

# Economic Opportunity and Integration

## Nashville's Hispanic and Business Communities

***Economic Opportunity and Integration: Nashville's  
Hispanic and Business Communities***

**SUPPORTED BY THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION**

**This working paper provides a general background on the Hispanic community in Nashville, Tennessee,—one of what are often referred to as new gateway cities for new immigrants. It documents how businesses, community and religious organizations and the local government are working together to promote immigrants' socioeconomic integration and maximize Hispanic immigrants' contributions in making Nashville a more prosperous city.**

**On August 11, 2009, the Americas Society and Council of the Americas (AS/COA) convened local and national business executives, community leaders, public officials, and others for a meeting in Nashville to share concrete experiences of how to promote Hispanic workforce development and integration. A draft of this paper was presented at that meeting. While our research is comprehensive, it does not claim to document all initiatives throughout the metropolitan area—our primary focus has been on the work of business and the larger community groups.**

**"Hispanic immigrants have played a vital role in our economic prosperity for the last 20 years."**

**-Karl Dean, Mayor of Nashville, TN, in an exclusive interview with AS/COA. August 11, 2009.**

**This is the first in a three-part series of working papers focusing on new gateway cities. The next paper will focus on Omaha, Nebraska, and the following one on Portland, Oregon. Through these working papers, the AS/COA aims to promote greater business attention to how integration programs are beneficial to both business and the community and demonstrate the social and economic contributions of Hispanic immigrants. We thank the National Business Council of this project for their continued support, and in the case of Nashville, our two local partners: the Tennessee Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As of 2008, an estimated 45.5 million Hispanics live in the United States, approximately 15 percent of the total population. Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in the country and the largest minority in 20 of the 50 states. Their collective purchasing power was estimated at \$870 billion in 2008.

The nationwide growth of the Hispanic population and its dispersal to new gateways is exemplified by cities such as Nashville. Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population in the city grew by 424 percent, and between 2000 and 2007 it grew by 78 percent. An estimated 40 percent of the foreign-born population in Nashville is Hispanic/Latino. This growth is explained, in part, by the city's changing economic landscape since the mid-1990s, from a regional economy based on light manufacturing to an urban economy centered on the service sector, and by the growth of internal migration. These two forces created a demand for low-wage labor in the service and construction sectors, which has been filled mainly by Hispanic workers.

"Some business leaders even suggested that the economy and population growth would have faltered if not for the foreign-born workers who took jobs unfilled by Americans."

-Anne Farris, "New Immigrants in New Places", *Carnegie Reporter*, vol. 3, no.3, Fall 2005, p.34.

The Hispanic population is recognized as an engine of economic growth and has been welcomed by a highly developed network of social service providers, philanthropists and business leaders. Yet, as documented in the *Nashville Immigrant Community Assessment Report* (January, 2005), immigrants are at a disadvantage due to language barriers, limited access to education, health services and housing, modest financial literacy and lack of cultural familiarity. This creates impediments to their advancement in the workplace and in the community. Achieving greater integration of Hispanics into the fabric of American society is a public policy imperative with obvious benefits for the corporate bottom line. For employers, more effective integration increases worker loyalty, reduces employee turnover, boosts worker productivity and motivation, thereby increasing businesses' efficiency and competitiveness. Providing the tools for integration also builds social capital, opens opportunities for upward mobility, and increases Hispanics' income and purchasing power, which is injected back into the economy. A more integrated Hispanic population facilitates greater multicultural communication and civic engagement, and reduces social tensions as well as minimizes some of the costs associated with the arrival of new immigrants. The private sector can play a key role in integrating this country's largest pool of immigrants.

The Americas Society and Council of the Americas' *Hispanic Integration Initiative* highlights examples of major U.S. corporations that already offer (or sponsor) these important services. Their programs provide **education, skills development, financial literacy, English-language acquisition**, access to **health care**, and promote **civic participation**. Members of the national business council established as part of this initiative have made a commitment to expand and consolidate these activities. In addition,

the goal of this project is to strengthen synergies between the public and private sector, and to develop joint initiatives that will help immigrants adjust to their new context while contributing to a constructive environment for interaction between the native population and increasingly multiethnically and culturally diverse communities.

## BUSINESS BEST PRACTICES

The *AS/COA Hispanic Integration Initiative* has identified examples of corporations in key sectors of the U.S. economy that promote the integration of the Hispanic population. This background document highlights examples from the Nashville area. Best practices are catalogued by type of activity:

### ● ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TRAINING

In Nashville, the **Loews Vanderbilt Hotel, The Rogers Group, Hospital Corporation of America, Tyson Foods, Shoney's and Gaylord Entertainment** provide **English-language training** at the workplace or off-site as a way to foster a better work environment, reduce social tensions at the workplace and in the community, and enable their businesses to provide better services and increase productivity. In turn, **Sun Trust Bank, Bank of America, Franklin National Bank and Union Planters** have provided Spanish-language training and cultural awareness programs for their employees to promote better communication and understanding of the Hispanic community. Noteworthy examples of other companies in the United States that promote language training for employees are **Miller and Long, Tecta America Corporation, Western Union, Northrop Grumman, Norsan Group, Chick-Fil-A and Shaw Industries.**

"Nashville is the only community I know in the United States where the Chamber of Commerce and the business community have stepped up and said 'Let's make this work'."

