

How Law Enforcement Can Better Engage Immigrant Communities

Promising Practices and Challenges from a National Survey and Regional Meetings



POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM

June 2024



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A Message from Executive Director Chuck Wexler

Fifteen years ago, in PERF's first report on immigration issues,¹ I wrote, "For PERF, it appears that the immigration issue will be a flashing light at the center of our radar screen for years to come." That turned out to be an understatement.

Since that April 2008 report, with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation, PERF has issued 14 additional reports dealing with various facets of immigration—from local police perspectives on state immigration policies, to community policing in immigrant neighborhoods, to the benefits of community-based ID cards. Consistent with its position at the vanguard of emerging issues, PERF was one of the first national policing organizations to identify outreach to refugee communities as a promising practice for law enforcement. (For the complete list of PERF reports on immigration issues, see Appendix E.)

This latest report focuses on an issue that law enforcement executives have cited as a top priority for the profession: building trust with the communities they serve. Building trust with immigrant communities, in particular, poses several unique challenges.

One challenge is the perception among many immigrants that they are not welcome in the United States. While most Americans consider immigration a good thing for the country, a growing minority wants to cut back on immigration.² And a large majority see the situation at the southern border, where the number of migrants seeking entry has overwhelmed U.S. officials, as a major problem.³ Anti-immigrant rhetoric and

1 Police Executive Research Forum, "Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Speak Out on Local Immigration Enforcement," April 2008, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free_Online_Documents/Immigration/police%20chiefs%20and%20sheriffs%20speak%20out%20on%20local%20immigration%20enforcement%202008.pdf.

2 Lydia Saad, "Americans Still Value Immigration, but Have Concerns," Gallup, July 13, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/508520/americans-value-immigration-concerns.aspx>.

3 Megan Brennan, "Plurality in U.S. Says Southern Border Situation Is 'Crisis,'" Gallup, July 14, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/508565/plurality-say-southern-border-situation-crisis.aspx>.



legislation, such as a bill approved by Texas lawmakers in 2023, under review by a federal judge as of the publication of this report,⁴ to make crossing the Texas-Mexico border a state crime, have helped create a culture of fear among many immigrants, especially those without legal status.⁵ For the estimated 11 million undocumented individuals in the U.S., fear of deportation means they may be less likely to seek assistance from the police in their communities.

A related challenge is the frequent confusion among immigrants about the different levels of law enforcement in this country and their roles in enforcing immigration laws. If local police are perceived as de facto immigration agents, some crime victims and witnesses will become reluctant to contact the police, which makes the job of investigating crimes more difficult.

Police executives understand that their mission is to keep their community safe for all residents, regardless of citizenship. But, when people are afraid to report crime, the entire community becomes less safe.

Communication barriers between immigrant communities and police can pose yet another challenge. If immigrants and police lack a common language, for example, or if police don't receive cultural awareness training to help them see the world through the eyes of immigrants, trust can be hard to build.

To learn more about law enforcement agencies' needs and priorities to build trust with immigrant communities, PERF surveyed its members in early 2023 and held follow-up interviews with several respondents. We also held meetings in Seattle, Tucson, and Albany with local representatives of law enforcement agencies, government agencies, and immigrant and refugee service providers. The PERF Immigration Group, consisting of 14 police chiefs and sheriffs, helped guide our work on the project.

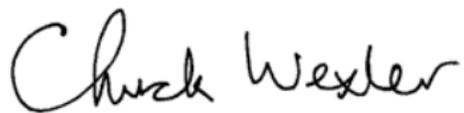
4 Maria Sacchetti, "U.S. appeals court keeps block on Texas immigration law," *Washington Post*, March 27, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2024/03/27/texas-immigration-law-federal-appeals-court/>.

5 Miriam Jordan, "New Florida Immigration Rules Start to Strain Some Businesses," *New York Times*, August 4, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/04/us/florida-immigration-law-businesses.html>.

This report documents lessons learned and offers a *Framework to Improve Trust and Communication with Immigrant Communities*.

While drafting this report, PERF, members of the PERF Immigration Group, and the Los Angeles Police Department, began pursuing a new avenue for engaging immigrant communities – the recruitment and hiring of legal permanent residents (LPRs) and “Dreamers” (i.e., young people brought to the U.S. before they turned 18 but without documentation) as police officers. This group of nearly 2.3 million young people could help police departments address their staffing shortages and build trust with immigrant communities. The report outlines these efforts and highlights opportunities to make this an option for more departments and their communities.

Building trust with immigrant communities can be a difficult challenge for police agencies, but it is essential to advancing law enforcement’s core mission of providing public safety for everyone.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Wexler". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chuck Wexler

Executive Director

Police Executive Research Forum

Washington, D.C.



Acknowledgments

This publication would not have been possible without the support, encouragement, and cooperation of a great many people. First and foremost, we would like to thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation for funding this project. I want to recognize Geri Mannion from Carnegie who has been an indispensable advocate and friend to not only PERF but also countless other organizations across the country over the past 15 years.

We would like to thank all who responded to our national survey and those who participated in follow-up interviews.

We would also like to recognize our partners in the policing community who hosted our three regional meetings and shared their insights. In PERF's years of work on immigration issues, we have found significant variation in how those issues affect communities, depending on factors such as the state of the local economy and the number of immigrants in the community. The chiefs who hosted our regional meetings helped us explore the impact of immigration on those three cities.

The first meeting, hosted by former Chief Adrian Diaz from Seattle, WA, displayed how a city with a long history of welcoming immigrants and refugees addresses the unique challenges faced by these populations. Chief Chad Kasmar in Tucson, AZ brought together a diverse group of individuals for an honest discussion on what is working and where improvements are needed. Chief Eric Hawkins from Albany, NY is facing a new challenge in his city with a recent flow of new arrivals coming secondarily from other parts of the country. This third and final meeting, held remotely, shed light on the challenges faced by police, social service providers, and others in working to provide a welcoming and safe environment for asylum seekers.

We want to thank the participants in our regional sessions for candidly sharing their experiences. The various perspectives they brought to the discussion were invaluable in helping us understand the complexity of this issue.

Finally, this project would not have been possible without the efforts of our PERF staff. Senior Associate Bailey Maryfield designed and managed the project, including the survey design and data analysis. Director of the Center for Management and Technical Assistance Tom Wilson, Deputy Director Jennifer Sommers, and Senior Principal Nancy Demme provided project oversight and guidance. Research Assistant Rachael Thompson and Research Associate Zoe Mack conducted background research, interviews, and quote vetting. James McGinty and Chris Fisher edited the report. Communications Associate Dustin Waters photographed the regional meetings and executed the report layout.

It was our privilege to have worked with so many exceptional people throughout this project. We hope we have done justice to the information and experiences they shared with us.





Executive Summary

The United States is facing a migration crisis that has placed unprecedented strains on communities across the country. The U.S.-Mexico border is overwhelmed with arriving asylum seekers. In fiscal year 2023, there were 2.5 million encounters between U.S. border authorities and migrants attempting to cross into the U.S., a new high.⁶ Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border have surged since the federal Title 42 policy, under which most asylum seekers were expelled without being allowed to apply for asylum, ended in May 2023. Also in 2023, for the first time ever, migrants from beyond Mexico and northern Central America represented a majority of the irregular arrivals at and between ports of entry.⁷ **These individuals, resettling in communities all across the U.S., bring with them a wide range of cultures that local police agencies must take into account when serving their communities.**

For more than two decades Congress has been unable to pass meaningful immigration reform, and the near-term outlook for legislation remains bleak.⁸ The combination of rising migration and a broken immigration and border enforcement system has created unsafe environments.

State and local authorities are desperate for solutions, and some are turning to anti-immigration policies that instill fear and confusion over the role of local law enforcement. Texas lawmakers, for example, passed legislation in November 2023 (blocked by a federal judge on February 29th, 2024 and, as of the

6 Colleen Putzel-Kavanaugh and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, “Shifting Patterns and Policies Reshape Migration to U.S.-Mexico Border in Major Ways in 2023,” Migration Policy Institute, October 2023, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/border-numbers-fy2023>.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Suzanne Gamboa, “Congress has failed for more than two decades to reform immigration — here’s a timeline,” NBC News, January 7, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/immigration-reform-failure-congress-timeline-rcna64467>.

publication of this report, likely heading to the Supreme Court⁹) that would empower police to arrest immigrants suspected of entering the country illegally, blurring the lines between local law enforcement and what has historically been a federal government responsibility.¹⁰ Other state and local authorities are committed to welcoming immigrants but have struggled to cope with the sheer number of new arrivals.

Police need the cooperation of the communities they serve to promote public safety through increased crime reporting and participation in investigations. It is critical that police form trusting relationships with immigrant populations, both recent arrivals and those already established in this country. PERF conducted this project to explore how law enforcement agencies are working to engage and build trust with the immigrant communities they serve and to identify promising practices.

PERF Member Survey and Follow-Up Interviews

To determine how local police agencies can better engage and build trust with immigrant communities, PERF conducted a survey soliciting their needs and priorities. The survey focused on two areas: engaging the immigrant community (e.g., priorities, training, and resource needs) and public safety considerations (e.g., communication with federal immigration authorities).

PERF emailed the survey on January 23, 2023 to PERF members who are sheriffs or chiefs of police. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a systematic sample of respondents who indicated they were available for an interview.

Much of the information PERF gained from the surveys and interviews fell into the broad areas of improving communication, building trust, and interactions with other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Improving Communication

In a sign of the importance police agencies place in improving communication with immigrant communities, **52 percent of survey respondents listed “general community outreach” as one of their department’s top two priorities regarding relationships with immigrants in the next year, far more than any other response.**

Forty percent of survey respondents indicated their city, county, or state has an entity that manages efforts to engage local immigrants and refugees, and 53 percent of them said they are meaningfully engaged with it and meet proactively.

Twenty-nine percent of responding agencies have an immigrant and/or refugee liaison, who can be a sworn officer or professional staff. This position is more common in larger agencies; 80 percent of agencies with 500 or more full-time sworn personnel have a liaison.

An important way to improve communication with immigrant communities is to educate officers on the immigrant experience; 20 percent of agencies listed “educating/training officers on the immigrant populations in the jurisdiction” as one of the department’s top two priorities regarding relationships with immigrants in the next year. **Eighty-three percent of agencies provide officers with cultural competency training, but most (63 percent) of them provide only general training, not training specific to the**

9 Maria Sacchetti, “U.S. appeals court keeps block on Texas immigration law,” Washington Post, March 27, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2024/03/27/texas-immigration-law-federal-appeals-court/>.

10 Paul J. Weber, “Texas wants the power to arrest and order migrants to leave the US. Can it do that?” Associated Press, November 15, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/texas-immigration-migrants-arrest-explainer-306f644e8bb95333b078ed3923adacf0>.

jurisdiction's immigrant populations. Also, most existing trainings are online or classroom instructed, rather than an immersive experience in immigrant communities. When interviewed agencies were asked what training or resources they needed to improve relationships with immigrant populations, cultural immersion training resources were the most commonly mentioned.

Building Trust

Twenty-one percent of survey respondents listed **overcoming fear and distrust as their biggest challenge** in working with immigrant communities, the second most common response (26 percent cited effective engagement). A major hurdle, according to interviewees, is their inability to affect national narratives on issues such as immigration and policing. Criticisms and stereotypes of immigrants in debates over immigration policy trickle down to local communities, adding to fear and distrust.

Interviewees also noted that **many immigrants suffered under corrupt and abusive police forces in their home countries.** These experiences can affect their assumptions about police in the U.S. Given their fear and distrust of police, immigrant victims often are reluctant to report crimes and cooperate in investigations.

Interactions With Other Organizations

Several interviewed departments emphasized the **importance of building partnerships with non-governmental organizations.** These partnerships are not difficult to form and can create inroads with immigrant communities by discussing issues and sharing resources. Thirty-five percent of survey respondents report that they coordinate with religious groups in the community, far more than any other type of organization.

In contrast, agencies stated that **any perceived collaboration with federal immigration agencies would undermine immigrants' trust in police.** Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated their state or city had enacted legislation limiting the ability of local law enforcement to work with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Most interviewed departments indicated they have no communication with federal immigration authorities and do not desire this communication. Also, 46 percent of responding agencies prohibit officers from asking about the immigration status of suspects, victims, and/or witnesses.

Regional Meetings

PERF also held three regional meetings with local representatives of law enforcement agencies, other government agencies, and immigrant and refugee service providers to help better understand local issues affecting immigrants and refugees. The three sites — Seattle (WA), Tucson (AZ), and Albany (NY) — were selected based on their prominent immigrant populations, identified promising practices in engaging immigrant communities and on-going challenges faced in positively engaging these communities. Seattle and Tucson were selected before the end of the Title 42 policy, which expelled asylum seekers from the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Albany, the only meeting to be virtual rather than in-person, was selected after Title 42 ended because of the burgeoning migrant crisis in New York City and the ripple effects of the crisis across the state.

Seattle

On June 1, 2023, PERF members met in Seattle with local representatives of law enforcement agencies, government agencies, immigrant and refugee service providers, and community organizations to discuss issues affecting the immigrant and refugee communities.



Filipino Community of Seattle representative Emma Catague speaks at the June 1, 2023 regional meeting

Much of the discussion focused on the increase in reported hate crimes and hate incidents. The number of reported hate crimes rose from 205 in 2015 to over 1,000 in 2022, and participants explained that the actual number of incidents is far higher. Immigrants feel safer reporting these crimes to community representatives or service providers because they don't trust the police and don't want to provide their names and contact information, especially if they are undocumented.

Service providers stated that gaining the trust of immigrants and refugees requires officers to have more face-to-face interactions and dialogue with them. While staffing shortages at the Seattle Police Department make this engagement difficult to maintain, SPD management is working to address the staffing problem.

Meeting participants agreed that **immigrants and refugees need to be informed about the difference between ICE/CBP and SPD and about Seattle's status as a "welcoming" (sanctuary) city.** Many are likely unaware that when SPD officers interact with an individual, they do not inquire about immigration status unless they have a reasonable suspicion that the person has committed a felony or know that they were previously deported. Also, SPD does not work with or report to CBP or ICE unless it is asked to assist with administrative (non-criminal) warrants.

Tucson

On August 2, 2023, PERF staff met in Tucson with local representatives of law enforcement agencies, government agencies, immigrant and refugee service providers, an immigration attorney, and a local community college.



Community representatives and members of the Tucson Police Department participate in a regional meeting on August 2, 2023

As in the Seattle meeting, stakeholders in Tucson explained that **many crimes go unreported by immigrants and refugees**. One reason is that a felony conviction could lead to deportation, so a victim might not want to report a crime committed by a family member, especially if that person is the family breadwinner. This population also often deals with trauma from past experiences with corrupt law enforcement in their home countries.

Stakeholders said there is a need for documents in different languages that help immigrants and refugees deal with issues such as recognizing scams and fraud. Refugees also need training on issues such as their rights regarding traffic stops and search warrants, how to interact with the police, and so on.

