is a part of the Unity Alliance of Southern Idaho, which is made up of law enforcement officers, government officials, religious leaders, businesspeople, and educators. The commission meets monthly. Its goals are to (1) support immigrants and refugees; (2) promote diversity and mutual respect as well as integration; and (3) give everyone a sense of belonging to



the community, so they will see value in working to improve the community.

- The Chelsea (MA) Police Department

often meets with local advocacy groups to build positive relationships with their community. "We work with various groups in non-traditional ways to build rapport by helping the community," said Chief of Police Brian Kyes. For example, police officers help the Chelsea Collaborative⁶ to deliver turkeys on Thanksgiving; work with the Rotary Club to transport youths to a summer camp; and partner with the Salvation Army and Boys and Girls Clubs



to bring toys to children in the community during the holiday season.

- The Garden City (KS) Police Department has a Police Citizen Advisory Board, which meets monthly. The Board has 13 members who represent different groups of people, including African, Vietnamese, and Hispanic communities, educators, college students, high school students, the Ministerial Alliance, social service agencies, the business community, and senior citizens. Chief Michael Utz and a member of his command staff sit on the Board to answer questions, but they are not board members. The Board works with community organizations and agencies, such as the school board, to engage members of immigrant communities.

The Police Department also engages directly with a variety of community organizations to talk about the role of the police in the community. The department participated in the creation of an Ethnic Empowerment Network that has members from approximately 25 countries, including Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, Haiti, Eritrea, the Philippines, El Salvador, and others. During each monthly meeting, immigrants from one chosen country discuss their culture. On occasion, police officers also speak about their work, how laws are enforced in the United States, and any cultural differences that are pertinent to policing.

In addition, the Garden City Police Department invites members of cultural groups to come into the Police Department and discuss their culture. For example, the department invited a member of the Somali community to give a presentation to officers so that officers will understand differences in Somali culture and customs.

Agencies report that it is helpful to assign officers to serve as liaisons to specific community groups.

- The Twin Falls (ID) Police Department has liaison officers who work with various immigrant and refugee groups in the community, such as church groups. One officer works as a liaison to a refugee center. “The liaison officer goes there to teach classes, often using an interpreter,”

said Chief of Police Craig Kingsbury. “He talks about how people can interact with the police. Many refugees have had negative experiences with police in their country of origin. We tell them how we police in the United States. Our goal is to help them become part of the community.”

A County-Wide Approach

The Eagle CO Law Enforcement Immigration Alliance

The Hispanic population in Eagle County, Colorado has grown considerably in recent years. Approximately 30% of the county's residents are of Hispanic origin, with many having emigrated from Mexico and Central America. As the county's population became more diverse, it became clear to police leaders that there was a need for outreach and engagement with Latino communities. However, that was a challenging task for the small police departments in Eagle County, all of which have fewer than 50 officers. And an outreach program operated by a single agency would have limited impact.

In 2010, Vail Police Chief Dwight Henninger approached Megan Bonta, a coordinator for Catholic Charities, to discuss development of an outreach program to strengthen relationships between the police and the Latino communities across Eagle County. They formed the Eagle County Law Enforcement Immigrant Alliance (LEIA), whose mission is to promote the "exchanging of resources, information, and outreach to build trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the immigrant community." The specific objectives of the initiative are to:

- Increase police-immigrant community trust and advance civil rights,
- increase the frequency of collaborative interactions between law enforcement and the immigrant community,
- increase the number of Hispanic/Latino(a)s who report crime, and
- Decrease the rate of victimization among the immigrant community.

Co-chaired by Chief Henninger and Ms. Bonta, the LEIA is led by a committee of law enforcement officials and community leaders. The committee includes the chief or sheriff from four law enforcement agencies in Eagle County: the Vail Police Department, the Avon Police the police chiefs in Eagle County: the Vail Police Department, the Avon Police Department, the Eagle Police Department, and the Eagle County Sheriff's Office. The community leaders represent organizations that provide services to, or work closely with, Latino residents of Eagle County, including the Eagle County School District, the Salvation Army, and the Office of Victim Services. The top law enforcement officials' presence on the committee shows the community that the agencies are committed to LEIA's mission, and the presence of community leaders builds trust in the community.

The committee members meet monthly to discuss outreach initiatives and share information. Guest speakers are invited to attend the meetings to discuss issues in their

communities and to help the police devise solutions for problems.

