



# Two-Generation Approaches for Immigrant Family Advancement

A GETTING-STARTED GUIDE FOR WELCOMING NETWORK MEMBERS

## Background

### WHAT ARE TWO-GENERATION APPROACHES?

*Two-generation approaches are designed to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by providing programs and supports to low-income children and parents from the same household. Two-generation approaches reflect a broad philosophy and tend not to follow a strict definition or formula. Traditionally, human-services funding and services target either children or adults in isolation; they rarely take into account the combined strengths and needs of the whole family across generations. Two-generation efforts seek to expand well-being for the whole family by working across program areas such as early childhood education, workforce development, parenting, financial education, and/or other components of education, training, and health.*

Because a significant number of immigrant and refugee families struggle with economic security, using a two-generation approach to policy development and service delivery for this population is particularly relevant. The unique language and cultural backgrounds of New Americans mean that two-generation supports may need to include elements of English-language learning, cultural competency, cultural orientation, and other initiative attributes in order to be truly relevant.

## HOW ARE TWO-GENERATION APPROACHES BEING USED WITH IMMIGRANT FAMILIES?

While the approach has received greater attention and funding in recent years, research suggests that many immigrant families may not have access to two-generation programs that could be beneficial (Migration Policy Institute, 2016).

To understand more about Welcoming Network members' involvement in two-generation work, Welcoming America surveyed its members in early 2019 to explore the extent to which local government and nonprofit members were aware of, supporting, or actively working with two-generation programs in their communities. Results indicated that while 92% have a specific agenda related to helping immigrant adults advance, only about 50% have a specific policy or program agenda focused on children. In addition, about 70% of respondents have little if any familiarity with the two-generation approach, while nearly 20% of members have some type of connection with two-generation projects locally. A handful of members are actively advancing two-generation programming, such as the examples from Montgomery County, MD, and Seattle, WA, profiled here. Finally, about 90% of respondents indicated Welcoming America could help advance two-generation efforts for immigrant families through avenues such as providing seed grants, connecting members to successful peer programs, and conducting webinars and trainings on the topic. Based on these findings, it appears there is a strong interest among groups leading immigrant inclusion to capitalize on two-generation approaches to strengthen their work.

### EXAMPLES FROM WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

#### Linkages to Learning

##### MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

For more than 25 years, [Linkages to Learning](#) has used a two-generation approach through three tiers of support: student, family and community. An award-winning prevention and intervention initiative through the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Linkages is based in 29 schools across the county, and touches the lives of thousands of families originally from Central America and other parts of the world. Linkages recognizes that many students need significant mental health supports, especially after experiencing the effects of trauma, war, and chronic instability. Linkages' comprehensive approach includes on-site mental health clinicians, family case managers, community-school coordinators, and an emphasis on parent engagement and advocacy. While children receive mental health services, their families also work on goals, which might include areas such as housing, income stability, or transportation. A community-school plan is created biannually to respond to residents' needs, develop deeper community connections, and provide opportunities for parent advocacy.

Families are reassessed every six months for the duration of their participation in services, and data indicate their greatest gains are around employment, income management, transportation, and resident participation. "The families themselves propel the work forward. The Parent Advisory Group members are the best communicators of why the two-generation approach is best."

—*Monica Martin, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services*



## Immigrant Family Institute

### SEATTLE, WA

Seattle’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) leads the [Immigrant Family Institute](#), an effort aimed at helping connect immigrant parents and their teens, and building better relationships with police. After a U.S. Department of Justice investigation found a pattern of excessive use of force, the Seattle Police Department partnered with OIRA to better understand the needs families were facing, especially those from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. They found two major themes from kitchen table conversations: lack of trust in the police and lack of knowledge of city systems. Today, immigrant youth, parents and guardians, and police come together to learn from each other and open up lines of communication. Through small group discussions and dialogues, the Institute uses an intergenerational approach from beginning to end, ensuring the generations learn from each other. Parents learn techniques for relating to their teens in the US, teens’ ties to parents are strengthened and they are less likely to enter the juvenile justice system, and police are able to foster greater community trust and safety. The Institute was created from evidence-based programs that promote youth resiliency, and new innovations were built in to adapt the effort to immigrant families. This includes employing facilitators from immigrant backgrounds and working with interpreters to ensure kids aren’t interpreting for their parents. “Transformational relationships happen in families when both generations are having important experiences together.”

—Cuc Vu, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs



## How to Get Started: Five Tips

For those who are interested in trying to expand two-generation efforts for immigrant families, here are five ways to get started:

### 1. CONVENE

Bring the right people together in your community to build awareness of the two-generation approach and its potential for helping those who are struggling economically. This might include convening policymakers, funders, service providers, families, and/or others with an interest in providing more equitable programming and with the influence to help advance the approach. Convening might also explore ways in which any existing two-generation projects may be extended to engage more immigrant families. Perhaps existing two-generation efforts aren’t successfully engaging immigrant families because of language, cultural, trust, or other accessibility barriers. Learning from immigrant leaders, as well as ethnic-based community organizations that may already serve families, should be a priority. Educating policymakers and providers about the opportunities to partner with immigrant-serving organizations to expand outreach and service provision is critical. Convenings might also bring together immigrant-based service providers who may be serving either adults or children in isolation but through collaboration could be making an even bigger impact on families.

## 2. GATHER COMMUNITY INPUT

To learn more about how immigrant and refugee families can best be supported, gather information and perspectives directly from the community. By using an asset-based approach to mapping resources that already exist in the immigrant community, such as the work already underway with immigrant families through ethnic community-based organizations, existing efforts can be strengthened and grown. Hearing directly from families about what is holding them back now from receiving full support and the types of two-generation efforts that would be most useful to them can help inform new and enhanced work. Small group gatherings in trusted spaces can help you gather the information you need to make informed decisions about how to best move forward with two-generation work.

## 3. SUPPORT LOCAL COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN ADULT- AND CHILD-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

Consider how your assistance—whether financial, in-kind, or technical—can help bring together immigrant-serving organizations that specialize in working with one age group to coordinate with each other so that entire families have an opportunity to be reached with supports. Look for key gaps in services across the generations and begin working to address them together.

## 4. EXPLORE NEW FUNDING OPTIONS

Work to break down the barriers between the traditional silos of adult- and child-focused funding. Share examples of how public and private funders are supporting a more holistic approach to services by providing whole family resources. [Colorado Department of Human Services](#) and [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) are both examples of funder champions of this approach. Meet with public and private funders in your community and share your vision for two-generation work for immigrant families and beyond.

## 5. DOCUMENT AND COMMUNICATE YOUR IMPACT AND SUCCESS

Two-generation programs benefit from robust data collection around the services families receive; information collected on the short, intermediate, and long-term impacts on families; and a storytelling approach that shares real-life examples of family transformation in the community. Help get the story out in your community about how immigrant families are advancing and contributing to a welcoming community.

## Works Cited and More Suggested Reading

Learn more about the keys to successfully tailoring two-generation approaches to meet immigrant families' needs:

Maki Park, Margie McHugh, and Caitlin Katsiaficas. 2016. *Serving Immigrant Families Through Two-Generation Programs*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

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