The Tucson Police Department (TPD) and city officials have struggled under a CBP policy of addressing overcrowding at CBP protection facilities by dropping immigrants off at various points around the city unannounced, in the hope that they will find assistance on their own.¹¹ Under a recent agreement with Tucson, CBP has begun notifying the city before a drop-off, which enables TPD and city officials to arrive in advance to help immigrants facilitate arrangements to their final destinations or find food and shelter.

Albany

PERF chose Albany as the third regional site partly due to the recent increase in arrivals of asylum seekers. More than 100,000 asylum seekers have arrived in New York City since the spring of 2022;¹² many are being bused to other cities in the area. Albany began receiving and housing asylum seekers in May

11 Robert Moore, Ramon Bracamontes, and Corrie Boudreaux, “Border agents once again release migrants in downtown El Paso,” El Paso Matters, May 15, 2022, <https://elpasomatters.org/2022/05/15/ice-once-again-releases-immigrants-in-downtown-el-paso/>.

12 Michael Bloomberg, “How Biden and Congress Should Fix the Immigration Crisis in Our Cities,” New York Times, September 10, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/10/opinion/michael-bloomberg-nyc-immigration-crisis.html>.

2023,¹³ and more than 700 asylum seekers had newly arrived by early August.¹⁴ On September 29, 2023, PERF staff met with local representatives of law enforcement agencies, government agencies, and immigrant and refugee service providers.

Meeting attendees expressed frustration over the **lack of coordination with new arrivals**. Buses of asylum seekers have arrived in Albany and surrounding cities with little or no warning, making it difficult to coordinate services. New York City hired a private company, DocGo,¹⁵ to coordinate services for the arrivals, but public officials have harshly criticized its poor performance, which has left gaps in services.

An additional serious problem is that the federal government requires asylum seekers to wait 180 days for employment authorization. This forces them to spend six months in limbo, unable to earn an income.

Meeting participants identified **translation services and cultural competency training as the primary needs** for law enforcement and their partners to build trusting relationships with immigrant communities. Albany has a limited number of bilingual or trilingual officers, and overtaxed non-profit service providers are not available to assist.

Findings From PERF's Research

Several themes emerged from PERF's survey, follow-up interviews, and regional meetings.

Communication

The first theme is the need to improve communication between police and immigrant communities. They have much they can teach each other. Police can help immigrants understand U.S. laws, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the different roles played by federal versus local law enforcement. Immigrants can help police understand their culture, experiences in their home country, and the challenges of building new lives in the U.S.

Trust

A related theme is the critical importance of building trusting relationships with immigrants, especially new arrivals. Building trust with the public is a top priority for law enforcement, but building trust specifically with immigrant communities poses unique challenges. Here the primary task for police is not to address historic issues for policing but instead to be culturally sensitive and approach immigrants with the knowledge that prior traumas in their home countries often affect their view of law enforcement in the U.S.

Lack of trust in police often leads to underreporting of crime and makes immigrants more vulnerable to victimization. Building trusting relationships with immigrant communities can therefore yield benefits such as improved crime reporting, more comprehensive investigations, and ultimately safer communities.

13 Kenneth C. Crowe II, "Albany expects more asylum-seekers to arrive Monday night," Times Union, May 29, 2023, <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/albany-receives-first-asylum-seekers-new-york-city-18124573.php>.

14 Dave Lucas, "Albany mayor, county executive blast DocGo, New York City's migrant services contractor," WAMC Northeast Public Radio, August 8, 2023, <https://www.wamc.org/news/2023-08-08/albany-mayor-county-executive-blast-docgo-new-york-citys-migrant-services-contractor>.

15 DocGo began as a medical services company, providing medical care including mobile health care, medical transportation, and remote patient monitoring/chronic disease management. It has now expanded into logistical operations to transport, house, feed, and care for of asylum seekers. See: Bobby Caina Calvin, "Caught in a lie, CEO of embattled firm caring for NYC migrants resigns," Associated Press, September 16, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/docgo-anthony-capone-resignation-fa88c77d4bda49622247c1d0a9128b64>.

Partnerships

A third theme from our research — one we heard stressed throughout this project — is the value of building the right kinds of partnerships. Police cooperation with non-governmental organizations, such as social service providers and refugee assistance groups, can fill resource gaps and act as a conduit for engagement and building trust. Conversely, we heard that police interaction with federal immigration authorities (or the mistaken belief that local police are enforcing federal immigration law) can undermine trust with immigrant communities, though Tucson PD’s experience with CBP “street releases” shows that working together can be beneficial in some cases.¹⁶

Framework to Improve Trust and Communication with Immigrant Communities

This report describes many programs and strategies that agencies have adopted to connect with immigrant communities. Some of the most promising practices are:

1. **Community officers.** Officers in specialized units or programs, often coming from immigrant communities themselves, can better connect to the communities they serve. These officers walk the streets and immerse themselves in the culture of these neighborhoods, talking to business owners and residents and hearing their concerns. These officers often become role models who can lead young people to choose a career in policing.
2. **Refugee liaisons.** Especially for communities with significant numbers of newly arriving refugees, refugee liaisons can build trusting relationships with asylum seekers and help them adjust to life in the U.S., including its laws and cultural norms.
3. **Hiring immigrants and refugees as officers.** Hiring these individuals, including non-U.S. citizens legally permitted to work (such as those with DACA status), as police officers has numerous potential benefits. These include counteracting the recruitment shortfall, filling important force needs to implement community policing initiatives, expanding the number of multilingual officers, and providing tangible evidence of a police department’s commitment to involving immigrant communities in the day-to-day activity of a police department.
4. **Cultural awareness for officers.** Helping officers better understand immigrant communities can foster trusting relationships. Especially valuable are cultural immersion programs, through which officers talk to community members, attend community events, and in other ways try to see the world through the eyes of the people they will serve and protect. Departments could also train officers on general issues related to immigration, such as the differences among immigrants, migrants, and refugees, the asylum process, and passport and work visa requirements.
5. **Pre-academy training.** Having police recruits spend time in immigrant communities before they begin training at the police academy, an approach pioneered by Seattle Police Department’s “Before the Badge” program, lays the foundation for officers to build understanding and trust with those communities.

¹⁶ On September 14, 2023, Texas lawmakers approved legislation that would empower police to arrest migrants suspected of entering the country illegally. Critics charge the bill is unconstitutional because it interferes with the federal government’s authority over immigration. If the bill becomes law and survives expected court challenges, it likely would add to immigrants’ distrust of law enforcement. Paul J. Weber, “Texas wants the power to arrest and order migrants to leave the US. Can it do that?” Associated Press, November 15, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/texas-immigration-migrants-arrest-explainer-306f644e8bb95333b078ed3923adacf0>.

6. **Language services.** The ability to communicate with immigrant communities, either directly or through interpretation, is essential both in emergency situations and during everyday community outreach. Officers can utilize existing language skills in bilingual units, learn new language skills through introductory training, and leverage other community resources for translation and interpretation services.
7. **Youth programs.** Engaging immigrant youth — through athletic activities, reading to younger kids, or in other ways — can build mutual trust and respect, allowing trust to spread to older generations. These relationships can also help keep young people from joining gangs and becoming involved in criminal activity.
8. **Community academies.** These provide immigrants with a behind-the-scenes look at their local police department, including its policies and procedures and the daily activities of its officers. Conducting these academies in multiple languages provides greater access to the immigrant community.
9. **Informational workshops and publications.** Police can provide immigrants with information such as contacts for local services, how to use 911, U.S. laws in areas such as driving and domestic violence, protecting against fraud and scams, and the department’s policies on asking about immigration status.
10. **Driver’s licenses or ID cards for non-citizens.** Many jurisdictions have adopted this approach, which benefits both immigrants and law enforcement by providing a legal pathway for immigrants to conduct basic activities such as driving and working. (For more information, see PERF’s 2021 report, “Community-Based Identification Cards Give Immigrants a Sense of Belonging and Trust in Local Police.”)¹⁷
11. **Partnerships with trusted messengers.** Established groups in immigrant communities — chambers of commerce, churches, and schools, for example — and community leaders can amplify messages from local law enforcement and help counteract negative national narratives about immigration or police. In addition, building a strong relationship with the local media, particularly Spanish-language media, is a powerful way to reach local immigrants.

17 Police Executive Research Forum, “Community-Based Identification Cards Give Immigrants a Sense of Belonging and Trust in Local Police.” June 2021, <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/CommunityBasedID.pdf>.



Findings From the Member Survey and Follow-Up Interviews

To develop the member survey, PERF conducted extensive background research on building relationships between law enforcement and immigrant communities, promising practices in the field, and federal immigration law and policy. PERF also leveraged the expertise of the PERF Immigration Group (see box below) by interviewing group members, holding an in-person meeting to discuss the most pressing immigration issues they face, and having members review and edit the draft survey.

The final survey consisted of 28 questions, divided into two areas: engaging the immigrant community (e.g., priorities, training, and resource needs) and public safety considerations (e.g., communication with federal immigration authorities). (See Appendix A for the text of the survey.)

PERF emailed the survey to PERF members who are sheriffs or chiefs of police on January 23, 2023. (PERF focused on these individuals to avoid receiving multiple responses from a single agency.) Survey data were collected between January 23 and March 3, 2023.

Representatives from agencies in 29 U.S. states and two Canadian provinces responded to the survey. PERF received the most responses from agencies in Texas (10 percent of the total), California (9 percent), and Florida (9 percent). Regionally, the largest share of responses came from southern states (41 percent), followed by western states (21 percent).

Local/municipal agencies made up 95 percent of the respondents; sheriffs' offices and campus law enforcement made up 4 and 1 percent, respectively. Seventy-one percent of responding agencies had between 25 and 499 full-time sworn members, and 19 percent had 500 or more. Jurisdictional populations were most often between 25,000 and 49,999 (21 percent).

The follow-up interviews enabled PERF to collect more detailed information on certain areas of the survey. (See Appendix A for the follow-up interview questions.) In some cases, interviewees received customized questions based on their survey responses.

PERF Immigration Group

PERF formed the PERF Immigration Group, consisting of 14 police chiefs and sheriffs, to provide guidance and support for PERF's immigration initiatives.

PERF hand-selected these individuals based on their demonstrated history of strong leadership in building relationships with immigrant communities in their jurisdictions; Immigration Group members have decades of experience and the credibility that only comes through on-the-ground experience.

The PERF Immigration Group critically advised PERF's immigration work by highlighting the challenges immigration poses for law enforcement nationally.



Table 1: PERF Immigration Group Members

- Chief Shon Barnes, Madison (WI) Police Department
- Chief Ramon Batista, Santa Monica (CA) Police Department
- Chief Christopher Blue (Ret.), Chapel Hill (NC) Police Department
- Sheriff Michael Chitwood, Volusia (FL) Sheriff's Office
- Chief Adrian Diaz (Fmr.), Seattle (WA) Police Department
- Chief Barbara Duncan (Ret.), Salisbury (MD) Police Department
- Sheriff Ed Gonzalez, Harris County (TX) Sheriff's Office
- Chief Chad Kasmar, Tucson (AZ) Police Department
- Chief Roxana Kennedy, Chula Vista (CA) Police Department
- Chief Michel Moore (Ret.), Los Angeles (CA) Police Department
- Chief Celeste Murphy, Chattanooga (TN) Police Department
- Chief David Nisleit (Ret.), San Diego (CA) Police Department
- Chief Paul Noel, Knoxville (TN) Police Department
- Chief Constable Adam Palmer, Vancouver (Canada) Police Department

The following discussion of the findings from the survey and interviews covers the broad areas of improving communication, building trust, and interactions with other organizations (governmental and non-governmental), along with other findings.

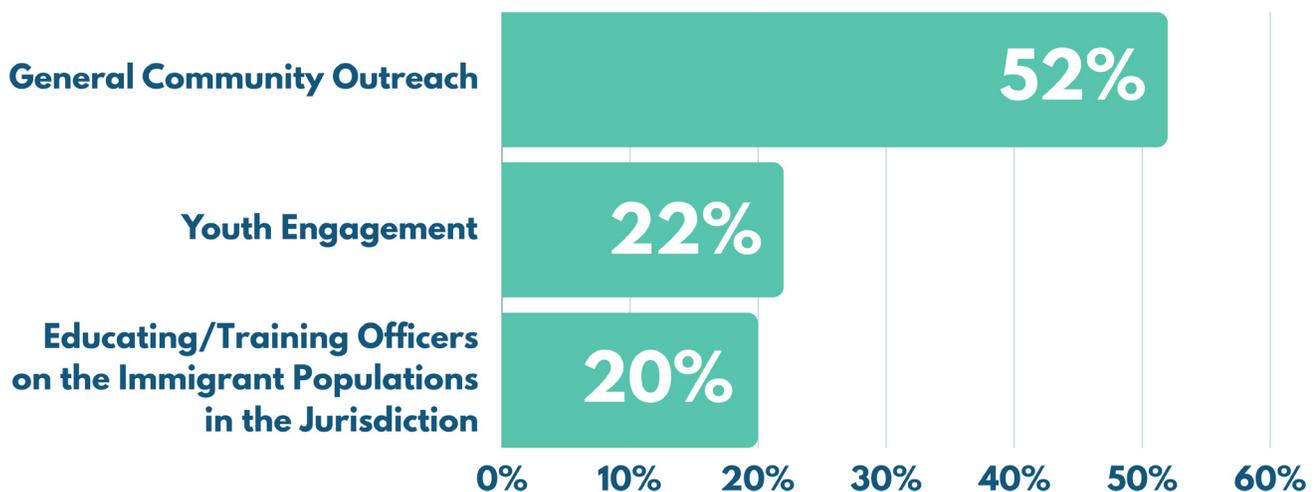
Improving Communication

In a sign of the importance police agencies place in improving communication with immigrant communities, **52 percent of survey respondents listed “general community outreach” as one of their department’s top two priorities regarding relationships with immigrants in the next year**, far more than any other response. (The next most common response was “youth engagement,” at 22 percent.) (See Figure 1.)

Engaging the Immigrant Community

Most agency officials interviewed indicated that their department did not have an advisory board focused on cultural diversity. Instead that function was filled at the city, county, or state level, sometimes in collaboration with the department. Some departments are planning to create or revamp a cultural diversity advisory board within the agency. Some jurisdictions that are smaller or have fewer immigrants have an advisory board that has a broad mission within the department but sometimes addresses issues of cultural diversity.

Figure 1: “In the Next Year, What Are Your Department’s Priorities Regarding Relationships with Immigrants?” (Top Responses)



Source: PERF Survey on Police-Community Relations, March 2023

Twenty-nine percent of responding agencies have an immigrant and/or refugee liaison. **Liaison officers, who can be either sworn officers or professional staff, can play an important role in engaging and building trust with immigrant communities.** They attend events and activities to develop trusting relationships, communicate directly with those they serve, and serve as the focal point of the department for that community.