*-Frank Sharry, former Director of the National Immigration Forum, quoted in Anne Farris, "New Immigrants in New Places", Carnegie Reporter, vol. 3, no.3, Fall 2005, p.36.*

### ● FINANCIAL LITERACY

**Southeast Financial Credit Union, Sun Trust Bank and Reliant Bank** are among some of the financial institutions working to improve Hispanics' financial literacy. Through initiatives that facilitate **access to banking services, credit, mortgages and loans**, they provide Hispanics with increased opportunities for economic and social integration. The **Loews Vanderbilt Hotel** in Nashville, in partnership with Bank of America and Conexión Américas has offered financial literacy classes on banking needs, tax preparation and information to help employees get on track to home ownership. **Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Citizens Home Loan, Inc., Wachovia Corporation, and Western Union** are other companies doing this at the national level.

### ● SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

**Job training, leadership development and skills development** provide Hispanics with increased opportunities to perform well and to have access to better jobs and wages. With the support of companies such as **Nissan North America, Inc., EDS**

**Foundation, Dollar General and State Farm**, among others, **Conexión Américas**, one of the leading community groups serving Hispanics in Nashville, offers specialized training and programs to strengthen leadership and entrepreneurship among this population, including access to housing and small-business education. **Northrop Grumman, Georgia Power, Manpower, Intercontinental Hotels Group**, and **Western Union** are among other companies in the U.S. that focus on the development of life and work skills among Hispanic workers.

- **ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE**

Through Spanish-language training, bilingual health care materials and information campaigns directed specifically to Hispanics, **Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), The Hispanic Solution, LLC** and a number of hospitals and clinics in Nashville such as **Saint Thomas Family Health Center South** and **Médicos para la Familia** are addressing some of the limitations in **access to health care** resulting from language and cultural barriers. At the national level, **Johnson & Johnson** and **Pfizer** are also reaching out to Hispanic customers, as is **Ochsner Health Systems** in New Orleans. Local media are also key partners in efforts to provide information in Spanish to the Hispanic community about health, employment and other relevant issues.

- **CIVIC PARTICIPATION**

Information about **citizenship** and voting rights is a way to encourage Hispanics' political participation, promote civic values, and reinforce immigrants' desire and commitment to root themselves in the fabric of their community. **La Sabrosita** (a Spanish-language AM radio station), **La Mejor** (a bilingual local radio station), the newspapers **El Crucero, Latino News, La Campana**, and the United Methodist Church's Spanish-language magazine, **El Intérprete**, focus part of their content on creating awareness about issues related to the Hispanic community and also provide these groups with useful information regarding naturalization, voter registration and other issues. Nationally, **V-Me TV, Telemundo, mun2** and **Univision** are working on initiatives related to Hispanic civic participation.

## I. Introduction

As a nation of immigrants, the United States has been defined by the contributions of different ethnic groups to building culturally diverse communities and enriching the American society through complementary abilities. The integration of immigrants, defined as their full participation in and commitment to the host society and their exercise of corresponding rights and obligations, can be measured by their socioeconomic and political participation, their upward mobility and their ability to communicate in English. However, integration is not an automatic process; it is developed through generations and shaped by many factors including the characteristics of the immigrants as well as the contexts of the country and communities where they settle. Both immigrant groups and the host society participate in the process of integration, which involves institutions at the federal and state levels, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and individuals, both the native population and the immigrant groups.

"...smaller cities like Nashville are discovering that public-private partnerships are vital to integrating the increasing numbers of immigrants."

-Demetrious Papademetriou,,  
President of the Migration  
Policy Institute, quoted in Anne  
Farris, "New Immigrants in  
New Places", *Carnegie  
Reporter*, vol. 3, no.3, Fall  
2005, p.35.

Civil society has historically played a key role in the integration of immigrants in the absence of a formal federal policy. The U.S. government offers just a few programs that provide health services, education or English-language training. Educators, health providers, librarians, immigrant advocates, civil rights organizations, NGOs, religious leaders, unions, employers, and philanthropic institutions have created mechanisms to accommodate recent immigrants and facilitate their adaptation. At the same time, they enable the native population (including ethnic groups from previous waves of immigration) to understand and accept new immigrants by creating spaces for positive interaction. As part of a two-way process, immigrants must seek to integrate, as most want to, but they must also be afforded feasible ways to do so. The private sector can help create such channels, and become such institutions of integration, just as they did during the last major wave of immigration in the early twentieth century.

In this context, the Americas Society and Council of the Americas believe that the public and private sectors should promote dialogue and address the challenge of

integrating the Hispanic\* population in the United States—a reality that will remain regardless of the political debate over immigration reform. We recognize the key role that businesses and employers play in promoting cohesion and integration among the Hispanic workforce and the contributions that this workforce makes to the U.S. economy. Most immigrants spend a great portion of their time at the workplace and this is one of the main arenas where they interact with other native or immigrant groups, use English, and have the opportunity to learn and take advantage of potential opportunities for upward mobility. Successful integration at the workplace benefits immigrants, fellow workers, employers, communities, and the overall economy and society. Hispanic immigrants make significant contributions now, but these could be increased by facilitating their further integration into American society.

In light of this fact, the *Hispanic Integration Initiative* draws attention to the practices developed by a number of businesses across the country to promote the integration of their Hispanic workforces or of the Hispanic consumer base. **Independently, or in partnership with community organizations, some major U.S. corporations offer (or sponsor) services such as English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, skills development, tools to build financial literacy and access to credit and the housing market, scholarships for adult or child education programs, health care workshops, information about naturalization processes and civic participation, and other types of training.** These businesses aim to encourage and facilitate the integration of their foreign-born employees and their families into the communities they live and work in. Their initiatives serve as significant examples of how the public and private sectors can effectively address the challenge of integration, both by aiding immigrants in adapting to their new context and by facilitating the native population's adjustment to interacting with multiethnic and culturally diverse groups.