Recognizing the role of churches and other religious facilities as central meeting places in communities, LEIA members have conducted outreach to these organizations. Every year, the police chiefs in Eagle County attend Spanish-speaking religious services and address parishioners. They obtain permission from pastors to speak to the parishioners for about five to 10 minutes on various topics, such as the difference between the role of federal immigration enforcement agencies and the role of local police. The chiefs typically emphasize that no one in Eagle County should feel marginalized or think that they do not have access to justice.⁷

Hosting Community Events

Immigrants may be wary of interacting with the police because they fear being asked about their immigration status. Even immigrants with legal status are often worried about reporting crime to the police, because they fear that police may not realize they have legal status. Immigrants also may not understand the differences between federal immigration agents and local police officers or sheriff's department deputies.

As a result, perpetrators of crime often target immigrant communities, because they know that immigrants may be less likely to report crimes to the police. Chief Mike Tupper of the Marshalltown (IA) Police Department said immigrants in his community have been targeted and cheated out of thousands of dollars, but their mistrust of the police made them unwilling to report the crimes.

Hosting community events gives police an opportunity to connect with community members and dispel fears they may have about the police. Police agencies should

schedule community events often, and should announce their events on their social media platforms, in multiple languages.



"We need to meet people where they're at, build relationships when things are calm, and not just show up during calls for service."

**Chief Mark Prosser
Storm Lake, IA Police
Department**

It's important to understand that while community events provide excellent opportunities to make connections with immigrant groups, it takes time and multiple connections over time to create a strong, long-lasting bond between police and the community. The following are examples of successful outreach initiatives that can be replicated:

- The Nogales (AZ) Police Department has been hosting “coffee with a cop” events since 2014. The events are held every two months in fast-food restaurants or coffee houses, and are announced in advance on social media. Police report that there is always a long line of community members interested in participating. Officers get a chance to connect with community members and hear how they can better meet the community’s needs. Officers also inform community members about outreach programs that the department offers.

The Nogales police also have an “Operation Rehydration” program, in which the department distributes cold drinks to community members. The drinks are provided by area food banks and donations from Walmart and Safeway stores.

- The Palestine (TX) Police Department works with the community to organize an annual Health and Safety Fair. Citizens volunteer their time to run the event, and businesses donate money. Approximately

40 to 50 businesses are vendors at the fair, representing English and Spanish businesses and culture, food vendors, insurance companies, medical and dental clinics, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Mexican Consulate. Citizens volunteer as translators so vendors can discuss their services and products with attendees.

More than 500 people attended the inaugural fair in January 2018. In 2019, the event was more than a health and safety fair; it became a celebration of diversity and Hispanic heritage. The fair also provides the community with an opportunity to see the Police Department’s efforts to engage with the community.



“I get invited to come to communities that are seeing a shift in demographics, and often I’m asked to participate in a single event, but I remind people that it’s not just about one event. This is a continuing process. It’s a marathon, not a sprint.”

**Chief Mark Prosser
Storm Lake, IA Police
Department**

Using Social Media

Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and blogs, are a low-cost mechanism for police and sheriffs' departments to engage with their communities for a wide range of purposes – disseminating information about crime patterns, individual crimes, and quality-of-life problems in the community; asking for tips; making safety announcements; and publicizing events.

Police and sheriffs' departments usually assign their public information officer the job of managing social media accounts and posting information. Many departments have multiple accounts for various purposes; for example, in large agencies, each precinct commander might have a separate social media account to post local information, while the department's main account covers the entire jurisdiction. In some jurisdictions, the chief of police may have a separate account to post "big-picture" commentary or analysis, while routine daily announcements and posts are made on the police department's account.

Many social media platforms have an easy option for translating posts into a variety of languages, which helps to ensure that people can receive and send information that will be understood by everyone, no matter which language they understand best.

- The Nogales (AZ) Police Department purchased the USPDhub Mobile App⁸ to share information with the community. The App allows police and sheriffs' departments to quickly distribute information via "push" notifications regarding crimes, safety notices, missing person reports, upcoming events, and other information. The App also allows community members to provide tips or other information, and to participate in surveys.