Cultural Competency and Cultural Immersion Training

Twenty percent of agencies listed “educating/training officers on the immigrant populations in the jurisdiction” as one of the department’s top two priorities regarding relationships with immigrants in the next year. **The importance of educating officers on the immigrant experience was a common theme from agencies and stakeholders throughout this project.** “Any additional training related to understanding other cultures within our community is beneficial,” Chief Steve Albanese with the Pittsburg (CA) Police Department reported.

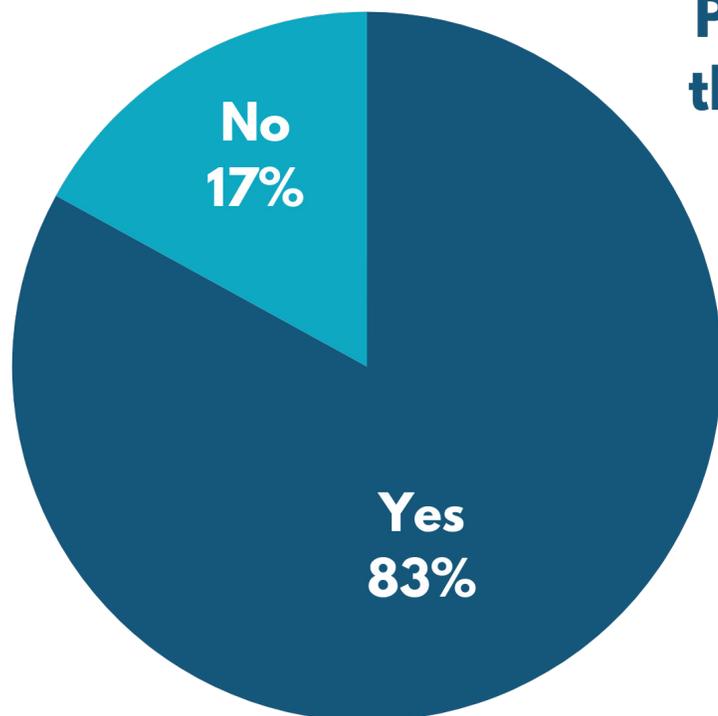
Eighty-three percent of agencies provide officers with cultural competency training, but most (63 percent) of them provide only general training, not training specific to the jurisdiction’s immigrant populations. (See Figures 2 and 3.) Also, most existing trainings are online or classroom instructed, rather than an immersive experience in immigrant communities such as an immigrant-led “reverse ride-along.”

“We could benefit from immersion-level language programs. The ability to effectively communicate on a personal level is very valuable.”

*Chief Paul Williams
Springfield (MO)
Police Department*



Figure 2: “Are Officers in Your Department Provided Training on the Different Cultures in the Community They Serve (e.g., Cultural Competency Training)?”



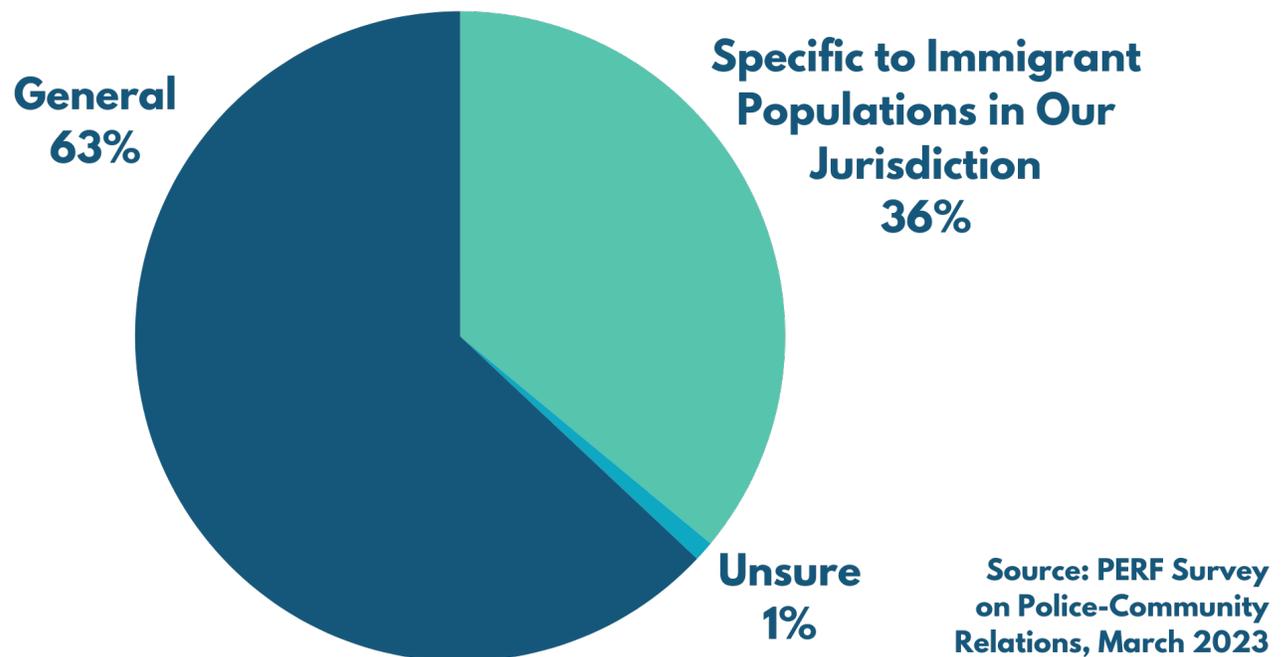
Source: PERF Survey on Police-Community Relations, March 2023

When interviewed agencies were asked what training or resources they needed to improve relationships with immigrant populations, cultural immersion training resources were the most commonly mentioned. One department said this should include formats in which immigrants tell their stories to officers, which can build empathy. Another stressed that these trainings need to go beyond a typical training, which may go in one ear and out the other, and instead aim at certifying officers in cultural competency.

Police recruits in Tucson participate in a refugee resettlement immersion program called “Walk a Mile in My Shoes,” which takes recruits through the experience of a refugee who does not know the language as they try to apply for housing, get healthcare, and meet other basic needs. The program aims to build empathy, understanding, and tolerance for refugees, who may need extra time with the police during an interaction.

The Madison (WI) Police Department also provides an innovative cultural competency training, in which each immigrant community in the area teaches a block of instruction in the police academy — their culture, customs, and what police can expect when interacting with them, as well as what they expect the police to do when called upon. (In a similar vein, Commander Laura May with the Cedar Rapids (IA) Police Department reported, **“It is a two-way street — the refugees need awareness of our culture and laws, and our officers need to be educated on the culture of the refugees.”**) These blocks add up to several days of training.

Figure 3: “Are Those Cultural Trainings General or Specific to Immigrant Populations in Your Jurisdiction?”



Interviewees noted that existing trainings rarely explain the distinctions among immigrants, migrants, and refugees and that officers would benefit greatly from this information. Interviewees also mentioned training needs on legal issues such as the asylum process, passport and work visa requirements, and the rights of foreigners when arrested.

Language Access

Seventy-four percent of responding agencies indicated they have a language access plan spelling out how to provide services to individuals who are non-English speaking or have limited English proficiency. A number of agencies use a commercial phone-interpreting service, but several said this can be cumbersome to use and often does not match the dialect being spoken, potentially causing confusion between the immigrant and interpreter. In some departments, officers resort to using Google Translate on their cellphones.

Many departments mentioned the need for additional language services. “Our biggest challenge is communication barriers,” said Chief Jack Clements with the Saco (ME) Police Department. “We really need more assistance with translators so we can spend effective time with asylum seekers.” And Chief Paul Williams with the Springfield (MO) Police Department reported, “We could benefit from immersion-level language programs. The ability to effectively communicate on a personal level is very valuable.”

“Besides recruiting more officers and staff to our ranks that represent our largest immigrant groups, we have access to phone interpreters, and the city is rolling out a new Community Interpreter Service that can provide on-site assistance in the city.”

Chief Steven Mazzie

Everett (MA) Police Department



Bilingual officers are valuable assets but can become overworked from being called frequently to respond to translation needs. Language pay is a good way to incentivize and honor these skills. One strategy to boost the number of available Spanish-speaking officers is through a brief (one- to five-day) course that teaches the basic words and phrases needed to communicate with Spanish-speaking people in many situations.

Educational Programs for the Immigrant Community

Forty-nine percent of responding departments provide educational programs to the immigrant community, such as how to use 911 and how law enforcement in the U.S. compares to their home countries. Resettlement agencies in the area are often involved in these programs.

The Tucson Police Department, for example, provides educational training and community workshops on scams, domestic violence, and driving. These are conducted in person; the department believes that face-to-face interaction humanizes the police and promotes communication and trust.

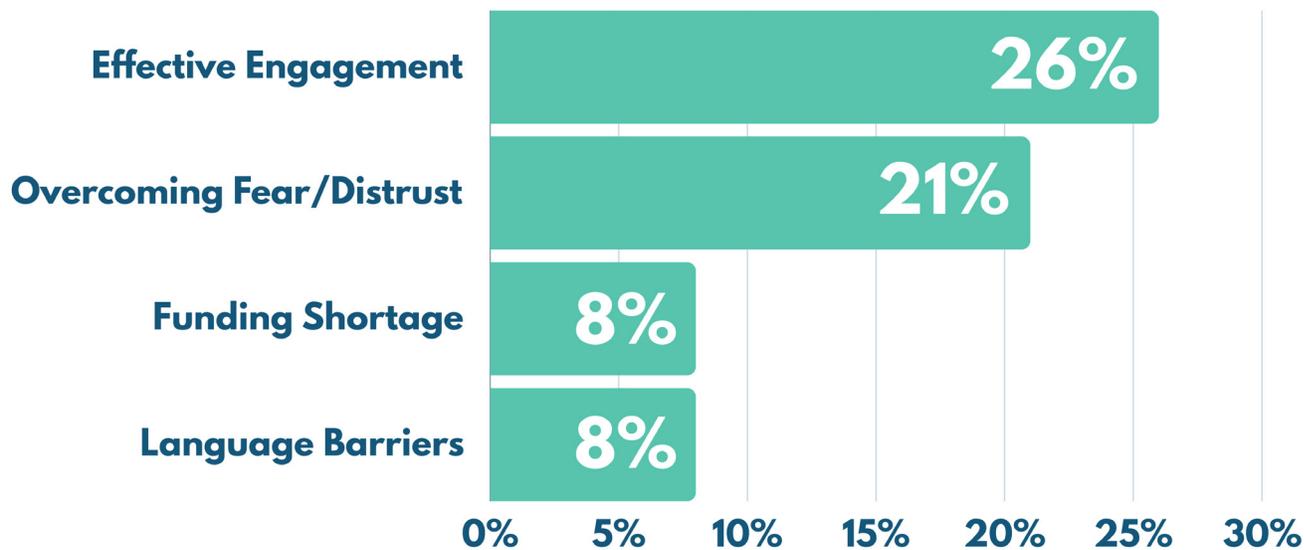
Building Trust

Twenty-one percent of survey respondents listed overcoming fear and distrust as their biggest challenge in working with immigrant communities, the second most common response (26 percent cited effective engagement). (See Figure 4.)

A major frustration, according to interviewees, is that debates over federal immigration policy often include harsh criticisms and stereotypes of immigrants. These sentiments trickle down to local communities, adding to fear and distrust. Interviewees also noted that **many immigrants suffered under corrupt and abusive police forces in their home countries.** These experiences can affect their assumptions about police in the U.S.

Given their fear and distrust of police, immigrant victims often are reluctant to report crime and cooperate in investigations. For example, the Oklahoma City Police Department (OKCPD) learned that migrant construction and agricultural workers in Oklahoma City were being targeted in robberies but were not reporting them; the department placed announcements in Spanish-speaking media encouraging workers to report the crimes and emphasizing that their immigration status would not be assessed.

Figure 4: “What Is the Biggest Challenge (e.g., State Laws or Local Ordinances, Funding, Effective Engagement) Your Department Is Facing in Working to Engage and Build Trust with Immigrant Communities?” (Top Responses)



Source: PERF Survey on Police-Community Relations, March 2023

NOTABLE INITIATIVE: OKLAHOMA CITY’S BILINGUAL UNIT

The Oklahoma City Police Department’s (OKCPD) Bilingual Unit was created to help the OKCPD perform its mission and deliver its services in situations where languages other than spoken English are used. The unit provides certified translators, maintains contacts and relationships with communities and individuals who speak languages other than English, and provides linguistic and cultural training.¹⁸

Established in 2003 with only about eight members, the Bilingual Unit has since grown to over 60 members. Officers skilled in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Sign Language receive language pay based on an objective assessment of their language skills.

In addition to handling calls for interpreting assistance, the unit responds to requests for participation in community events, for translation of written documents, and for linguistic or cultural training.¹⁹

18 Oklahoma City Police Department, Investigations Bureau: Bilingual Unit Standard Operations Procedures. 420.0270. Effective February 6, 2006.

19 *Ibid.*

Interactions With Other Organizations

Collaborating with non-governmental organizations can greatly assist police efforts to improve connections with immigrant communities, agencies report. In contrast, any perceived collaboration with federal immigration agencies would undermine immigrants' trust in police.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Thirty-five percent of survey respondents report that they coordinate with religious groups in the community, far more than any other type of organization. Very few reported coordinating with groups such as schools, or medical providers, for example.

Several interviewed departments emphasized the importance of building partnerships with non-governmental organizations. These partnerships are not difficult to form and can create inroads with immigrant communities by discussing issues and sharing resources. The Williamsburg (VA) Police Department, for example, works with the local domestic violence shelter and homeless shelters; it also participates in school supply and toy drives in partnership with housing and human services groups.

NOTABLE INITIATIVE: MARYSVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S PARTNERSHIP WITH KEEP DREAMS ALIVE

The nonprofit Keep Dreams Alive (KDA),²⁰ established in Marysville (WA) in 2020, works on immigration-related issues such as helping residents join the workforce. KDA has a particular focus on the Hispanic community but assists immigrants of all kinds and has played an important role in assisting Afghan refugees in the area.

The Marysville Police Department (MPD) reached out to KDA as part of the agency's ABLE (Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement) initiative. ABLE agencies must acquire community sponsors to become certified,²¹ and MPD recognized the significance of establishing a relationship with KDA. Such connections are key to building trust and legitimacy with the immigrant population.

This partnership has allowed both parties to stay updated on each other's activities. Also, KDA has served as an ambassador for the community by connecting residents to the police. MPD and KDA partner for public appearances, showing the community that police are approachable and helpful. The goal is to build these relationships before the residents need police assistance.

20 Keep Dreams Alive Foundation, accessed October 4, 2023, <https://keepdreamsalive.org/>.

21 Georgetown Law, "Program standards: ABLE Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies," <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/cics/able/program-standards/>.



“Our police department works with refugee resettlement agencies and our local refugee NGO network. Our Neighborhood Police Officer unit has a permanent office at the primary refugee resettlement agency, which facilitates communication and education with the refugee population. Our NPO unit also has a permanent office at our Hispanic activity center, which commonly interacts with Hispanic immigrants.”