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\* The U.S. Census Bureau uses the terms Hispanic and Latino interchangeably to identify persons who indicate that their origin is Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central or South American, or some other Spanish origin, regardless of race.

## II. Nashville as a New Gateway for Hispanic Immigrants<sup>1</sup>

Nashville has a history of immigration dating back to the nineteenth century. However, the most significant growth of the foreign-born population has taken place since the early 1980s when the federal government selected the city as one of the main sites for its refugee resettlement programs. As a result, the city has significant concentrations of residents from the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

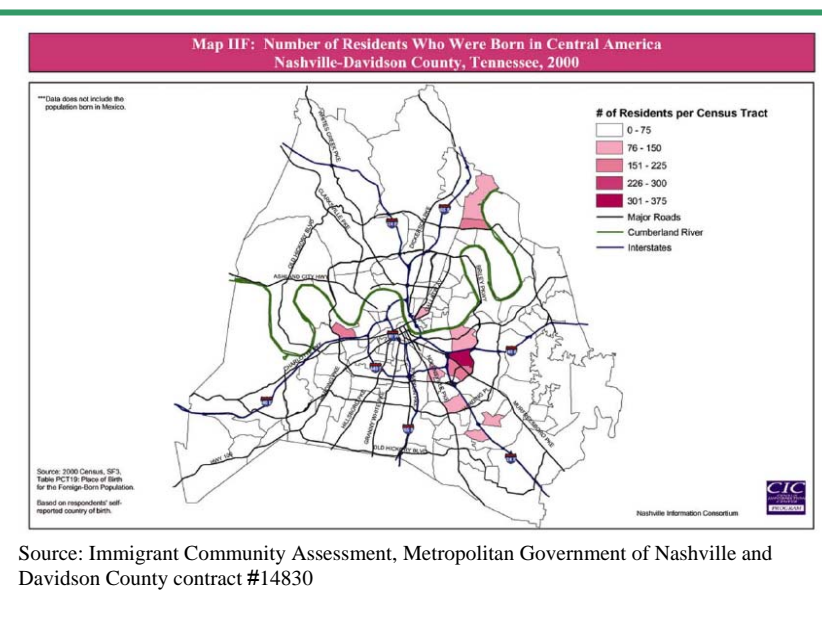
Added to this, since the mid-1990s, the city's economic landscape has changed from a regional economy based on light manufacturing to an urban economy centered on the service sector, which has created a demand for low-wage labor. It has also experienced a growth of internal migration as a result of Nashville's changing public image as a "livable" city, which in turn has spurred a growth of residential and commercial construction<sup>2</sup>—at least

"[In the 1990s] there was the idea that everyone was a winner, and the foreign-born weren't considered a great burden. Even if there wasn't always a welcoming, there also wasn't anything negative."

-Garret Harper, former research director at the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, quoted in Anne Farris, "New Immigrants in New Places", *Carnegie Reporter*, vol. 3, no.3, Fall 2005, p.34.

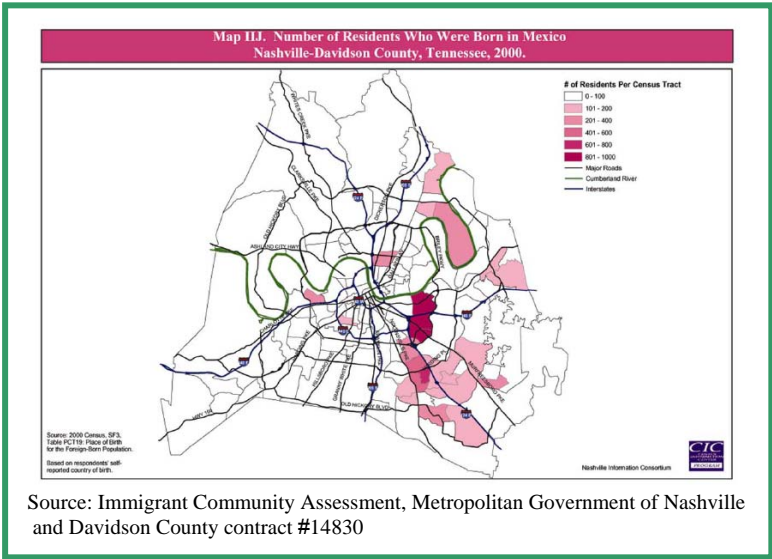
until the global economic downturn hit. These changes, added to a swelling of the labor force in traditional gateway cities and an anti-immigrant climate in some areas, have brought a large number of Hispanic immigrants to Nashville. Between 1990 and 2000, the Music City experienced a 424 percent increase in its Hispanic population. Between 2000

and 2007 it grew by 78 percent. The 2005-2007 American Community Survey estimated the Hispanic population at almost 43,000 (7.3 percent of the total population)<sup>3</sup>, while other estimates range from 50,000 to 110,000.<sup>4</sup> Another measure of the growth of this population is that between 1994



Source: Immigrant Community Assessment, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County contract #14830