Some agencies have found it helpful to create a Facebook page solely for the community to interact with police. This allows the community to post and receive important information. For example, the Garden City (KS) Police

Department has a social media page to interact with their community members. They recently added a full-time public information officer (PIO) who attended training about how to expand the department's social media presence and reach a wider community. According to Chief Michael Utz, "After the training, our PIO added interesting facts and pictures to our social media sites, showing the human and fun side of law enforcement to engage more community members. As a result, our social media followers have grown from 8,000 to 16,000 followers, representing all facets of the community."

Besides sharing important information with the community, social media can be used to correct false information. Eagle County created a Facebook page to dispel false rumors. In one incident, community members thought that federal immigration agents were conducting an enforcement action at a local restaurant, but it was a local child protective services agency.

In October 2017, Chief Andy Harvey of the Palestine, Texas Police Department launched a program named Unidos en Palestine (United in Palestine). The goal to build trust in the police among all members of the Palestine community.

Chief Harvey realized that he needed a way to communicate about program events and other information with the multicultural community, and decided that Facebook

would be the best platform. The department created a Facebook page for Unidos en Palestine, and in three days, it had more than 1,000 followers. The Facebook page provides information on school closings, inclement weather warnings, power outages, and other information from the city government. And community members post information about community events, job opportunities, calls for volunteers to help with community projects, local sports news, reports of missing dogs, and a wide variety of other matters.

"Lines have started to blur in Unidos – police and community – which is the goal," said Chief Harvey.

The Police Department also uses the Facebook account to provide information to community members, in their own languages, on routine matters like how to get car insurance or pay a water bill. Unidos en Palestine also holds weekly or biweekly meetings in police training rooms, where members of the community, police officers, and community leaders discuss local issues.

Old School Communication

Not all community members are active on Facebook or other social media platforms, so police agencies should always be on the lookout for other ways of communicating. For example, in Santa Cruz County, AZ, which is on the Mexican border, Sheriff Tony Estrada speaks on a Mexican radio station each week to share information with the Hispanic community in his county. And in Herndon, VA, Police Chief Maggie DeBoard wrote a one-page letter to her immigrant community urging them not to be afraid to call the police about crimes or other issues. The letter was meant to build trust with Herndon's undocumented community, so they would call the police when they needed help, instead of fearing deportation. The local school district assisted getting the flyers out by sending them home with school children to get important information to their parents. The flyers, written in both English and Spanish, were also distributed throughout apartment complexes and other locations throughout town.

Translation Services

A number of police chiefs shared that language barriers can be daunting, particularly in jurisdictions where dozens of different languages are spoken. “We have done a pretty effective job of communicating in Spanish, but we also have many refugees coming in from Southeast Asia,” said Chief Mike Tupper of Marshalltown, Iowa. “And we need people who not only speak the

language, but also the dialects.”

Google Translate

Google Translate provides free “machine translation” services (computerized systems that do not involve a live translator) in more than 100 languages, with varying degrees of sophistication.⁹ This service can be helpful as police agencies strive to publish department flyers, announcements, newsletters, social media posts, and other communications in a variety of languages spoken in their communities. To prevent errors in translation, police agencies may use automated translation services as a starting point, and ask community members to review the translation in order to correct any mistakes and refine the documents.

Google Translate also offers mobile apps that allow police officers and community members to use their mobile phones or other devices to speak in their own language and receive an immediate audio translation. This can



“We are a relatively small community of 31,000, but we have a lot of diversity. Thirty-five different languages are spoken here, and in some cases, it’s only two or three people who speak a language. This has always been a hurdle for us, but we thrive on our diversity here.”

Chief Michael Utz
Garden City, KS Police
Department

be very useful for officers' daily encounters with community members who do not speak English.

Over-the-Phone Interpretation Services

Another option is to use services such as AT&T's LanguageLine¹⁰ interpreter service, which provides over-the-phone interpretation with professional interpreters. The company says it provides interpretation services in more than 240 languages.

Bilingual Officers and External Resources

For many years, police agencies have worked to hire bilingual officers who can serve as liaison officers working with various communities.

- The Rogers (AR) Police Department serves a community that is about 35% Hispanic, and has worked to recruit Spanish-speaking officers and place them strategically throughout their patrol squads. "We track our Hispanic officers in terms of assignment," said Chief Hayes Minor. "Out of eight patrol squads, only one does not have at least one Spanish speaker. It is rare that we go into a 12-hour shift without a Spanish-speaker on duty."
- The Garden City (KS) Police Department offers stipends to recruit officers who speak, read, and write in different languages. The department also

maintains a number of contacts who serve as resources when the department encounters a person who speaks a language that the Police Department cannot handle. These resources include local business leaders and school district officials who know people who can translate in various languages, "on-call" interpreters whom the department pays at an hourly rate, and AT&T LanguageLine phone translation services when needed.