Officer Hugo Blanco

Amarillo (TX) Police Department

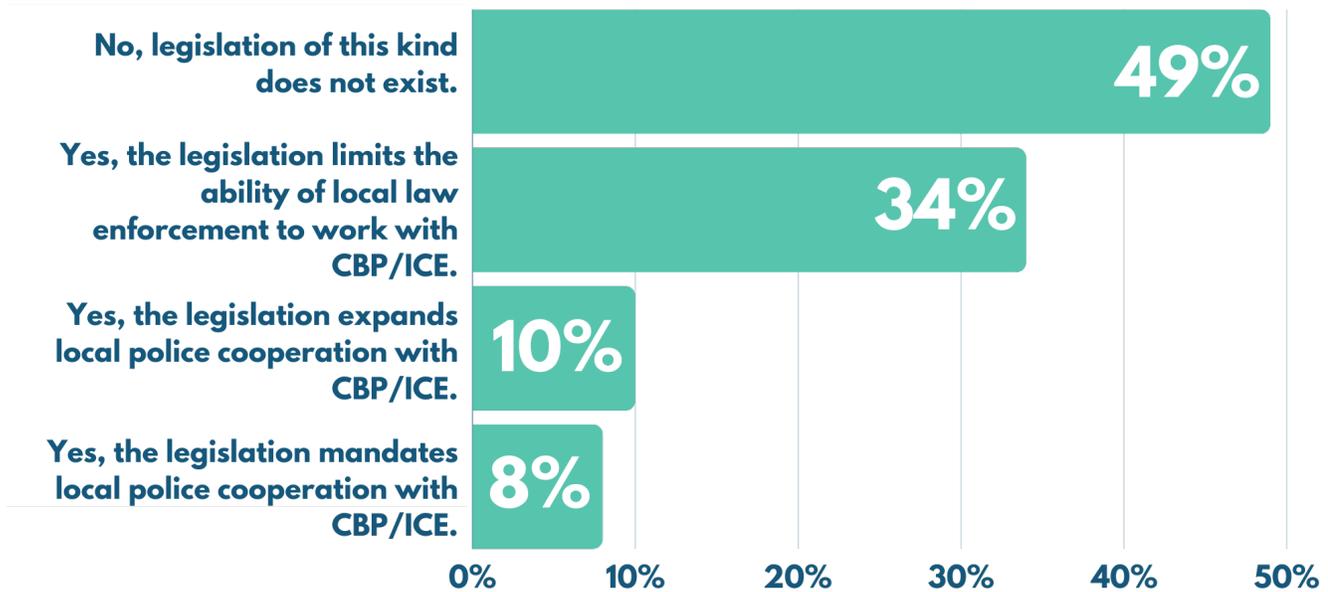
NOTABLE INITIATIVE: HOW ONE SMALL COMMUNITY HANDLED REFUGEE ARRIVALS

Whitewater (WI), a community of approximately 15,000, is 50 miles west of Milwaukee. In early 2022 the Whitewater Police Department (WPD) began noticing significant changes in the population from which they were receiving calls due to the arrival of close to 1,000 refugees from Central America, primarily Nicaragua and Venezuela, over the previous year.

This rapid population change, coupled with the challenges facing these new residents, called for a coordinated response by WPD and its community partners:

- The refugees generally did not speak English, so the department encouraged staff to complete a six-week online Spanish language course. Officers can earn holiday leave by taking the course. With this and other incentives, WPD hopes to have a quarter of the staff complete the course by the end of 2023.
- WPD held a “New Community Member Expo,” which about 100 new residents attended.
- WPD published an information sheet in both English and Spanish on do’s and don’ts regarding U.S. laws (e.g., traffic laws).
- WPD brought in an immigration attorney to educate officers and the community on the asylum process and to create a guide in both English and Spanish. Both the meeting and the immigration guide have been made publicly available.
- WPD worked with local non-profits that provided the new residents with medical care, clothing, and housing. WPD plans to expand this coordination by working with churches in the community.

Figure 5: “Has Your State or City Enacted Legislation Governing Interactions Between Local Police Officers and Immigrants, Particularly in Relation to Working with US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)?”



Source: PERF Survey on Police-Community Relations, March 2023

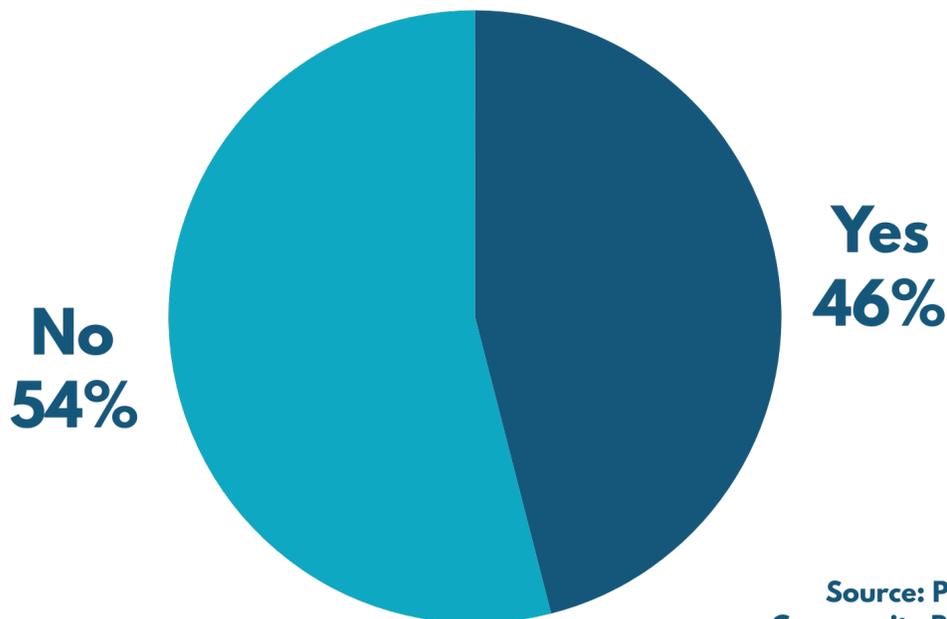
Federal Immigration Authorities

Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated their state or city had enacted legislation limiting the ability of local law enforcement to work with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). (See Figure 5.)

Most interviewed departments indicated they have no communication with federal immigration authorities. They regard immigration enforcement as strictly a federal responsibility, and any local agency involvement could erode trust between police and immigrants in the community. “Our biggest challenge in engaging with immigrant communities is the belief that local police play more of a role in immigration enforcement than we do,” explained Chief Chris Davis with the Green Bay (WI) Police Department. “As the rhetoric around immigration issues heats up, this belief is harder to counteract.”

Some departments do have limited communication with federal immigration authorities; for example, they may only communicate regarding violent crime or if the federal authorities need assistance locating a specific person. **Overall, interviewed departments did not express the need for more from federal authorities.**

Figure 6: “Does Your Department Have a Policy in Place Prohibiting Officers from Asking About the Immigration Status of Suspects, Victims, and/or Witnesses?”



Source: PERF Survey on Police-Community Relations, March 2023

Forty-six percent of departments responding to PERF’s survey prohibit officers from asking about the immigration status of suspects, victims, and/or witnesses, though these policies are not always communicated to the public. (See Figure 6.) Some policies completely prohibit such questioning, particularly for victims or witnesses; others allow questioning under specific circumstances, such as if an arrest takes place or if immigration status is relevant to an investigation. Several states have similar prohibitions.

When asked to elaborate on their biggest challenges in working with immigrant communities, several interviewees cited differing philosophies among bordering jurisdictions. Immigrants often cannot distinguish between a local municipal officer in uniform and a county sheriff’s deputy — a critical distinction if the police department’s policy is not to ask about immigration status but the county sheriff works more closely with federal agents to determine immigration status. Local ordinances or state laws mandating certain actions, such as attempting to verify immigration status during certain interactions, further complicate the issue.

Other Findings

PERF gathered information on several other topics from the survey and interviews.

“When responding to calls for service, our officers are mandated to only address the purpose of the call. Immigration status is only relevant if it is necessary to the case.”

Chief Edward Jackson

Annapolis (MD) Police Department



Public Safety

Thirteen percent of survey respondents indicated their jurisdiction experienced measurable crime increases in the immigrant community within the last three years.²² The areas of increase varied by community but included sex crimes, domestic violence, drug use, alcohol-related offenses, operating without a license, carjacking, robbery, gun violence, DUI, larceny, and assault.

Among recent efforts to address these increases, the Chattanooga (TN) Police Department, which struggled with robberies in immigrant communities, conducted targeted outreach to the community and other city stakeholders, increased its visibility on traditional and social media, and put out public service announcements on the issue. Investigators identified cases in which victims were struggling with fear of the police or fear of retaliation if they cooperated with police and redoubled efforts to ensure that investigations were conducted thoroughly. These initiatives led to significant decreases in robberies in immigrant communities.

The Tucson Police Department's (TPD) response to increased crime in its immigrant communities included setting up educational town halls covering issues such as DUI, domestic violence, and child abuse, where the laws in immigrants' home countries might be different. TPD used its connections with faith leaders to boost participation in these town halls. Notably, these sessions also addressed issues beyond criminal activity, including pool safety (many immigrants live in apartment complexes with pools).

Refugee Arrivals

Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicated their jurisdiction has experienced an increase in refugee arrivals.²³ When asked what challenges this has created, the strain on local resources was the most common response, though some departments mentioned the language barrier and lack of trust in police.

22 The survey asked, "Has your jurisdiction experienced any measurable crime increases in the immigrant community (e.g., increases in domestic violence within immigrant populations) within the last three years?" This could have been interpreted as crimes committed by immigrants, and/or crimes committed against immigrants.

23 Data suggest this percentage would be higher if the survey were conducted today. For example, see National Immigration Forum, "Six consecutive months of more than 6,000 refugees," September 15, 2023, <https://immigrationforum.org/article/legislative-bulletin-friday-september-15-2023/>.

According to Chief Celeste Murphy with the Chattanooga Police Department:

“We had refugees being dropped off on buses without warning and we had to coordinate with area businesses and faith leaders to find temporary housing resources until we were able to assist. Some ran away and we were unable to help because they were afraid of the police.”

Recruiting

Many departments expressed an interest in hiring immigrants and refugees. Margo Susco, Community Engagement Coordinator with the Tucson Police Department, for example, reported:

“We are looking to hire more refugees. . . . We’ve found with immigrant/refugee communities that there really is a strong work ethic. And once you get past the initial trust barrier, I think most of them understand that law enforcement in the U.S. is different than in their home country.”

Departments cited barriers to recruiting, however. It can be difficult to gain the trust of this population given experiences in their home countries, as noted above. Also, smaller jurisdictions struggle with a lack of potential applicants. And most states require U.S. citizenship to become a police officer. Chief Matt Murray with the Yakima (WA) Police Department explained, “There are barriers to hiring qualified applicants who were raised in the U.S. by undocumented immigrants (often called DACA). **But they would be an awesome new pool to recruit from.**” (See “Recruiting and Hiring Non-Citizens,” page 27.)

Interviewed departments also mentioned that improving access to immigrant communities for recruiting purposes would be advantageous but currently is a legal challenge in their communities. One agency said it would like to create targeted advertisements for these communities.

“Our Community Outreach Unit hosts an annual ‘Refugee-First Responder Picnic,’ which brings together recently resettled individuals and local first responders. The goals are to break down fear and stigma, and to educate participants on how to best access the other group. We have done this annual picnic four times. We also participate in a larger workgroup of service providers striving to provide collective access and assistance to resettlement efforts.”

Chief Shon Barnes

Madison (WI) Police Department



Recruiting and Hiring Non-Citizens

At the final meeting of the PERF Immigration Group, several members expressed interest in creating a recruiting program focused specifically on non-U.S. citizens legally allowed to work in the U.S. Hiring non-citizens to serve as police officers has numerous potential benefits, including counteracting the recruitment shortfall in the profession, filling important personnel needs to implement community policing initiatives, and expanding the number of multilingual officers.²⁴

Many states still require officer candidates to be U.S. citizens, and even in the few states without this requirement, some cities and towns have citizenship or lawful permanent resident (LPR) requirements. The landscape is beginning to change, however. A growing number of states are allowing LPRs and even those who fall under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy, who are legally allowed to work in the U.S., to become law enforcement officers.²⁵

California, Colorado, and Washington State have passed laws allowing anyone authorized to work in the U.S., including DACA recipients, to be hired as law enforcement officers.²⁶ New Jersey and other states are considering similar changes. Illinois passed a law allowing those legally authorized to work and carry a firearm to become officers, including anyone with valid DACA status.²⁷

Agencies, however, face several barriers to hiring non-citizens.

For example, non-citizens generally cannot purchase or carry a firearm, and carrying a firearm is a core requirement for police officers in this country. Federal laws and administrative rules restrict the possession of firearms by non-citizens, but the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has explained that “DACA recipients can possess duty firearms and ammunition as part of their official law enforcement officer duties.”²⁸

24 Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force, “Filling the Ranks: Why Lawful Permanent Residents Should Qualify for Law Enforcement Positions,” June 14, 2017, <https://leitf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/LPR-6.14.17.pdf>.

25 See Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force, “Backgrounder: Jurisdictions Permitting LPR Hiring,” August 17, 2021, <https://leitf.org/2021/08/lprhiring/>; Philip Marcelo, “Illinois Will Allow Some Non-citizens to be Police. But Only Those Authorized to Work and Own a Gun,” Associated Press, August 4, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-immigration-illinois-daca-boebert-desantis-968521926686>; Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force, “Blog Post: State Citizenship Laws Regarding Law Enforcement Hiring,” February 28, 2023, <https://leitf.org/2023/02/hiringblog/>.

26 Justo Robles, “California made it legal for DACA immigrants to work as police. Which departments are hiring them?” Cal Matters, January 24, 2024, <https://calmatters.org/california-divide/2024/01/daca-program-california/>; Saja Hindi, “Colorado to allow DACA recipients to work as armed police officers,” Denver Post, April 27, 2023, <https://www.denverpost.com/2023/04/27/colorado-legislature-law-daca-police/>; Washington State Legislature, “Substitute Senate Bill 6157,” <https://lawfilesexet.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6157-S.SL.pdf#page=1>.

27 Brian Weckerly, “New Illinois law allows non-citizens to become police officers and deputies,” OurQuadCities, January 9, 2024, <https://www.ourquadcities.com/news/local-news/new-illinois-law-allows-non-citizens-to-become-police-officers-and-deputies/>.

28 Letter from Matthew P. Varisco, Assistant Director, Office of Enforcement Programs and Services, ATF, to Police Executive Research Forum, January 5, 2024, <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/PERFDACAResponseLetter.pdf>.