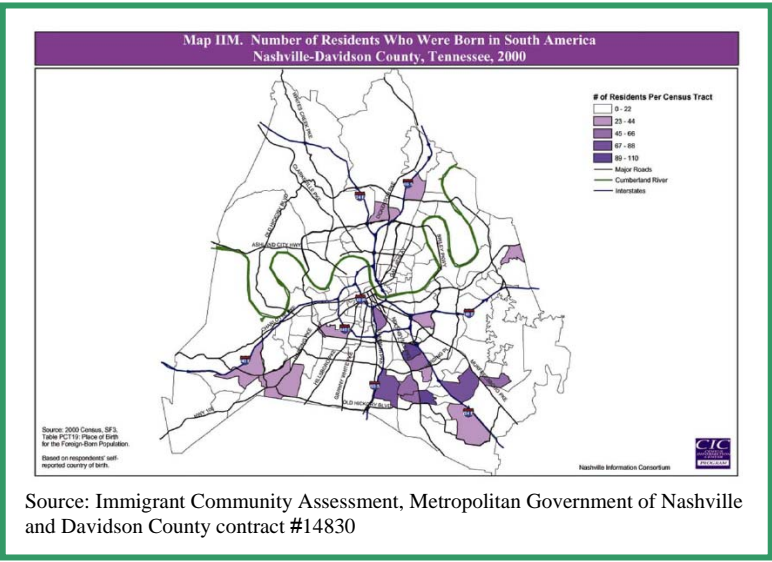
and 2004, public schools experienced a 1,133 percent increase in Hispanic student enrollment.<sup>5</sup>



Mexicans represent approximately 40 percent of the immigrant population but the city also has large numbers of immigrants from Central America (this population increased from 154 to 13,540 between 1990 and 2000<sup>6</sup>) and South America (mainly Venezuela and Colombia), as well as Cuban refugees whose

arrival traces back to the 1960s refugee resettlement programs.

Hispanic migration to Nashville has transformed parts of the city as well as worksites in the hospitality, construction and fast-food industries, and has raised new questions about race, ethnicity and cultural belonging.<sup>7</sup> It has also affected the provision of services and the political debates on immigration, as exemplified by the debate of an English-only bill, defeated in January 2009, which is discussed below.



### III. The role of community groups and the private sector

In response to the growth of the Hispanic population, and the gap between available services and community needs, a number of non-profit groups and businesses have developed a network of support and community organization. Since the late 1990s, these advocacy networks have been recognized as a source of best practices for other groups in Nashville and nationwide, as was documented in the three-year “Building the New American Community” (BNAC) initiative.<sup>8</sup> As a result of the initiative, an alliance of businesses, social service agencies and immigrant and refugee activist rights groups was formed. The Nashville New American Coalition (NNAC) focused on the integration of immigrants into the political, social and economic life of the city by involving the entire community in this process, particularly at the workplace.<sup>9</sup> The NNAC emphasized business development, recertification for foreign-trained professionals, civic participation, voter education, leadership training, and youth development. It also provided assistance to existing community immigrant and refugee organizations.

The commitment of the Nashville business community to integration is considered a noteworthy example. According to Frank Sharry, former director of the National Immigration Forum, “Nashville is the only community I know in the United States where the Chamber of Commerce and the business community have stepped up and said ‘Let’s make this work’.”<sup>10</sup> For example, in 1999, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce formed an immigration committee to match employers with workers and, since 2000, banks such as **Sun Trust Bank, Bank of America, Reliant Bank, Southeast Financial Federal Credit Union** and **Franklin National Bank** were providing Spanish-language courses for employees and bilingual materials. Meanwhile, the Tennessee Hispanic Chamber of Commerce formed in 1999 to address language barriers for Hispanic business owners in Nashville and promote small business and workforce development. A few months later a second Hispanic chamber was formed: The Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, with a more socially oriented agenda.<sup>11</sup>

Tennessee has also been a national leader in the immigration debate. In May 2001, Tennessee became the first state to issue driver licenses for immigrants, regardless of their status. Groups such as the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC), based in Nashville, were at the forefront of efforts against a repeal of the law.<sup>12</sup> More recently, the defeat of the English-only bill in Nashville (January 2009) was recognized as an example for other cities in bringing together a broad coalition of groups (advocacy networks, civil rights groups, religious groups, schools, immigration experts,

business leaders, and community organizations) against legislation that would have had a negative impact on immigrant integration. The Nashville for All of Us coalition argued that the initiative would damage the city's reputation for tolerance and diversity and would drive away immigrant workers and internationally-owned businesses (there are 206 foreign-owned companies in Nashville, providing an estimated 34,000 jobs). Moreover, the initiative would have not only punished undocumented immigrants but also refugees and marginalized both groups from civic life.<sup>13</sup> The measure was opposed by what are considered "some of the most powerful forces in town," the Chamber of Commerce, the Visitors Bureau, church leaders, Mayor Karl Dean, Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen, and the chancellors and presidents of the local universities.<sup>14</sup>

"One of my great concerns about this [the English-Only Bill] was the message it would send -- one that took down the 'welcome' sign and put up a 'go away' sign...I feel that that could have really hurt Nashville's ability to grow in a healthy fashion."

-Tom Oreck, Chairman, Oreck Corp., quoted in Richard Fausset, "English only' equaled 'go away,' opponents say," *The Los Angeles Times*. Januarv 24. 2009.

Despite the existence of a number of groups that are working in favor of the immigrant communities in Nashville, the English-only bill is a sign that in recent years, particularly in a context of economic slowdown, there has been a change in tone in Nashville from its traditional image as a welcoming city, to a city where anti-immigrant sentiment has mobilized more actively. An example is the Davidson County Sherrif's Office signing of a 287(g) memorandum of understanding with the federal government in April 2007. This program allows the local police to participate in immigration enforcement tasks, which has resulted in a high number of deportations (more than 5,000 by 2009).<sup>15</sup> Although Sheriff Daron Hall argues that there has been a drop in arrests and gang violence, the Southern Poverty Law Center reports that most of those deported were arrested on misdemeanor offenses. This has created fear among the community, with 73 percent of Hispanics apprehensive about cooperating with the police, and led to discrimination.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to this approach, the **Metropolitan Nashville Police Department (MNPd)** established "El Protector," an outreach program designed in collaboration with community stakeholders to strengthen the relationship between the Hispanic community and the police department.