- The Pitkin County (CO) Sheriff's Office has several bilingual officers and will pay the costs for any officer who wants to learn another language.
- The Vail (CO) Police Department utilizes a volunteer interpreter program run by the Eagle County Law Enforcement Immigration Alliance (LEIA). It is a county-wide program that provides translation services for police officers and residents. An officer who needs translation services in the field can request an interpreter who will respond directly to the scene. The volunteer interpreter program allows for a neutral, trained, third-party interpreter to assist with interviews, victim statements, and investigations. To recruit interpreters, LEIA members advertise the program at community events and look for volunteers among the county police departments' bilingual civilian personnel.

Conducting Outreach to Local Schools

Conducting programs with local schools is a good way for police officers to connect with immigrant communities. Having officers in schools can help “humanize” them for students who have a general feeling of apprehension about the police. When an officer has a positive relationship with children, the children often go home and tell their family members about the officer. This can help the local police to be seen in a positive light by immigrant families.



The Chelsea (MA) Police Department understands this phenomenon. The department has three school resource officers assigned to local schools, where they build trust with students.

On a long-term basis, conducting outreach with schools can also help police agencies

to recruit future officers from immigrant communities. The Twin Falls (ID) Police Department hosts a leadership academy, in which high school juniors spend two weeks at the Police Department, learning about what police work consists of. The Police Department tries to make sure it has students from different backgrounds represented. The department also has a liaison to the College of Southern Idaho’s Hispanic Club. The liaison officer builds connections with students, some of whom may develop an interest in joining the department.



Herndon's Project Hope

Promising Practice Spotlight

Herndon, Virginia is a diverse community (36% Hispanic, 33% white, 18% Asian, and 9% black). More than half of the county's residents speak a language other than English, including more than 30% who speak Spanish. The Herndon Police Department saw a need to engage with immigrant families, and partnered with Hutchison Elementary School's guidance counselor, Renee Gorman, to create a program called Project Hope.



Hutchinson Elementary is a low-income Title I school. More than 70% of the students are of Hispanic origin, and 64% are learning English in school, but cannot perform ordinary classroom work in English.

Project Hope is an after-school program intended to build relationships between the police and the community. Students in grades 3 to 6 meet with officers after school for 90 minutes once a week, throughout the school year. Many of these students come from countries where policing was

repressive, so their parents or other relatives may have been fearful of the police. Project Hope provides an opportunity for students to meet a different kind of police officer, in a relaxed setting.

"It's hard to go directly into the community and develop relationships of trust without some help," said Herndon Chief of Police Maggie DeBoard.

"The schools have proven to be an excellent place to bridge that gap for us, because the trust in our schools and our teachers is already there. Because the kids are introduced to us by teachers whom they already trust, the children are more apt to trust us."

The activities in Project Hope change from week to week. A typical afternoon begins with the students and officers taking turns to talk about the negative and positive aspects of their days. Next, the officers and students share a snack, followed by a physical activity, such as playing a sport or cooking. After that, the students spend time working on life skills related to a theme of the day. Themes may include self-esteem, decision-making, communication, diversity, and other topics.

For example, during a session that focused on embracing diversity, officers and students placed pushpins on a map of the world, to indicate their heritage. This can give the students an appreciation for how large the world is, and how Americans come from all parts of the globe. The students, officers,

and program staff members also were asked to bring in a food dish representing the cuisine of their country of origin. The session ended with everyone sharing a meal with many kinds of food.

Some Project Hope sessions involve the students' parents, which allows the Police Department to share messages with a wider group. When parents are at a session, Police Chief DeBoard takes the opportunity to address concerns that parents may have about immigration enforcement in Herndon. She assures the parents that the Herndon Police Department serves and protects all community members, regardless of their immigration status, and emphasizes that the police never ask about immigration status when someone calls the police for help.

Officers involved in Project Hope said they have seen a transformation in students. Some students who were once fearful of the police now greet the officers with excitement. Officers have seen the positive change in parents as well. "Many parents used to wait in the parking lot when it was time to pick their children up, but now they come inside and participate in some of the sessions," Chief DeBoard said. "Some have said they never thought they would be sitting at a table with police officers, sharing a meal."