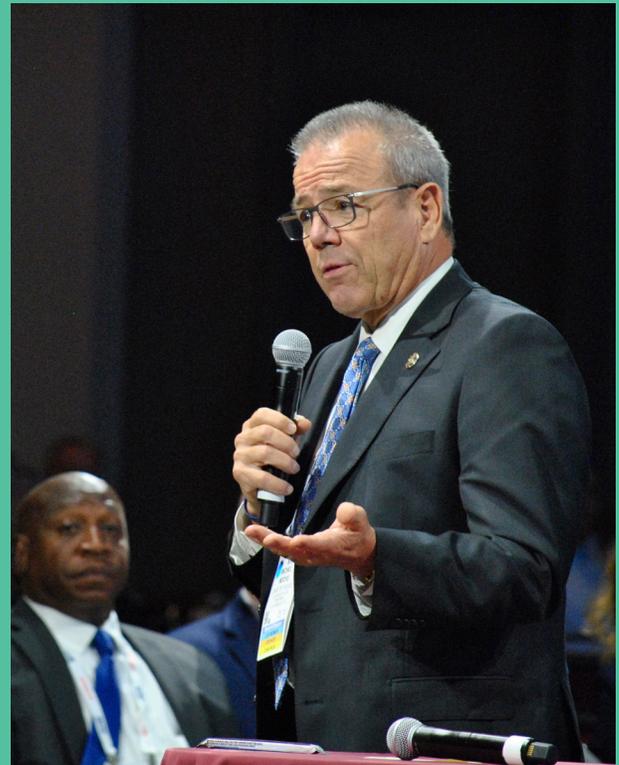
According to ATF, the Federal Gun Control Act (GCA) provides a limited number of exceptions to restrictions on possession of a firearm or ammunition, including if they are issued by a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency, or possessed in accordance with official law enforcement duties. In states where DACA recipients and other non-citizens are qualified to be law enforcement officers or peace officers, agencies need to adjust their firearms policies to ensure duty weapons can only be possessed for official law enforcement duties.

Following California's passage of a bill allowing DACA recipients to be peace officers, Chief Michel Moore of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) recruited and hired almost a dozen of these young people.

PERF, in partnership with the LAPD, consulted with the ATF on some of the legal issues involved in hiring these young people, and reached general understanding that DACA recipients can possess firearms and ammunition when on duty, enabling them to become fully deployable officers.

The United States Armed Forces have a history of hiring non-citizens who are legally allowed to work in this country. At a time when American police agencies are facing significant staffing constraints, replicating the armed forces' existing program in policing would be beneficial on a number of levels. PERF will work with agencies that are hiring these young people to identify lessons learned and generate recommendations and guidance for other departments.

Departments that are interested in beginning to recruit and hire these young people should examine their state and local eligibility standards for becoming a peace officer. In some jurisdictions, legislative changes will be needed to allow non-citizens to be hired,²⁹ while in others the standards may be set administratively



Retired LAPD Police Chief Michel Moore

by the state's Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission or similar hiring authority. In some states where these changes are actively being debated, there appears to be a misunderstanding about federal guidance on these individuals' ability to be peace officers concerning their ability to carry a duty firearm. As noted, communications with ATF acknowledged that if an individual is (i) legally allowed to work in the United States, (ii) is allowed to become a peace officer under state/local laws and regulations, and (iii) the hiring department has a firearm policy that clarifies the individuals are required to possess their duty firearm for official law enforcement purposes, these individuals can possess and carry a department-issued duty firearm.

²⁹ Bills in [Colorado](#), [Illinois](#), and [California](#), offer examples of the type of legislative changes that can be made to allow these individuals to be peace officers.



“Some folks will very easily give the full story and all of the details about an incident, but where I see the hurdle is the point where they know the police will ask for their name and phone number. That’s when they become hesitant and unsure.”

*Dr. Jessica E. Salvador
Executive Director, Casa Latina*

Promising Practices to Improve Communication and Trust

In interviews, departments described a number of strategies they have adopted to build positive connections with immigrant communities.

- **Community academies.** Several interviewees described their department’s operation of a citizens’ academy (sometimes called a residents’ or community academy) to acquaint community members with various components of police work. For example, the Fresno (CA) Police Department offers a residents’ academy in Spanish, English, Hmong, and Punjabi. Other departments are looking to expand these efforts. The Santa Monica (CA) Police Department’s community academy, conducted in both English and Spanish, is a ten-week program; recognizing this is a big commitment, the department would like to turn this into an eight- to ten-hour course covering hot topics to broaden its reach in the community. Academies were described across PERF’s research as being extremely valuable but difficult to maintain due to resource needs.
- **Community liaisons.** Through the Amigos en Azul³⁰ program, created by the Austin (TX) Police Department (APD), Hispanic officers serve as community liaisons to better connect APD with Austin’s Hispanic communities. This program has since spread to numerous other jurisdictions; many interviewees mentioned having participants in their department.
- **Spanish-language media.** Several interviewed departments said they have built a strong relationship with the local media, particularly Spanish-language media, to get their message out to immigrants in the community. When local media are lacking or have a weak relationship with the police, national news fills the gap, potentially spreading negative national narratives. Interviewees also advised departments to leverage organizations in immigrant communities, such as the Latino chamber of commerce, churches, and schools, to reach immigrants.

30 Amigos en Azul, accessed October 4, 2023, <https://amigosnazul.com/>.

- **Mapping.** The Tucson Police Department (TPD) is collaborating with the International Rescue Committee, a refugee resettlement agency with information on where refugees are being placed in the city, on a mapping initiative to better identify which populations are experiencing which crimes. The collaboration helps TPD know where to direct services and how to ensure that refugees receive what they need from the police.
- **Driver’s licenses or ID cards for non-citizens.** Many jurisdictions have adopted this approach, and the Madison (WI) Police Department recently lobbied state lawmakers along with a community group to push for allowing non-citizens to earn a driver’s license. “People are not calling the police because they don’t want to be asked for ID or are not comfortable sharing their identification,” Chief Shon Barnes explained. “We need to have ID for people who are victims, who can’t speak for themselves.” Proponents argue this will cut down on hit-and-runs and other problems.
- **Peace Officer status for non-citizens.** Several states and local governments have no restrictions or have removed them, allowing non-citizens already authorized to work in the U.S., including DACA recipients, to become peace officers. There are many states and localities where these individuals are not allowed to serve as peace officers.

Interviewees stressed the importance of going out into the community and meeting with immigrants to solicit their ideas, which can get a conversation going. One interviewee described meeting with immigrant communities on traffic safety and local ordinances. Another mentioned the importance of engagement with formal and informal leadership in the immigrant communities; the more credible those community leaders are, the more productive their relationships with law enforcement can be.



“The biggest challenge is general distrust of law enforcement. A number of the locations they come from have corrupt law enforcement.”

*Chief Stephen Beecher
Mount Olive Township (NJ)
Police Department*





Findings From the Regional Meetings

To help it better understand local issues that affect immigrants and refugees, PERF held regional meetings in Seattle (WA), Tucson (AZ), and Albany (NY). Attendees included local representatives of law enforcement agencies, government agencies, and immigrant and refugee service providers.

The three sites were selected based on their prominent immigrant populations, promising practices in engaging immigrant communities, and challenges faced. Seattle and Tucson were selected before the end of the “Title 42” policy expelling asylum seekers and the burgeoning migrant crisis in New York and other cities. (See box, “What was the Title 42 Border Restriction?”) Albany, selected last, was chosen specifically to discuss those challenges.

Interviews were conducted with as many stakeholders as feasible prior to the regional meetings. These interviews helped guide the agenda for the meetings. (See Appendix B for the pre-interview questions.) At the meetings, each participant was given the opportunity to speak on challenges, successes, and training or resource needs. (See Appendix D for the attendees at each meeting.)

This section discusses the findings from the meetings, including:

- How immigrants’ lack of trust in the police leads to underreporting of crime;
- Promising practices agencies have employed to improve communication and trust;
- Agencies’ training and resource needs to improve communication and trust; and
- How police interactions with governmental and non-governmental organizations affect trust.

What Was the Title 42 Border Restriction?

Title 42 of a 1944 public health law allows the federal government to prevent migrants from entering the country if there is a “serious danger” they will introduce a communicable disease to the U.S.

In March 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government used that authority to bar many asylum seekers from entering the U.S. from Canada and Mexico and to expel arriving migrants without allowing them to apply for legal protection. (Previously, migrants could be allowed into the US and remain in this country while they waited for a decision on their request for asylum.) Unaccompanied children, families, Cubans, Colombians, Nicaraguans, and (initially) Venezuelans³¹ were exempt from immediate removal, so migrant resettlement was reduced but not eliminated during the pandemic.

Since migrants expelled under Title 42 faced no penalties and were free to try again to enter the country, the number of such attempts rose considerably. The U.S. turned away migrants more than 2.8 million times under the policy.

The Title 42 order expired in May 2023 when the Biden Administration lifted the public health emergency for COVID-19. Title 8, a federal immigration and border law that allows access to asylum, once again governs the processing of arriving migrants.

Seattle Regional Meeting

Background

Seattle’s roughly 140,000 foreign-born residents account for 19 percent of the city’s population, according to 2020 figures.³² China and India are the top two countries of origin for foreign-born residents, at 15 and 9 percent of the foreign-born population, respectively.³³ The Seattle public school system in 2021 identified 154 different languages spoken by its students; the top non-English languages were Vietnamese, Cantonese, Somali, Amharic, and Oromo.

Seattle calls itself a “welcoming city,” meaning “all city departments prioritize and consider the policies, actions, and practices that help immigrant and refugee communities succeed.”³⁴ Because of this status, **when Seattle Police Department (SPD) officers interact with an individual, they do not inquire about immigration status unless they have a reasonable suspicion that the person has committed a felony or know that the person was previously deported.** SPD does not work with or report to CBP or ICE unless it is asked to assist with administrative (non-criminal) warrants. (Many municipalities use the term “sanctuary city” to refer to these policies.)

31 Title 42 was expanded to cover Venezuelans in October 2022.

32 City of Seattle, “Seattle’s immigrants and refugees,” https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OIRA/2023_OIRA_DataSnapshot_FINAL.pdf.

33 *Ibid.*

34 City of Seattle, “Frequently Asked Questions about Local City-level Immigration Policies,” accessed July 7, 2023, <https://www.seattle.gov/iandaffairs/issues-and-policies/seattle-immigration-policy-faq>.



“This is a generalization, but for the immigrant community, particularly people who are undocumented, there’s a saying that the police and ICE are the same thing.”

Malou Chavez

*Executive Director,
Northwest Immigrant
Rights Project*

On June 1, 2023, PERF members met with local representatives of law enforcement agencies, government agencies, immigrant and refugee service providers, and community organizations to discuss issues affecting the immigrant and refugee communities.

Trust and Underreporting of Crime

Detective Elizabeth Wareing of the SPD Hate Crimes Unit reported that there has been a five-fold increase in reported hate crimes³⁵ over the past seven years: from 205 in 2015 to over 1,000 in 2022. The reported number of hate incidents (acts of prejudice that do not involve violence, threats, or property damage) is also growing.

Hate crimes and hate incidents are likely far more frequent than SPD figures show since they tend to be underreported, especially by refugees and immigrants, according to Det. Wareing. Several attendees from faith-based organizations and other non-governmental service providers agreed. Meeting participants shared that migrants feel safer reporting these crimes to community representatives or service providers because they don’t trust the police and don’t want to provide their names and contact information, especially if they are not in the U.S. legally. Attendees gave numerous examples in which immigrants and refugees told of actions against them that clearly constitute a hate crime or incident but refused to report them to law enforcement, despite attempts to persuade them otherwise.

35 Washington State defines hate crimes as those motivated by bias based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression or identity, or mental, physical, or sensory handicap. Seattle’s broader definition also encompasses bias based on homelessness, marital status, age, parental status, and political ideology. Police Department, “Hate and Bias Crimes,” accessed October 4, 2023, <https://www.seattle.gov/police/need-help/crimes-against-persons/hate-crimes-and-bias-crimes>.

If immigrants and refugees do report a crime, meeting participants explained, they can become frustrated at how long it can take for an officer to respond. Officers at the roundtable explained that because SPD is understaffed and calls for crimes in progress take priority, calls to report a completed crime often receive a delayed response.

Language and cultural issues can further complicate matters. Monisha Harrell, Former Board Chair of Equal Rights Washington, stated, “I’ve seen people avoid reporting hate crimes because they feel that seeking justice will take more personal time and energy than the justice that would ever be served.” Language barriers make it particularly difficult to explain the complexities of the U.S. criminal justice system.

To promote reporting of hate crimes, meeting participants recommended that SPD streamline the reporting process, educate service organizations about U-visas (visas set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and can help law enforcement in investigating criminal activity),³⁶ and perhaps have someone educate the immigrant and refugee communities about the basic prosecutorial process.

Promising Practices

Roundtable participants stressed that many immigrants experienced violence, oppression, and corruption in their country of origin, often at the hands of police, and arrive in the U.S. with a preconceived fear and distrust of police. Officers need to understand that these beliefs prevent many immigrants from calling police even when they clearly need help.

The meeting included much discussion of programs that build trust between the immigrant and refugee communities and the police. In addition to the examples described below, all agreed that **whenever officers can attend cultural events or activities — sporting events, food festivals, and so on — this helps break down barriers.** Some of the activities described below continue today, but others had to be discontinued due to insufficient funding or staffing, despite being highly successful.

- **Pre-academy training.** The “Before the Badge” program, implemented by SPD, helps to make connections between officers and immigrants. For six weeks before SPD recruits begin training at the police academy, they are immersed in various Seattle communities, visiting community centers, talking to community members, attending community events, and learning about the people they will serve and protect. This valuable experience demystifies the communities — many of which have robust immigrant and refugee populations — where these new officers will eventually work.

The program was highly praised by stakeholders and police alike.

- **Contact information on service providers.** The office of King County (WA) Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall created the “Crosswalk List,” which provides contact information for all service organizations that can assist immigrants and refugees. Deputies hand out the list every time they interact with an immigrant or refugee.

36 See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Victims of Criminal Activity: U Nonimmigrant Status,” accessed October 4, 2023, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/victims-of-criminal-activity-u-nonimmigrant-status>.

- **Informational workshop.** El Centro de la Raza (The Center for People of All Races) offers a “Know Your Rights” workshop providing newcomers to the country with information about their rights during vulnerable situations, including how to appropriately respond if they encounter the police or immigration enforcement.
- **Weekend programs.** The widely praised Immigration & Refugee Family Institute, which no longer takes place due to funding cuts, was a nine-weekend-long program that brought officers together with immigrant and refugee families; officers did not wear uniforms and translators attended. The migrants learned about the justice system and the police department, and the police learned about the migrants and their cultures.
- **Community Liaison Officers.** SPD uses its many Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) to build trust with various communities. CLOs walk the streets and immerse themselves in the culture of these neighborhoods, talking to business owners and residents and hearing their concerns. The CLOs who attended the meeting clearly love their jobs and believe their efforts are beneficial both to SPD and to them personally.
- **Sports programs.** SPD officers took part in a “Boxing with At-Risk Youths” program. All the attendees familiar with the program said it was successful for young people as well as officers, especially officers who might not normally conduct community policing. The program has been cut due to funding, but many meeting participants said they hoped it would be re-established.