Other groups in the Nashville area have also identified the need for more efforts to create awareness and constructive messages about the contributions of immigrants among the host community and to continue expanding services and support for the

integration of foreign-born groups. One such effort is the Survey of Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Middle Tennessee, being conducted by researchers at the Tennessee State University College of Business. This study seeks to draw attention to immigrant entrepreneurship in middle Tennessee, create a database of immigrant-owned businesses in the area and address some of the constraints for self-employment and business development. The study sees immigrant entrepreneurship not only as an economic contribution to the city but a sign of integration.<sup>17</sup> At the government level, in 2009, Mayor Dean established the Mayor's New Americans Advisory Council to facilitate integration among the foreign born in Nashville. Many new immigrant groups are represented on the council, which includes academics and business leaders.

A remaining challenge is that despite the significant progress that Nashville has made in developing a network of services, community organizations and businesses that support the integration of Hispanics, the community remains divided among itself. Jamie Winders argues that the existing organizations [representing or dealing with the Hispanic community] "have often traced class and nationality differences among Latinos/as, [which explains the emergence of] multiple Hispanic Chambers of Commerce and nonprofit organizations, with missions ranging from direct service provision to state and local political participation, from lobbying to clearinghouse and liaison functions."<sup>18</sup> Hispanic business owners and professionals report facing challenges as a result of the existence of two (and sometimes four) Hispanic chambers without a clear agenda defined by members.

Through site visits in Nashville and in-depth interviews with business leaders, community organizations, religious groups and government officials, the AS/COA learned that the Nashville community has a number of innovative examples that can be shared with new gateway cities across the country. At the same time, the research has identified a need for further collaboration across sectors and among existing groups to bring together resources and expertise to address the needs of the community for integration services.

## IV. Integration in Nashville: Best Practices and Current Challenges

The Nashville Immigrant Community Assessment report commissioned by then-mayor Bill Purcell and published in August 2003 documented the main needs and existing services for immigrants. Although there are clear signs of integration—over 70 percent of Nashville residents whose native language is not English speak it “well” or “very well”—challenges remain. For example, one-third of Nashville’s foreign-born residents, especially

“Currently, eighteen percent of the foreign-born population in Nashville lives below the federal poverty level (\$17,050 for a family of four in 2000), almost double the rate for the total city population. Almost half of the foreign-born population speaks limited English. Three-fourths are not citizens and, therefore, are civically isolated and politically disenfranchised. [...] the increases [in ESL classes] cannot keep pace with the demand, and the number of classes and teachers is woefully lacking.”

*-Anne Farris, "New Immigrants in New Places", Carnegie Reporter, vol. 3, no.3, Fall 2005, pp. 34-35.*

those who are ages 18 to 64, live in households where no member over the age of 14 speaks English “very well.” An estimated 20 percent of immigrants were officially poor in 2000.<sup>19</sup>

The Nashville Immigrant Community Assessment report’s main recommendations to address the needs of the foreign born in Nashville included increasing access to English-language instruction and classes on daily life in the U.S.; strengthening access to education (adult and children); increasing the supply of affordable and safe childcare services; improving skills development opportunities (assistance in job searches, learning employee rights, addressing occupational safety and health problems); increasing access to health, particularly the need for bilingual emergency services and providing more translation services for social service agencies; and access to housing. The report also identified the need to provide community-based social services agencies in areas where immigrants and refugees tend to reside and increase the frequency of transportation services between the southeast quadrant and the other areas of Nashville. In 2003, 80 percent of 813 public and private social service providers in Nashville were located outside of the southeast quadrant of Nashville while almost 60 of Nashville’s foreign-born residents live in this corridor. Finally, the report recognized a need to strengthen the capacity to monitor, plan, coordinate, and address the needs of immigrants and refugees.<sup>20</sup>

In an effort to document how each of these needs are being met by the local government, community and religious organizations and businesses, and to identify

remaining gaps and areas that require further support, the AS/COA has met with representatives of each of these groups to document many of the best practices and remaining challenges, as described in the next section.

Table IVA. Number and Percentage of 813 Social Services Providers by Service Domain and Type of Services, Nashville-Davidson County, Tennessee, 2003

<u>Service Domain</u>	<u>Types of Services</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Healthcare	Mental, Physical, and Disability	117	14.4
Economic/Resettlement	Financial, Food, Disaster Relief, Homeless, Refugee Services	111	13.7
Family	Childcare, Eldercare, Child Welfare	90	11.1
Safety/Emergency	EMS, Fire, Police	14	1.7
Education/Information	Communication and Information Services, Schools, ESL Programs	198	24.4
Community	Civic Engagement, Social/Recreation/Arts, Support Groups, Spiritual	175	21.5
Housing	Residential Services	45	5.5
Transportation	Transportation	9	1.1
Legal	Advocacy, Civil Rights, Citizenship, Legal Services	54	6.6
Total		813	100%

Source: Immigrant Community Assessment, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County contract #14830