While Project Hope has had an immediate impact on the relationships between

the Herndon Police Department and the community, the success of the program also will be seen in years to come, Chief DeBoard said. "The real impact is going to be seen when I am long gone, when these kids are adults and they're teaching their children to trust the police," she said. "We are planting the seeds with these kids, and future chiefs will see the long-term impact."¹¹

Distinguishing Between Local/Federal Agencies

Police leaders often emphasize the importance of officers understanding that some immigrants have come to the United States from countries where police were corrupt or abusive. As a result, police departments work to reassure community members that they can trust the police. These messages should make it clear that :

1. Local police officers have no legal authority or responsibility for enforcing federal immigration laws, so that is not their job, and
2. Local police will not ask community members about their immigration status.

“We have really pushed out the message that we have no interest in being involved in immigration enforcement,” said Chief Hayes Minor of the Rogers (AR) Police Department. “We focus on local crime that affects local people.”

“There is an important educational component when we are out in the community,” said

Chief Steve Stahl of the Maricopa (AZ) Police Department. “We need to distinguish between law enforcement agencies. We are not ICE; we will not randomly check IDs.”

“We are trying to instill in our communities a sense that the ‘right to life’ covers everyone,” said Chief Roy Bermudez of the Nogales (AZ) Police Department. “We are one community, but there is so much fear among the immigrant community. They fear harassment, and we’re trying to change that perception.”

“Our cultural competency training teaches our officers to demonstrate fairness and respect for all people, and to treat everyone with dignity,” said Chief Andy Harvey of Palestine (TX) Police Department.

Craig Kingsbury of Twin Falls (ID) Police Department said it is important that all officers understand the boundaries between local laws and federal immigration laws. “The officers on patrol have the most contact with people from all walks of life,” he said. “We work

to train our officers so that they understand we are not immigration authorities, and we make sure they understand our policies.”

Police chiefs should identify local leaders who already have the trust of the community, and try to build relationships with those leaders. Attending community events and making police personnel available to all community members will demonstrate that the Police Department cares about everyone in the community, regardless of immigration status. “We always make ourselves available,” said Chief Bermudez.

Leveraging Available Resources

It can be beneficial for small-town police departments to establish lines of communication and information-sharing with nearby police departments and other agencies. In some cases, local agencies will find ways of sharing resources and working together. It also can be helpful to talk to other agencies that are facing similar challenges, simply to compare notes about problems and solutions.

For example, Chief Michael Utz of the Garden City (KS) Police Department meets with other chiefs from his area. They discuss sharing resources, such as translators. He also works closely with the local Sheriff's Office. Chief Dwight Henninger of Vail (CO) Police Department does this as well. He makes sure that local police chiefs and the sheriff of Eagle County meet each month to ensure that they are on the same page regarding immigrants in their community.

Additional Immigration Resources

The Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force (LEITF) is a group of over 120 law enforcement leaders who meet regularly by phone, or in person, to discuss immigration issues facing law enforcement. LEITF provides resources on immigration policies as it relates to law enforcement and compiles best practices to share with the field. To learn more visit <https://leitf.org/>

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) is a police research and policy organization and a provider of management services, technical assistance, and executive-level education to support law enforcement agencies. PERF regularly convenes meetings of law enforcement leaders on critical issues, including immigration, and produces free online publications, which can be found here: <https://www.policeforum.org/free-online-documents>. Recent publications on addressing immigration issues include:

- [Community Policing in Immigrant Neighborhoods: Stories of Success](#)

- [Building Police-Community Trust in the Latino Community of Southwood in Richmond, VA](#)
- [Strengthening Relationships between Police and Immigrant Communities in a Complex Political Environment: Multicultural Outreach and Engagement Programs for Police Agencies](#)
- [Refugee Outreach and Engagement Programs for Police Agencies](#)

The International Rescue Committee is a global humanitarian aid organization that specializes in supporting immigrants and refugees. For more information on their services and resources, visit their website at <https://www.rescue.org/>

Conclusion

Police and sheriffs' departments in small cities and towns face challenges that are similar to those of big cities, but small jurisdictions have fewer resources. One of the key challenges is about engaging people from all types of backgrounds, including immigrants who speak languages other than English, and who sometimes have a fear of the police because of their experiences with repressive police agencies in their country of origin.