In addition to organized programs, positive individual interactions with police officers can build trust. Several SPD staff told the group about coming to this country as children, in some cases as refugees, and how such interactions significantly affected their lives. For example, Middle East Community Service Officer Albert Khandzhayan recalled:

“I came to this country when I was 2 ½ with my parents as refugees from Azerbaijan. When I was 10 or 11 years old, there was an officer who would come and check on me to make sure I was not getting into trouble. I did not know until many years later that the same officer paid for my summer camp experience every summer. He too had been a refugee. It had a profound impact on me.”

In another example, SPD Civilian Community Liaison Habtamu Abdi arrived as a refugee from Ethiopia and initially viewed police here as negatively as he had viewed police in Ethiopia. Years later, while volunteering in the Ethiopian community he saw SPD officers who responded to a domestic violence victim help her; they later returned and brought toys to her children. Witnessing those acts of kindness changed his view of the police and prompted him to get involved.

Training and Resource Needs

Service providers stated that **gaining the trust of immigrants and refugees requires officers to have more face-to-face interactions and dialogue with them.** They asked officers to practice genuine community policing: walk around the business districts, stop in for a cup of coffee with community members, talk to teenagers, play sports with youngsters, and attend cultural events. Many officers said they used to be more engaging, but with staffing so short they often must run from call to call. SPD management is working to address its hiring and retention issues, and progress in relieving the staffing shortage should give officers more time to engage.

“Even among native-born Americans, there are women and people in domestic violence situations who don’t want to call the police, especially if they’re a minority, because they don’t feel like they’re taken seriously. So, then you add language barriers, you add cultural differences, and you add fear of the police. They’re just really, really vulnerable.”

Sylvie Morel-Seytoux

Resettlement Director, Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest



Lutheran
Social Services
of the Southwest

Many immigrants and refugees cannot tell the difference between an SPD officer, an ICE agent, and a member of CBP, according to meeting participants. To immigrants, uniforms instill fear, doubt, and mistrust, and this will be the case until they understand how to distinguish among these individuals and know the extent of their authority. Service providers gave examples of small incidents that significantly damaged an already fragile relationship, such as when an SPD officer at the scene of an incident called a CBP officer to the scene to help with translation. Participants and officers also noted that ICE warrant sweeps further reduce immigrants’ trust in the police, even though SPD is not involved.

Currently, there is no consistent procedure to inform immigrants about the difference between ICE/CBP and SPD or about Seattle’s welcoming city status, and no handout available that explains this. Police and stakeholders agreed that this information must be conveyed to migrant communities as early as possible — clearly, concisely, and in several languages — but there was no consensus on whether law enforcement or service providers should have this responsibility.

Meeting participants agreed on the importance of education and that immigrants need to be taught their fundamental rights and how to exercise them to advocate for themselves. Most people arrive in this country ignorant of U.S. federal, state, and local laws, which often are very different from those in their home country. For instance, some countries do not have laws against drunk driving; others do not criminalize domestic violence and child abuse as the U.S. does. A minor offense such as failing to appear for a traffic ticket can lead to an immigrant being trapped in a legal system they do not understand. Immigrants and refugees need to know where to get answers about the laws and everyday processes in their new community.

Service providers suggested that Seattle produce and disseminate documents to help immigrant communities understand general civil, criminal, and traffic laws, as well as to give basic information about how the medical examiner’s, prosecutor’s, and other legal-related offices function. This information can help immigrants feel more confident and secure, and perhaps help them avoid involvement in the civil or criminal processes themselves.

Tucson Regional Meeting

Background

Stakeholders describe Tucson as a “welcoming city” to immigrants and refugees. As of 2021 it was home to more than 70,000 foreign-born residents, who accounted for 13 percent of the population.³⁷ Fifty-five percent of foreign-born Tucson residents are naturalized citizens and 71 percent were born in Latin America.³⁸

Immigrants generally pass through Tucson on their way to another U.S. destination, usually remaining in the city for less than 72 hours. Also, Tucson is only 60 miles from the Mexico border, so it is not uncommon for Mexican residents to travel back and forth over the border to visit family members in Tucson.

Legislation Arizona enacted in 2010³⁹ eroded trust between immigrants and police by requiring local and state law enforcement officers to attempt to determine an individual’s immigration status during a “lawful stop, detention or arrest” when there is reasonable suspicion that the individual is in the country illegally. However, subsequent changes by the Tucson Police Department (TPD) have limited the situations in which the law is enforced.

On August 2, 2023, in a meeting hosted by Chief Chad Kasmar, PERF staff met with local representatives of law enforcement agencies, government agencies, immigrant and refugee service providers, an immigration attorney, and a local community college.

Trust and Underreporting of Crime

As in the Seattle meeting, stakeholders in Tucson explained that many crimes go unreported by immigrants and refugees. One reason they cited is that a felony conviction could lead to deportation, so a victim might not want to report a crime (such as domestic violence) committed by a family member, especially if that person is the family breadwinner. Some immigrants and refugees may call 911 only if the situation is very serious, otherwise choosing to handle things on their own.

This population also often deals with trauma from past experiences with corrupt law enforcement in their home countries. These fears can lead immigrants and refugees to avoid police and to contact social service providers on issues requiring a law enforcement response.

Immigrants’ and refugees’ hesitancy to contact the police is a troubling trend, particularly given that this population is vulnerable to certain crimes, such as phone scams and hate crimes.

The fact that many immigrants and refugees are forced to go underground to meet their basic needs places them at further risk of victimization and exploitation, according to stakeholders. For example, refugees must wait 180 days before they can legally work and therefore often work “off the books” to earn money, and many migrants drive without a license because of lack of access.

37 United States Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census and 2021 American Community Survey: <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Tucson+city,+Arizona>.

38 *Ibid.*

39 Arizona State Legislature, “Senate Bill 1070,” <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/sb1070s.pdf>.

“When I first came here, if I saw a police car pull into our apartment complex, I would run inside, close the door, lock it, and stay inside. If I saw something suspicious happening, I would stay inside because I didn’t know what to do or who to call. I was thinking, ‘Well, if I call the police I might get in trouble or arrested or beat up.’ So that was my mindset before I became a CSO. When I decided to do some ride-alongs with officers, that’s when I began to see the differences between African or refugee camp police and police in America.”

*Community Service Officer Awes Mohamed
Operations Division Midtown,
Tucson Police Department*



Promising Practices

As in Seattle, several members of TPD came to the U.S. as refugees or asylum seekers; one with DACA protection is working as a Community Service Officer (non-sworn). All emphasized that positive interactions with the police contributed to their decision to join TPD. Other strategies and programs include:

- **Person-first philosophy.** A TPD commander stated that when the division receives a brand-new officer in training, they immediately emphasize that immigrants are people first. Each one is a person who came from a different place. When each is a person first in your mind, you assign them more value and treat them differently.
- **Ride-alongs.** Several stakeholders and officers who are immigrants or arrived as refugees said ride-alongs changed their perspective on officers and the job they do, helping them see officers as people.
- **Immersion programs.** Stakeholders and officers agreed that immersion programs such as “Walk a Mile in My Shoes” are excellent ways to help officers understand the frustration immigrants and refugees can face in navigating processes such as obtaining a driver’s license or dealing with a landlord.
- **Cultural awareness for officers.** Lutheran Social Services (LSS) gives officers a presentation on how to approach people from different cultures. It is not formalized training, but it includes content on what is considered respectful or disrespectful in different countries.

Also, the Tucson Refugee Ministry offers a free online training called “Refugee 101.”⁴⁰ It takes about an hour to complete. The group recommended that officers be required to take it, which would give them a better understanding of refugees’ experiences and the challenges they face.

- **ID cards.** LSS gives ID cards to refugees, which they can present to a police officer to show that they are a refugee and are working with LSS. Though these are not sanctioned federal, state, or city government ID cards, having the LSS card gives the refugees some level of comfort. LSS recommends that all stakeholders give out ID cards to their clients.
- **Engagement with youth.** TPD and stakeholders agreed that student engagement is necessary to help keep young people from joining gangs and becoming involved in criminal activity. Playing sports with kids, casual conversations, and reading to younger kids build trust and respect.

Training and Resource Needs

Stakeholders said there is a **need for documents in different languages that help immigrants and refugees deal with issues such as recognizing scams and fraud.** They also said that refugees need training on issues such as their rights regarding traffic stops and search warrants and how to interact generally with the police. Such training would be better coming from the police, according to stakeholders, since it would give refugees some positive interaction with law enforcement.

Immigrants and refugees have been frustrated by the lack of language access when they call 911, according to stakeholders. Stakeholders volunteered to help TPD with translation issues in the 911 center.

Interactions With U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Many immigrants who travel through Tucson are dropped off in the city by CBP as part of a so-called “street release.” When CBP protection facilities are over capacity, as a last resort CBP drops immigrants off in cities — near parks, shopping centers, or bus stations — in the hope that they will find their way to a relative or sponsor or to a local non-profit that can temporarily provide food and shelter.⁴¹

These street releases were very problematic for Tucson because CBP would randomly drop immigrants off without notice at organizations that may have been able to assist. Most of the immigrants did not speak English, had little or no money, and had no idea where they were when they were released. Many releases were in the evening or the middle of the night and forced a vulnerable population to fend for themselves. TPD and city officials scrambled to respond to these situations as quickly and humanely as possible.

Under a recent agreement with Tucson, CBP now notifies the city before a drop-off, which enables TPD and city officials to arrive in advance to help immigrants facilitate arrangements to their final destinations or connect them with organizations that can provide food or shelter. Roughly 80-100 asylum seekers who have been processed through DHS are bused into Tucson each day; most are moving on to sponsors and will leave Tucson in a matter of days. According to Assistant Chief Kevin Hall, TPD’s patrol operational relationship with ICE or CBP is, for the most part, limited to coordinating these street releases.

40 Tucson Refugee Ministry, <https://www.tucsonrefugeeministry.com/courses/trm-refugee-101/>.

41 Robert Moore, Ramon Bracamontes, and Corrie Boudreaux, “Border agents once again release migrants in downtown El Paso,” El Paso Matters, May 15, 2022, <https://elpasomatters.org/2022/05/15/ice-once-again-releases-immigrants-in-downtown-el-paso/>.

“How can we have a system that allows people to legally be present in the country, but not legally work? Because people have to meet their basic needs. They have to eat. They can’t even get to their court dates without money for transportation. This is creating an environment where they will — not might, but will — be exploited. So let them work legally.”

Kathy Sheehan

Mayor, City of Albany



Albany Regional Meeting

Background

In 2021 Albany was home to roughly 15,000 foreign-born residents, who accounted for 16 percent of the city’s population (the number of foreign-born residents has likely increased significantly since then). Fifty percent of the foreign-born population in Albany are naturalized citizens; 43 percent were born in Asia and 31 percent were born in Latin America.⁴²

PERF chose Albany as the third site partly due to the recent increase in arrivals of asylum seekers. While welcoming immigrants and refugees is not new to Albany and existing resources can be leveraged, the city faces significant challenges due to the new influx of migrants.

More than 157,000 asylum seekers have arrived in New York City since the spring of 2022.⁴³ Some have been bused in from border states; Texas reports that it has sent more than 13,000 migrants to New York City since August 2022.⁴⁴ Others have family in New York or are attracted to the city’s history of welcom-

42 United States Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census and 2021 American Community Survey, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Albany+city,+New+york>.

43 Michael Bloomberg, “How Biden and Congress Should Fix the Immigration Crisis in Our Cities,” New York Times, September 10, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/10/opinion/michael-bloomberg-nyc-immigration-crisis.html>.

44 Jonathan Weisman and Nicholas Fandos, “GOP gets the democratic border crisis it wanted,” New York Times, September 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/08/us/politics/gop-migrants-blue-cities.html>.

ing immigrants. Many asylum seekers are being bused to other cities in the state. Albany began receiving and housing asylum seekers in May 2023,⁴⁵ and more than 700 new asylum seekers had newly arrived by early August.⁴⁶

On September 29, 2023, PERF staff met virtually with local representatives of law enforcement agencies, government agencies, and immigrant and refugee service providers, in a meeting hosted by Albany Police Chief Eric Hawkins.

Interactions With DocGo

Meeting attendees — law enforcement in particular — expressed frustration over the lack of coordination with new arrivals. Buses of asylum seekers have arrived in Albany and surrounding cities with little or no warning, making it difficult to coordinate services.

New York City hired a private company, DocGo,⁴⁷ to coordinate services for the arrivals, but Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan and other public officials have harshly criticized its poor performance, which leaves gaps in services.⁴⁸ For example, a local law in the Albany suburb of Colonie does not allow individuals to stay in hotels — the current housing for many new arrivals — for more than 28 consecutive days, but asylum seekers have no other housing to go to. They also need legal assistance, a gap that existing providers in the area are working to fill.

A serious additional problem is the **federal requirement that asylum seekers wait 180 days for employment authorization, which forces them to spend six months in limbo, unable to work legally and earn income.** This puts them in an even more vulnerable position and at high risk for exploitation. Furthermore, new arrivals may not be aware that if they entered the country via the CBP One app (a free mobile app that serves as a portal to various CBP services), they are eligible to apply for work authorization immediately.

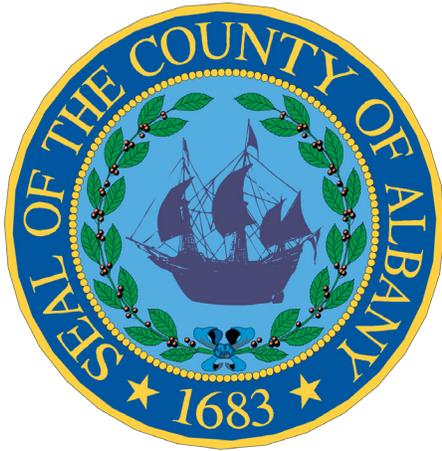
Another major challenge for Albany is its lack of an immigration court. Immigrants must travel five hours across the state to Buffalo to attend their hearings. Mayor Sheehan has indicated that conducting hearings remotely or placing an immigration judge in Albany or Utica (approximately 1.5 hours from Albany) would be invaluable.

45 Kenneth C. Crowe II, “Albany expects more asylum-seekers to arrive Monday night,” Times Union, May 29, 2023, <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/albany-receives-first-asylum-seekers-new-york-city-18124573.php>.

46 Dave Lucas, “Albany mayor, county executive blast DocGo, New York City’s migrant services contractor,” WAMC Northeast Public Radio, August 8, 2023, <https://www.wamc.org/news/2023-08-08/albany-mayor-county-executive-blast-docgo-new-york-citys-migrant-services-contractor>.