## I. WORKFORCE AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT: EDUCATION, LANGUAGE AND SKILLS TRAINING

### Language Training at the Workplace (English and Spanish)

- Recognizing the diversity of its staff and the importance of communication among employees and with clients, the **Loews Vanderbilt Hotel** in Nashville offers both English-language classes to employees as well as Spanish-language classes for managers. If the classes are taken on-site, they are offered free-of-charge; while employees are reimbursed for English-language classes that are taken off-site. The **Loews Vanderbilt Hotel** also pays for English-language classes for an employee's family, offers translators at all staff meetings and has a Spanish-language assistance line.
- The **Rogers Group**, a construction firm, **Gaylord Entertainment**, **Shoney's** and **Hospital Corporation of America (HCA)** have also put in place workplace English-language programs for their employees.
- The **Tyson Foods** plant in Goodlettsville, TN, has offered ESL classes on-site whenever there is a demand from employees. Employees pay a small fee for the classes but are reimbursed if they complete the course. The plant also has a computer room for employees to take courses online and provides mentors if an employee does not know how to use a computer. To promote better communication among employees and staff, the plant has one-week programs to certify employees as interpreters in various languages, including Spanish, Somali and Arabic. Qualified employees then help translate information in the plant. In addition, the plant helps employees prepare their taxes and provides training on e-filing programs.

### Cultural Awareness and Language Training for Businesses

- **The Hispanic Solution, LLC** is a consulting firm that offers businesses and service providers solutions for increased returns, better communication and effective outreach to the Hispanic community as employees, clients or consumers. It has provided services for a number of Fortune 500 companies and organizations including Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), Tractor Supply Co. and Enterprise Rent-A-Car.
- From 2000-2006 the organization **Hablemos** has provided Spanish-language training and cultural awareness programs for a number of corporations in Nashville including **Sun Trust Bank**, **Bank of America**, **Franklin National Bank**, and **Union Planters**.
- **ProLingua Inc.**, a consulting and training firm specializing in multicultural growth strategies, provides business training that includes workplace Spanish, English coaching, community immersions and grassroots marketing to help companies gain first-hand experience and insights into non-traditional markets.

- A number of groups and organizations in Nashville, such as the Tennessee Performing Arts Center, The Nashville Symphony and Cheekwood Botanical Gardens have promoted **outreach and awareness about the Hispanic community** through cultural programs that bring Latino artists or celebrate Hispanic heritage. The Scarritt-Bennett Center conducts the program “*Diversity In Dialogue Circles on Immigration and Race* “ and the **Davidson Group** promotes communication between people of different races and ethnicities.

### **ESL Programs**

- **HOPE (Hispanic Organization for Progress and Education)** provides ESL courses for Hispanics and other immigrant groups.
- Through the program “**Conversemos,**” **Conexión Américas** connects Spanish-speaking adults with English-speaking mentors so they can each help each other improve conversational skills in their second language.
- **The Tennessee Foreign Language Institute** and the **Clarkville Literacy Council** provide ESL programs as well as Spanish-language training. The Clarkville Literacy Council provides grants for ESL programs and translation for schools.

### **Bilingual Services**

- **Conexión Américas** has a “Spanish Help Line” that helps Hispanics find bilingual doctors, lawyers and other bilingual service providers, including banks. Through its “Enlaces” program it also provides Hispanic families with information, resources and assistance to address their immediate needs (from translating a birth certificate to finding an affordable apartment).

### **Adult Education Programs and Parent Participation in Schools**

- The **Committee of Parents Latinos (COPLA)** is a volunteer organization that helps parents understand the U.S. education system and supports involvement in their children’s education. It also seeks to create a dialogue between Nashville public schools and Hispanic parents. They have partnered with local media outlets to disseminate information, and, to date, they have collaborated with TV stations (Telemundo and Telefutura), newspapers (*Latino News* and *La Campana*) and Activa Radio, a local radio station. They also organize events to recognize the achievements of Hispanic graduates. COPLA has representatives in all of the city’s school clusters and has partnerships with all schools with a Hispanic student population.
- **Conexión Américas** offers “**Parents as Partners**” workshops that provide parents with information on the basics about education in the U.S. and how to get involved in their children’s education.

- **The YMCA of Middle Tennessee** has a **Hispanic Achievers Program (YHAP)** that seeks to improve the lives of Hispanic families by helping parents learn English, supporting students so they can finish high school and attend college, and celebrating Hispanics' cultural heritage.

### **Job Placement and Training and Small Business Development**

- In October 2007, Mayor Karl Dean announced the creation of a **Minority Business Advisory Council** charged with developing initiatives to assist small and minority-owned businesses. The Mayor stated that "Nashville needs to be a model of minority participation in public contracts," (*Nashville Business Journal*, October 10, 2007).
- **Conexión Américas** provides financial, entrepreneurial, self-employment and small business education and assistance to the Hispanic community, as well as networking opportunities and peer interaction. By promoting high-skills training, it provides the community with the tools for moving ahead. For example, Conexión's basic **business training course "Negocio Próspero"** teaches participants how to obtain a business license, book-keeping, applying for loans, developing a business plan, and doing market research.
- **HOPE has created a job database of graduating Hispanics (HOPE for Jobs)** that connects prospective employers with Hispanic job-seekers in an effort to support job placement for members of the community. Additionally, it **provides workshops for business owners** to inform them on how to apply for state bids and become certified, among other tools.
- Through their foundation, **Nissan North America, Inc.** has supported the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, the National Hispanic Business Clearinghouse and the Hispanic Leadership Institute. They have also partnered with the National Minority Supplier Development Council. Since moving their headquarters to Tennessee, they welcome opportunities to partner with local Hispanic organizations

## **II. FINANCIAL LITERACY: ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND HOUSING**

### **Financial Literacy Training Programs**

- **Conexión Américas** offers financial education workshops for Hispanics under the program **"Sembrando Semillas"** (Planting Seeds) and an annual **"Avance"** conference. Participants learn how to **open and use bank accounts, improve their credit scores and file taxes**. Through workshops and media campaigns the organization provides Hispanic workers with information about the U.S. tax system, their tax rights and responsibilities as well as direct assistance to prepare and file tax returns.