This report describes the successes that small agencies have achieved in welcoming immigrants and creating strong and cohesive communities.

Following is a summary of promising practices for law enforcement agencies in small cities and towns, as they conduct outreach initiatives and engage their immigrant communities.

Summary of Recommendations for Small Cities, Towns, and Counties

- Establish partnerships with religious



"In Pitkin County, we've accepted our immigrant population as part of the community. One advantage of being a small town or county is that it's easier to get to know people, because you see them every day."

Chief Joe Disalvo
Pitkin County, CO
Sheriff's Office

groups, immigrant advocacy organizations, and other community leaders in your town.

- Build positive relationships with local community leaders, so that the trust will spread to other members of the community.
- Consider establishing an immigrant advisory committee, made up of law enforcement officials and community

members.

- Assign officers to serve as liaisons to specific community groups.
- Schedule community events regularly.
- Use social media to share information with community members and to obtain feedback. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms can enable police and sheriffs' departments to share information, publicize programs and events, answer questions, and dispel false rumors. And many social media platforms allow users to switch from one language to another simply by clicking on a button.
- Publish department flyers, announcements, newsletters, social media posts, etc. in multiple languages.
- Hire bilingual officers, who can serve as liaison officers to specific communities.
- Considering starting a volunteer interpreter program.
- Conduct outreach to local schools to connect with immigrant families.
- Make your agency available to community members by attending community events.
- Create positive messaging that reassures the community they can trust their local police and sheriff's department.
- Emphasize that local police and sheriffs' departments are not immigration enforcement agencies, because immigration laws are federal laws, not state laws or local ordinances.
- Inform community members that your agency does not ask about immigration status when community members contact the police about a crime or other matters.
- Talk to immigrant communities about how law enforcement agencies in the United States operate.
- Teach your officers about the different cultures of immigrants in your community.
- Ensure that officers are aware of legal boundaries regarding immigration laws, and that they understand your policies about not inquiring about community members' immigration status.
- Emphasize to your personnel that they are expected to treat all members of their community with fairness and respect, regardless of their immigration status.
- Develop lines of open communication and information-sharing with nearby agencies, to share resources and collaborate on issues of joint concern.

Endnotes

1. Police Executive Research Forum (2019). Community Policing in Immigrant Neighborhoods: Stories of Success. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/CommunityPolicingImmigrantNeighborhoods.pdf>
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5. A list of interviewees can be found in the Appendix. The titles listed throughout this document reflect participants' titles and affiliations at the time of their interviews.
6. The Chelsea Collaborative's mission is to "enhance the social and economic health of the community and its people." <https://www.chelseacollab.org/>
7. For details about the Eagle County Law Enforcement Immigrant Alliance and the efforts of the Vail Police Department, see "Strengthening Relationships between Police and Immigrant Communities in a Complex Political Environment: Multicultural Outreach and Engagement Programs for Police Agencies." <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/PoliceImmigrantCommunities.pdf>.
8. <https://www.logictreeit.com/uspdpdhub.html>
9. <https://translate.google.com/>
10. <https://www.languageine.com/interpreting/phone>
11. For a more detailed look at Project Hope and the efforts of the Herndon Police Department, please see PERF's publication "Strengthening Relationships between Police and Immigrant Communities in a Complex Political Environment: Multicultural Outreach and Engagement Programs for Police Agencies." <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/PoliceImmigrantCommunities.pdf>.

Appendix

Interview Participants

- Chief Roy Bermudez, Nogales (AZ) Police Department
- Chief Maggie DeBoard, Herndon (VA) Police Department
- Sheriff Joe DiSalvo, Pitkin County (CO) Sheriff's Office
- Sheriff Tony Estrada, Santa Cruz County (AZ) Sheriff's Office
- Chief Andy Harvey, Palestine (TX) Police Department
- Chief Dwight Henninger, Vail (CO) Police Department
- Chief Craig Kingsbury, Twin Falls (ID) Police Department
- Chief Brian Kyes, Chelsea (MA) Police Department
- Chief Hayes Minor, Rogers (AR) Police Department
- Chief Mark Prosser, Storm Lake (IA) Police Department
- Sheriff Eli Rivera, Cheshire County (NH) Sheriff's Office
- Chief Steve Stahl, Maricopa (AZ) Police Department
- Chief Mike Tupper, Marshalltown (IA) Police Department
- Chief Michael Utz, Garden City (KS) Police Department