47 DocGo began as a medical services company, providing medical care including mobile health care, medical transportation, and remote patient monitoring/chronic disease management. It has now expanded into logistical operations to transport, house, feed, and care for of asylum seekers. See: Bobby Caina Calvin, “Caught in a lie, CEO of embattled firm caring for NYC migrants resigns,” Associated Press, September 16, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/docgo-anthony-capone-resignation-fa88c77d4bda49622247c1d0a9128b64>.

48 Lucas.



“Law enforcement needs to be more culturally aware when dealing with immigrants, especially non-citizens. Law enforcement needs to understand that their interaction could affect immigration status down the road. Some things police ask will cause concern or result in fear from immigrants, impacting their participation.”

Evelyn Kinnah

Director, Albany Regional Immigration Assistance Center

Non-profit service providers say they need more funding to assist asylum seekers, citing the strain on existing resources.⁴⁹ Similarly, government entities including Albany’s Department of Mental Health and Department for Children, Youth and Families anticipate significant challenges in areas such as language access and staffing to meet the community’s needs.

Housing is a huge concern, meeting attendees explained; if this basic need is not met, asylum seekers may resort to activities such as panhandling to try to earn enough income for shelter. Panhandling can be a risky activity, putting asylum seekers at even greater risk of victimization.

Attendees agreed that the **asylum seekers are far likelier to become victims of crime than perpetrators**. Notably, calls for service to the hotels where asylum seekers are staying have gone down by 50 percent since their arrival.

Promising Practices

As a sanctuary or welcoming city, Albany assures asylum seekers and other immigrants that Albany Police Department (APD) does not conduct immigration enforcement activities. This policy helps build a trusting connection. Other successful approaches to improving communication and trust with the migrant community include:

- **Refugee liaisons.** One of the first things APD did upon learning that asylum seekers would begin arriving was revive its refugee liaison unit, which had gone dormant. It has since grown from two members to over half a dozen. This unit is key to building trusting relationships with asylum seekers and overcoming the mistrust rooted in negative experiences with police in their home countries. Liaisons also educate asylum seekers on how to stay safe in the community and cultural norms to be aware of.
- **Community officers.** APD has a very effective Community Officer program. Community officers walk the streets and get to know the neighborhood; the agency has seen this type of police presence and engagement make a difference in crime rates.

⁴⁹ Daniel Parra, “As relocated asylum seekers adjust to life in Albany, advocates call for more resources,” CityLimits, June 13, 2023, <https://citylimits.org/2023/06/13/as-relocated-asylum-seekers-adjust-to-life-in-albany-advocates-call-for-more-resources/>.

- **Language instruction.** The Albany city school district has gone from having roughly 300 English language learners to over 1,200 over the course of six years; 47 different languages are now spoken in the schools. An important city resource is the Albany International Center, which gives specialized instruction in English to around 500 students who are new immigrants or refugees; the school also collaborates with APD and its bilingual officers when needed.
- **Joint research.** APD and the mayor's office are collaborating with the University of Albany on a project in which students will study immigration issues in the city. This research will inform Albany PD's efforts to reach and assist immigrants in the community.

Training and Resource Needs

Meeting participants identified **translation services and cultural competency training as the primary needs for law enforcement and their partners to build trusting relationships with immigrant communities.**

Albany has a limited number of bilingual or trilingual officers and the nearby city of Rotterdam, which has also received asylum seekers, has none. Overtaxed non-profit service providers are not available to assist law enforcement with this issue.

In addition to the need for cultural competency training, stakeholders argued that **when trusted service providers with well-established roles in the community help make the introduction to law enforcement, the conversations are much more productive.** For example, the nonprofit Capital District Latinos invites officers to its English as a second language classes to interact with individuals in the community. More such introductions would help law enforcement build trusting relationships.

More funding is also a priority, as much of the current funding is going to DocGo rather than service providers in and around Albany. (In September 2023 the New York City Comptroller rejected the city's contract with DocGo, citing problems with its work, and launched an audit of the organization.) Organizations such as the New York Immigration Coalition, Capital Region and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Albany desperately need funding to serve the arriving asylum seekers.





Conclusion: Framework to Improve Trust and Communication with Immigrant Communities

Several themes emerged from PERF’s survey, follow-up interviews, and regional meetings. One is the **critical importance of building trusting relationships with immigrants, especially new arrivals**. Building trust with the public as a whole is a top priority for law enforcement, but building trust specifically with immigrant communities poses unique challenges. Here the primary task for police is not to repair past harms but instead to be culturally sensitive and approach immigrants with the knowledge that bad experiences in their home countries often affect their view of law enforcement in the U.S.

Lack of trust in police often leads to underreporting of crime and makes immigrants more vulnerable to victimization. Building trusting relationships with immigrant communities can therefore yield benefits such as improved crime reporting, more comprehensive investigations, and ultimately safer communities.

A related theme emerging from our research is the **need to improve communication between police and immigrant communities**. They have much they can teach each other. Police can help immigrants understand U.S. laws, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the different roles played by federal versus local law enforcement. Immigrants can help police understand their culture, experiences in their home country, and challenges building new lives in the U.S.

A third theme from our research — one we heard stressed throughout this project — is the **value of building the right kinds of partnerships**. Police collaboration with non-governmental organizations, such as social service providers and refugee assistance groups, can fill resource gaps and act as a conduit for engagement and building trust. Conversely, we heard that police interaction with federal immigration authorities (or the mistaken belief that local police are enforcing federal immigration law) can undermine trust with immigrant communities, though the Tucson Police Department’s experience with CBP “street releases” shows that collaboration can be beneficial in some cases.

This report describes many programs and strategies that agencies have adopted to connect with immigrant communities. Eleven of the most promising practices are:

1. **Community officers.** Officers in specialized units or programs, often coming from immigrant communities themselves, can better connect to the communities they serve. These officers walk the streets and immerse themselves in the culture of these neighborhoods, talking to business owners and residents and hearing their concerns. These officers often become role models who can lead young people to choose a career in policing.
2. **Refugee liaisons.** Especially for communities with significant numbers of newly arriving refugees, refugee liaisons can build trusting relationships with asylum seekers and help them adjust to life in the U.S., including its laws and cultural norms.
3. **Hiring immigrants and refugees as officers.** Hiring these individuals, including non-U.S. citizens legally permitted to work (such as those with DACA status), as police officers has numerous potential benefits. These include addressing the recruitment shortfall, filling important force needs to implement community policing initiatives, and expanding the number of multilingual officers.
4. **Cultural awareness for officers.** Helping officers better understand immigrant communities can foster trusting relationships. Especially valuable are cultural immersion programs, through which officers talk to community members, attend community events, and in other ways try to see the world through the eyes of the people they will serve and protect. Departments could also train officers on general issues related to immigration, such as the differences among immigrants, migrants, and refugees, the asylum process, and passport and work visa requirements.
5. **Pre-academy training.** Having police recruits spend time in immigrant communities before they begin training at the police academy, an approach pioneered by Seattle Police Department's "Before the Badge" program, lays the foundation for officers to build understanding and trust with those communities.
6. **Language services.** The ability to communicate with immigrant communities, either directly or through interpretation, is essential both in emergency situations and during everyday community outreach. Officers can utilize existing language skills in bilingual units, learn new language skills through introductory training, and leverage other community resources for translation and interpretation services.



7. **Youth programs.** Engaging immigrant youth — through athletic activities, reading to younger kids, or in other ways — can build mutual trust and respect, which can also spread to older generations. These relationships can also help keep young people from joining gangs and becoming involved in criminal activity.
8. **Community academies.** These provide immigrants with a behind-the-scenes look at their local police department, including its policies and procedures and the daily activities of its officers. Conducting these academies in multiple languages provides greater access to the immigrant community.
9. **Informational workshops and publications.** Police can provide immigrants with information such as contacts for local services, how to use 911, U.S. laws in areas such as driving and domestic violence, protecting against fraud and scams, and the department’s policies on asking about immigration status.
10. **Driver’s licenses or ID cards for non-citizens.** Many jurisdictions have adopted this approach, which benefits both immigrants and law enforcement by providing a legal pathway for immigrants to conduct basic activities such as driving and working. (For more information, see PERF’s 2021 report, “Community-Based Identification Cards Give Immigrants a Sense of Belonging and Trust in Local Police.”)⁵⁰
11. **Partnerships with trusted messengers.** Established groups in immigrant communities — chambers of commerce, churches, and schools, for example — and business owners can amplify messages from local law enforcement and help counteract negative national narratives about immigration or police. In addition, building a strong relationship with the local media, particularly Spanish-language media, is a powerful way to reach local immigrants.

Lack of trust has created strained relationships between police officers and the immigrant communities they serve, leading to unreported crime and increased or repeated victimizations among immigrants. While building trust with immigrant communities is a difficult challenge for many police agencies, it is essential to advancing law enforcement’s core mission of providing public safety.

50 Police Executive Research Forum, “Community-Based Identification Cards Give Immigrants a Sense of Belonging and Trust in Local Police,” June 2021, <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/CommunityBasedID.pdf>.



Appendix A: Survey and Follow-up Interview Instruments

Survey on Police-Immigrant Community Relations

It is important for police to have strong relationships with the communities they serve. Trust between officers and community members builds legitimacy for the department, which can improve crime prevention and the ability to solve crimes when they do occur. Forming trusting relationships between police and the immigrant communities in their jurisdictions is complicated by national immigration enforcement initiatives and, at times, state laws that instill fear among immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented.

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) is conducting a survey of its members to determine their needs and priorities in order to successfully engage and build trust with immigrant communities. This survey aims to evaluate the current state of the field with respect to police-immigrant community relations and how recent action on immigration at the federal level has affected public safety at the local level.

Survey questions are divided into several topic areas. This survey is intended to gather information related to work with all immigrant populations, not just those that are undocumented or seeking asylum. The following survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will be able to save your work and return to complete the survey at any time via the link provided. This feature also allows you to forward the survey to other people in your agency for assistance. Specific responses, including quotes, will not be attributed to you in any public facing documents without your express permission. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact PERF Senior Associate Bailey Maryfield (bmaryfield@policeforum.org). We ask you to complete your survey response by February 17th. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey—your answers are extremely valuable!

Sincerely,

Chuck Wexler

Needs and Priorities

1. In the next year, what are your department's priorities regarding relationships with immigrants? Please select the top two priorities.
 - Communicating the department's role in enforcement of federal immigration laws
 - Educating/training officers on the immigrant populations in the jurisdiction
 - Recruiting immigrants for sworn/civilian positions in the department
 - Improving crime reporting among immigrant populations
 - Crime reduction in immigrant communities
 - Community education (e.g., how to use 911)
 - Victim/witness outreach
 - Language access improvements
 - General community outreach (e.g., Town Hall meetings)
 - Youth engagement (e.g., Police Explorers)
 - Other (please describe)

2. What is the biggest challenge (e.g., state laws or local ordinances, funding, effective engagement) your department is facing in working to engage and build trust with immigrant communities?
[open textbox]

3. What training or resources does your department need to better facilitate building relationships and trust with immigrant populations?
[open textbox]

4. Please provide any recommendations you have for how PERF can play a role in immigration issues.
[open textbox]

Public Safety Concerns

5. Has your jurisdiction experienced an increase in refugee arrivals? Refugees differ from immigrants in that refugees have been forced to flee their homes because of war, violence, or persecution, often without warning. If you are unable to distinguish between refugee and immigrant arrivals, please mark "Unsure."
 - Yes [PROCEED TO Q6]
 - No [PROCEED TO Q7]
 - Unsure (please describe) [PROCEED TO Q7]

6. What challenges, if any, has this created for your department?
[open textbox]

7. Has your jurisdiction experienced any measurable crime increases in the immigrant community (e.g., increases in domestic violence within immigrant populations) within the last three years?
- Yes [PROCEED TO Q8]
 - No [PROCEED TO Q9]
 - Unsure (please describe) [PROCEED TO Q9]
8. Please explain what crimes have increased in your immigrant community and what efforts your department has taken in response.
- [open textbox]

Engaging the Immigrant Community

9. Does your city, county, or state have an entity that manages programs and efforts aimed at engaging the local immigrant and refugee populations (e.g., Office of International and Immigrant Affairs)?
- Yes [PROCEED TO Q10]
 - No [PROCEED TO Q11]
 - Unsure [PROCEED TO Q11]
10. Is your department meaningfully engaged with the entity that manages programs and efforts aimed at engaging the local immigrant and refugee populations?
- Yes, we meet proactively.
 - Yes, but we only meet as required.
 - No, we are not actively engaged.
11. Does your department have an immigrant and/or refugee liaison (sometimes called cultural diversity liaison)?
- Yes
 - No
12. Are officers in your department provided training on the different cultures in the community they serve (e.g., cultural competency training)?
- Yes [PROCEED TO Q13]
 - No [PROCEED TO Q14]
13. Are cultural trainings general or specific to immigrant populations in your jurisdiction?
- General
 - Specific to immigrant populations in our jurisdiction
 - Unsure
14. Does your department have a language access plan?
- Yes [PROCEED TO Q15]

- No [PROCEED TO Q16]
- Unsure [PROCEED TO Q16]

15. Please briefly describe your department's language access plan and how it is working for you.
[open textbox]

Building Trust

16. Does your department have a policy in place prohibiting officers from asking about the immigration status of suspects, victims, and/or witnesses?
 Yes [PROCEED TO Q17]
 No [PROCEED TO Q19]

17. Please briefly explain this policy.
[open textbox]

18. How is the policy prohibiting officers from asking about the immigration status of suspects, victims, and/or witnesses communicated to the public?
[open textbox]

19. Does your department provide educational programs to the immigrant community (e.g., how to use 911, differences in law enforcement compared to their home countries)?
 Yes [PROCEED TO Q20]
 No [PROCEED TO Q21]

20. Please briefly describe the educational programs your department provides for the immigrant community.
[open textbox]

21. Does your department coordinate with non-governmental organizations (e.g., churches, victim advocacy groups, immigration attorneys) to help build trust with the immigrant population? If so, please briefly describe the partners and your most recent work with them.
[open textbox]

Communication with Federal Immigration Authorities

22. Has your state or city enacted legislation governing interactions between local police officers and immigrants, particularly in relation to working with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)?
- Yes, the legislation limits the ability of local law enforcement to work with CBP/ICE.
 - Yes, the legislation expands local police cooperation with CBP/ICE.
 - Yes, the legislation mandates local police cooperation with CBP/ICE.
 - No, legislation of this kind does not exist.