- Since 2004, **Sun Trust Bank** has led a number of financial literacy campaigns among the Hispanic population in Nashville. Through **seminars and fairs and with the support of churches, schools and community groups**, it has provided the members of the community with basic banking tools and information about the importance of financial literacy.
- **Reliant Bank** has financial literacy programs for children, including Hispanics, and it markets its products in English and Spanish.
- The **Loews Vanderbilt Hotel** in Nashville, in partnership with **Bank of America** and **Conexión Américas** has offered financial literacy classes to cover basics such as banking needs and taxes and get employees on track to home ownership. To date, they have arranged over \$24 million in mortgages. The percentage of employees who fail on the loans is less than ten percent the national average.

### **Bilingual Financial Services**

- **Sun Trust Bank, Reliant Bank, Bank of America, and Southeast Financial Federal Credit Union** offer information in English and Spanish and in most cases provide bilingual assistance at their branches.

### **Homeownership**

- **Conexión Américas** partners with **Southeast Financial Credit Union** to offer the “**Puertas Abiertas Homeownership Program**,” a national-award winning program. It provides information for Hispanics on how to obtain a mortgage and develop a credit history through individualized counseling sessions and homebuyer education courses. It also includes a **down-payment assistance fund and financing**. The lending program emphasizes the importance of owners having equity in their home and educates them on how to increase assets and be able to maintain a home. It is the only program that provides mortgages without requiring a social security number (an ITIN is accepted). The basis for this program is that through economic integration new immigrants can move out of poverty, become successful homeowners, pay taxes and become fully integrated into their communities.

## **III. HEALTH CARE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE**

### **Bilingual Access to Health Care and Social Services**

- One of the main areas of focus of the organization **Hablemos** is to share information and resources with health care providers to provide the highest quality of care possible, improve safety and bridge the cultural and linguistic gap between staff and Hispanic patients. Among its many clients are **Vanderbilt University Medical Center , Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), Belmont University College of Health Sciences, Mental Health Association of**

**Tennessee, University of Toledo, Nashville Dietetic Association, United Neighborhood Health Services , Tennessee Urgent Care, and The University of Tennessee Extension Service.**

- **HCA's** quality interaction programs for clinicians provide caregivers with tools to understand the characteristics and diversity of Nashville's immigrant community. Through cultural competence programs that instruct employees on the diversity of immigrant cultures and language instruction, HCA helps prepare caregivers to provide accessible information and care to the community.
- **Saint Thomas Family Health Center South** is Nashville's first non-profit, community health center with a focus on serving the Hispanic community. The bilingual staff specializes in family practice and medical treatment of children and adults. A sliding payment scale is established for its 80 to 90 percent uninsured or under-insured patients. In 2007 the health center received a Healthcare Safety Net Primary Care Services grant from the Tennessee Department of Health in recognition of the number of uninsured adult patients receiving primary health care services at the South Clinic.
- **HOPE** has a strong partnership with the **Matthew Walker Clinic** to which it refers the uninsured, both Hispanics and other groups. An estimated 50 percent of the clinic's clientele is Hispanic. The clinic has bilingual staff and provides services for the uninsured, regardless of migration status.
- **TN Disability Pathfinder, Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee and Metro Social Services** have established a bilingual database "**Camino Seguro**" ([www.caminoseguro.org](http://www.caminoseguro.org)) that provides information about social services, mental health and disabilities facilities with bilingual personnel.
- **Médicos para la Familia** is a privately owned health clinic located on Nolensville Rd., where a large number of Hispanics live. Fees for the services are reduced and payments are based on a scale, depending on patients' ability to pay. Most of the staff speaks fluent Spanish and the information about their services is translated into Spanish. A second clinic is located in Memphis.
- Another important provider of health services, especially obstetrics, is **Nashville General Hospital**—the birthplace of a large majority of Hispanic babies.

#### **IV. CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

- **HOPE (Hispanic Organization for Progress and Education)** has developed a series of programs to support the Hispanic community's civic literacy, including **gang awareness programs, domestic abuse programs, information about immigration and naturalization, voter registration drives, and campaigns to get Hispanics involved in city government.** The main goal is to help "Hispanic Tennesseans become informed and engaged citizens who can contribute to the greater good of the community and take an active part in its progress in the years to come." Through its 4,000-member mailing list, it keeps the community informed about civic issues.