Demographics

23. Please indicate the state, province, or territory where your agency is located.

[dropdown menu of U.S. states and territories and Canadian provinces including a “More than one” option]

24. Please indicate your agency type.

- Local/municipal
- Sheriff’s Office
- State Police/Highway Patrol
- Special jurisdiction (e.g., university, natural resources, airport/rail/harbor, etc.)
- Other (please describe)

25. Please indicate your agency size.

- Fewer than 10 full-time sworn personnel
- 10-24 full-time sworn personnel
- 25-99 full-time sworn personnel
- 100-499 full-time sworn personnel
- 500 or more full-time sworn personnel

26. Please indicate the population of your agency’s jurisdiction.

- Less than 2,500
- 2,500-9,999
- 10,000-24,999
- 25,000-49,999
- 50,000-99,999
- 100,000-249,999
- 250,000-499,999
- 500,000-999,999
- 1,000,000 or more

27. Using these survey responses, PERF will examine the way law enforcement agencies are engaging and building trust with immigrant communities; PERF will also examine various law enforcement agencies' needs, priorities, and local public safety concerns in light of federal immigration action. But surveys are broad and cannot cover every question and unique situation. Would you be willing to share more of your insights via an interview?

Yes [PROCEED TO Q28]

No [END]

28. Please provide the best agency contact information for a follow-up interview.

[open textbox]

[END]

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey!

Survey on Police-Immigrant Community Relations: Follow-Up Interviews

Thank you again for completing the PERF Survey on Police-Immigrant Community Relations. We have prepared several interview questions to follow-up on your responses. This interview will help us better understand how your department engages the immigrant communities in your jurisdiction along with any concerns or resource needs you have.

This interview should take approximately 30 minutes.

As with your survey responses, your interview responses will remain anonymous and any identifying information will remain internal to the project team. Specific responses, including quotes, will not be attributed to you in any public facing documents without your express permission.

1. You mentioned that [RESPONSE] were the training or resources your department needs to better facilitate building relationships and trust with immigrant populations.
 - a. Can you elaborate more on that?
 - b. Can you tell me about any innovative activities you are already engaged in?
2. You mentioned that [RESPONSE] was the biggest challenge you are facing in working to engage and build trust with immigrant communities.
 - a. Can you elaborate more on that?
3. [If indicated experienced crime increases in the immigrant community within the last three years]. You indicated that your jurisdiction experienced crime increases in the immigrant community within the last three years.
 - a. Did you make any directed efforts to address it? If yes, were they successful?
 - b. If no, what resources would have helped or could help in the future?
4. [If indicated have an entity that manages programs and efforts toward the local immigrant and refugee populations in city, county, or state]. You indicated that your city, county, or state has an entity that manages programs and efforts toward the local immigrant and refugee populations.
 - a. Can you please describe anything your department is collaborating with them on?
 - b. Are there any areas for improvement concerning your relationship with this entity?
5. Does your department have an advisory board focused on cultural diversity in your jurisdiction? [If yes, ask questions below].
 - a. Does this advisory board have a clear and agreed-upon charter defining its authority, mission, goals, and procedures?
 - b. Have there been any recent initiatives undertaken by this board in conjunction with your department?
 - i. If yes, can you describe them?
 - c. Are there any areas for improvement concerning your relationship with the board?
6. [If indicated have an immigrant and/or refugee liaison]. You indicated that your department has an immigrant and/or refugee liaison.
 - a. Is this a full-time or part-time role?
 - b. Does the liaison engage in any outreach activities specifically directed at undocumented immigrants or refugees?
 - i. If yes, what do those look like?

- c. Can you please describe any positive effects following the creation of this role?
7. Are there immigrant populations in your community that have been particularly difficult to engage?
 - a. [Whether response was yes or no]. Why do you think that is?
 - b. Have you identified any methods that work to build relationships and gain trust?
8. [If indicated officers in the department are provided training on the different cultures in the community they serve]. You indicated that officers in your department are provided training on the different cultures in the community they serve.
 - a. How have the cultural competency trainings been received by your department?
 - b. Do officers seem to find them valuable?
 - c. Do officers learn about the difference between migrants, refugees, and immigrants?
 - d. Do officers learn the reasons for immigration, particularly for refugees?
 - e. What's missing from these trainings?
9. What, if any, challenges with language access are you experiencing?
10. Can you talk about the value of coordinating with the non-governmental organizations you described?
 - a. Does the immigrant community feel more comfortable reporting crime as a result?
11. How are you measuring progress with engaging and building trust with immigrant communities?
12. How can communication with federal immigration authorities be improved?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix B: Regional Meetings Interview Instruments

Opening:

Introductions: Interviewers, what PERF is about.

What the meeting will be about: (PERF) in hosting 3 regional meeting, the first will be in Seattle, they will focus on how local law enforcement currently coordinates with various entities to engage and build trust with immigrant and refugee communities and how these partnerships can be enhanced and improved.

Recording the interview: Let the interviewee know we would like to record the interview to aid in preparing for the meeting – and will not use anything from the recording without their permission – ask for consent to record.

Regional Meetings Interview Questions

Law Enforcement

1. What challenges are you as police leaders facing when it comes to immigration?
 - a. What challenges are you facing in terms of building trust with immigrant communities?
 - b. What are some success stories in engaging immigrants?
 - c. Are there immigrant populations in your community that have been particularly difficult to engage?
 - d. Does your department have any recruitment efforts focused on the community's immigrant population?
 - e. What have you done to increase crime reporting from immigrant communities?
2. Does your department have active communication with CBP and or ICE officials in your jurisdiction?
 - a. Is anything missing from this coordination?
3. ICE has been more focused on enforcement and removal of aggravated violent felons in recent years rather than all noncitizens—have there been any positive or adverse effects of this focused enforcement seen at the local level?
4. CBP has experienced drastic increases in monthly encounters along the southwest border—how, if at all, has this affected local law enforcement?

State/Local Government

1. Does your organization regularly speak with local law enforcement to share ideas/concerns?
 - a. Does your organization ever invite law enforcement to outreach activities?
 - b. Have you ever provided training or information to law enforcement on immigrant populations?
 - c. What could be done to improve coordination/communication?
2. What fears or frustrations do immigrants express to you in terms of interacting with law enforcement?
 - a. How can law enforcement work with organizations like yours to reduce this fear or frustration?
3. What more could law enforcement be doing to reach out to immigrants, particularly to build trust?
4. What is the biggest challenge you see that immigrants are facing today?

Social Services

1. Please briefly describe your organization and any services you provide to the immigrant population in your community?
2. Does your organization regularly speak with local law enforcement to share ideas/concerns?
 - a. Does your organization ever invite law enforcement to outreach activities?

- b. Have you ever provided training or information to law enforcement on the immigrant populations in your community?
 - c. What could be done to improve coordination/communication?
3. What fears or frustrations do immigrants express to you in terms of interacting with law enforcement?
 - a. How can law enforcement work with organizations like yours to reduce this fear or frustration?
4. What more could law enforcement be doing to reach out to immigrants, particularly to build trust?

Immigrant Community Members

1. Please, tell us a little bit about yourself, where you're from and how long you've lived in Seattle?
2. How do you view law enforcement in your community?
 - a. What has shaped this view?
 - b. What could law enforcement do to improve this view?
3. Do you hesitate to engage with law enforcement when you need assistance? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever attended a community event where law enforcement was – were they conducting out-reach?
 - a. If yes, what was your impression?
 - b. If no, have you ever been aware of any events like these taking place?
5. What can law enforcement do to make you feel safer in your community?

Appendix C: Table of Survey Results

Table 2: Agency Region.

Region	Percentage of Responses (n=78)
West	21%
Midwest	18%
South	41%
Northeast	18%
Territory	0%
Canada	3%

Table 3: Agency Size.

Agency Size	Percentage of Responses (n=78)
Fewer than 10 full-time sworn personnel	1%
10-24 full-time sworn personnel	9%
25-99 full-time sworn personnel	35%
100-499 full-time sworn personnel	36%
500 or more full-time sworn personnel	19%

Table 4: Population of Agency's Jurisdiction.

Population of Jurisdiction	Percentage of Responses (n=78)
Less than 2,500	1%
2,500-9,999	5%
10,000-24,999	12%
25,000-49,999	21%
50,000-99,999	19%
100,000-249,999	18%
250,000-499,999	10%
500,000-999,999	10%
1,000,000 or more	4%

Table 5: Responses to “In the next year, what are your department’s priorities regarding relationships with immigrants? Please select the top two priorities.”

Priority	Percentage of Responses (n=85)
Communicating the department’s role in enforcement of federal immigration laws	11%
Educating/training officers on the immigrant populations in the jurisdiction	20%
Recruiting immigrants for sworn/civilian positions in the department	13%
Improving crime reporting among immigrant populations	16%
Crime reduction in immigrant communities	18%
Community education (e.g., how to use 911)	14%
Victim/witness outreach	14%
Language access improvements	14%
General community outreach (e.g., Town Hall meetings)	52%
Youth engagement (e.g., Police Explorers)	22%
Other	6%

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents made two selections. Percentages represent the proportion of respondents who made that selection.

Table 6: Responses to “Does your department have an immigrant and/or refugee liaison (sometimes called cultural diversity liaison)?” by Agency Size.

Agency Size	Immigrant and/or Refugee Liaison (n=84)
	Yes
Fewer than 10 full-time sworn personnel	0%
10-24 full-time sworn personnel	14%
25-99 full-time sworn personnel	11%
100-499 full-time sworn personnel	25%
500 or more full-time sworn personnel	80%

Table 7: Responses to “Has your state or city enacted legislation governing interactions between local police officers and immigrants?”

Legislation Governing Interactions with Immigrants	Percentage of Responses (n=80)
Yes, the legislation limits the ability of local law enforcement to work with CBP/ICE.	34%
Yes, the legislation expands local police cooperation with CBP/ICE.	10%
Yes, the legislation mandates local police cooperation with CBP/ICE.	8%
No, legislation of this kind does not exist.	49%

Appendix D: Regional Meetings Attendees

Seattle Regional Meeting Attendees

Law Enforcement

- Seattle Police Department – Former Chief Adrian Diaz, members of his executive staff, and members of several units that interact directly with immigrants and refugees.
- King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall and members of her office.

Government

- Mayor's Office – Monisha Harrell, Senior Deputy Mayor
- Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs – Hamdi Mohamed, Director
- Community Police Commission – Felicia Cross, Community Engagement Director and Mergitu Argo

Service Providers

- International Rescue Committee – Angie Muthee and Emmanuel Ndayisenga
- Northwest Immigration Rights – Malou Chavez, Deputy Director
- El Centro de la Raza – Miguel Maestas
- Refugee Women's Alliance – Seth Walker
- Consejo Counseling and Referral Service – Mario Paredes, Executive Director; Jovvana Herrera; Murry Vasquez; Nancy Arreguin
- Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence – Amarinthia Torres
- Casa Latina – Jessica E. Salvador, Executive Director
- Sea Mar – Jesus Sanchez

Faith-Based Services

- Catholic Community Services – Catholic Immigration Legal Services Program – Abdi Jama, Director

Community Representatives

- Filipino Community of Seattle – Community Leader Emma Catague
- Little Saigon – Community Leader Quynh Pham

Tucson Regional Meeting Attendees

Law Enforcement

- Tucson Police Department – Chief Chad Kasmar and 12 TPD Sworn and Professional Staff

Service Providers

- Hasanaat (Muslim Refugee Services) – Mahmoud Alabagi, Executive Director
- International Rescue Committee – Katrina Martinez, Employment Empowerment Manager; Ajmeer Safi, Community Engagement Coordinator; Melanie Reyes, Community Engagement Coordinator; Lucinda Stokes-Williams, Resettlement Manager; and Joelle Zuberi, Client & Community Engagement Coordinator
- Iskashitaa Refugee Network (Muslim Refugee Services) – Barbara Eiswerth, Executive Director
- Owl & Panther (Refugee Services) – Samuel Farrow and Darin Jin

Faith-Based Services

- Catholic Community Services: Migration & Refugee Services – Anna Burke, Migration and Refugee Services Director and Libia Keeme, Administrative Assistant
- Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest – Precious Weah and Melissa Bryant
- Tucson Refugee Ministry – Jennifer Tompkins, Executive Director and Claudia Levin, Community Outreach Director

Other

- Immigration Attorney – Mo Goldman, Goldman & Goldman
- Pima Community College – Sara Haghighi, Refugee Education Program Manager

Albany Regional Meeting Attendees

Law Enforcement

- Albany Police Department – Chief Eric Hawkins and PIO Megan Craft
- Seattle Police Department – Rebecca Boatright, General Counsel and Executive Director of Analytics and Research
- Colonie Police Department – Deputy Chief Robert Winn
- Rotterdam Police Department – Chief Michael Brown

Government

- Mayor’s Office – Mayor Kathy Sheehan
- City School District of Albany – Tasha Anderson, Assistant Principal and Tom Giglio, Director of ENL and Refugee Services
- Albany County Department for Children, Youth and Families – Moira Manning, Commissioner
- Albany County Department of Mental Health – Stephen Giordano, Commissioner
- Albany Regional Immigration Assistance Center – Evelyn A. Kinnah, Director; Bakary Janneh, Deputy Director; and Joseph Bonarrigo, Policy Analyst

Service Providers

- International Rescue Committee – Suzan Al Shammari, Community Engagement Officer and Milagros Cruz, Community Relations Officer
- Capital Region for the New York Immigration Coalition – Angela Castrillo-Vilches, Manager of Member Engagement
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Albany – David Sussman, Executive Director
- Immigration Law Center, Justice Center at Albany Law School – Lauren DesRosiers, Senior Staff Attorney
- Columbia County Sanctuary Movement – Ivy Hest, Co-Executive Director
- Refugee Roundtable of the Capital Region – Dahlia Herring, Co-chair
- West Hill Refugee Welcome Center – Tim Doherty, Executive Director

Appendix E: PERF and Its Work on Immigration-Related Issues

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 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.

For the past 15 years, PERF has worked on initiatives related to law enforcement and immigration. Through a partnership with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, PERF has examined community policing in immigrant neighborhoods and refugee outreach; and with support from the Ford Foundation, PERF has explored how to strengthen relationships with immigrant communities and examined migrant deaths at the southern border. PERF's present work under its immigration initiatives is supported by awards from both corporations.

PERF's previous reports on immigration-related issues include:

- [*Community-Based Identification Cards Give Immigrants a Sense of Belonging and Trust in Local Police \(2021\)*](#)
- [*Inventory of Promising Practices and Programs for Immigrant and Refugee Outreach \(2020\)*](#)
- [*Building Trust with Immigrant Communities: Best Practices for Law Enforcement Agencies in Smaller Cities and Towns \(2020\)*](#)
- [*Community Policing in Immigrant Communities: Stories of Success \(2019\)*](#)
- [*Refugee Outreach and Engagement Programs for Police Agencies \(2017\)*](#)
- [*Responding to Migrant Deaths Along the Southwest Border: Lessons from the Field \(2016\)*](#)
- [*Local Police Perspectives on State Immigration Policies \(2014\)*](#)
- [*Voices from Across the Country: Local Law Enforcement Officials Discuss the Challenges of Immigration Enforcement \(2012\)*](#)
- [*Police and Immigration: How Chiefs Are Leading their Communities through the Challenges \(2010\)*](#)
- [*Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Speak Out on Local Immigration Enforcement \(2008\)*](#)



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