- **Conexión Américas** promotes leadership development and civic engagement through its **Hispanic Community Advisory Group**. It has developed an **anti-drunk driving campaign in Spanish**, in collaboration with the Governor's Highway Safety Office. Its "Spanish Helpline" provides information and referrals.
- **The Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC)** has recently **developed leadership development justice schools** by partnering with the Highlander Center. It also helped pass legislation to increase immigrant access to driver licenses.
- **TIRRC** has brought together one of the most diverse immigrant rights coalitions in the country. Members are from Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe as well as countless U.S.-born allies. It also helped found the **Southeast Immigrant's Rights Network**, a network that increases cooperation and learning between immigrant rights organizations in the region.
- The **ACLU of Tennessee** has been very active in promoting civic participation and leadership development for the immigrant community. It was a key player in the counter-mobilization against English-only. In a letter to *The New York Times* in reference to the Nashville for All of US campaign, the ACLU Tennessee's Executive Director, Hedy Weinberg wrote: "The bond that unites Nashville is not linguistic or ethnic homogeneity, but a shared commitment to sustaining our welcoming and inclusive community" (January 11, 2009). The ACLU has also campaigned against violations to immigrants' rights that have resulted from the implementation of the 287(g) program.
- The ethnic media have played a significant role in immigration campaigns. **La Sabrosita** (a Spanish-language AM radio station), **La Mejor** (a bilingual local radio station), the newspapers **El Crucero**, **Latino News** (one of the only newspapers with dedicated local journalists), **La Campana**, and the United Methodist Church's Spanish-language magazine, **El Intérprete**, have sections focused on creating awareness about issues related to the Hispanic community and also to provide these groups with useful information.
- The **Metropolitan Nashville Police Department** began hiring Hispanic officers in the 1990s and now offers an **online course titled "Intensive Survival Spanish for Law Enforcement."** However, there have been complaints about the cost and effectiveness of the course. The police department also created "**El Protector**," an outreach program designed in collaboration with community stakeholders to strengthen the relationship between the Hispanic community and the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department. Through this program, police officers visit different community organizations and offer information on domestic violence and public and personal safety. The department has also provided cell phones for 30 volunteers who serve as interpreters when police officers need help in communicating with the Spanish-speaking population. In an effort to create links to a younger generation, they have also established a three-day academy for teenagers (12-17 years old) who are interested in the profession.

- Working in collaboration with the police department, **La Mejor** has organized street fairs where Nashville police officers and the Hispanic population can interact and build trust. Bradley Branson, general manager of **La Mejor**, emphasizes that these fairs are, above all, an opportunity to establish relationships. “The police force will be effective if there is an open dialogue with the community. During these fairs, people start putting faces with names and begin forming connections,” he says. **La Campana** hosted a number of interviews with police officers in an attempt to get the Hispanic community to better understand the appropriate dynamics for an interaction with an officer.
- **TIRRC** has developed an award-winning public education and communications campaign, known as the “Welcoming Tennessee Initiative.” It creates opportunities for Tennessee residents, both native and foreign born, to discuss the effects of immigration and how to develop strong and inclusive communities. In addition to creating a platform for dialogue about immigration, more than 70 “ambassadors” have been recruited and trained around the state to organize welcoming committees and facilitate dialogue. TIRRC also has used billboards to launch visible public education campaigns and has held many community forums and presentations at churches, universities, and civic clubs. In less than three years, local decisionmakers and business leaders have evolved from decrying the growth of the city’s immigrant population to now embracing the importance of an immigrant-friendly city.
- The **HCA Foundation** sponsored the Nashville Public Television’s *Next Door Neighbors* series focused on immigration, which included a segment on the Hispanic community in Nashville (“Next Door Neighbors: Hablamos Español”). **TIRRC** also worked with Nashville public TV on the series.
- Every March, **TIRRC** participates in the New American Day on the Hill. It includes training on how a bill becomes a law, on who to talk with to voice concerns and meetings with representatives.
- **TIRRC** has registered over 5,000 individuals to vote through its voter registration and mobilization campaigns: *Get out the Vote*, *Voter Registration* and *Voter Education*. It has also educated thousands more about voting and issues through in-person and immigrant media-based education. TIRRC has also made efforts to encourage legal permanent residents to apply for citizenship by hosting Tennessee’s first Citizenship Clinic in 2007. TIRRC is planning to be involved with the Census 2010 campaign to educate the community on the importance of participating.
- The **Coalition for Education on Immigration (CEI)** is a grassroots organization devoted to facilitating educated, rational and informed conversations on immigration and related issues. It has played an active role in the community by offering seminars to teachers, business leaders and other groups about the lives of Nashville immigrants, the challenges they face, and policy and other responses that can support their process of integration.

## V. Conclusions and Next Steps

The companies and community groups mentioned here are making headway toward facilitating the process of integration for Hispanic and other immigrant groups. They have recognized that the integration of immigrant workers increases business competitiveness through a better-trained, stable and loyal workforce that has the experience and training required to move up the professional ladder. Through these practices, employers also promote social cohesion in and outside the workplace and improve working conditions, all of which contribute to maximizing business productivity. Yet, there is more to be done.

Participants in the AS/COA meeting in Nashville on August 11, 2009, agree that integration is a two-way street, and in addition to working with Hispanics and the overall immigrant population, the host community needs to be educated about the value of immigration. There is a need to **create awareness** not only about the needs and challenges for new immigrants of Hispanic/Latino origin but also to promote messages that present the community in a positive light, reflecting the **diversity of immigration experiences, interests and intellect within the community, and breaking down stereotypes.**

Local leaders identified specific areas in which they can further collaborate to support Hispanic and Hispanic-immigrant integration.

- **On or off-site English as a Second Language (ESL) classes**, especially when the employer absorbs costs, along with computer-based classes, interpretive services, and VITA site designation, are all initiatives that help to create an environment supportive of different cultures and religions and where worker retention and productivity is high. In offering these services, businesses should recognize the opportunity to partner with area schools. Mentorship programs are a good avenue for companies to become involved with the Hispanic community and with local students—their future workers.
- The COPLA (Committee of Latino Parents) model—promoting the flow of information and constructive communication between school districts and parents—is a good example of how education can be made accessible to both the students and the families as a whole. But more involvement on the part of the districts is necessary. Greater opportunities for adult education are needed so that parents can gain the skills needed to move ahead and at the same time **become more involved in their children’s education.**
- Participation in the census is critical to overall civic engagement and for politicians and policymakers to take notice of the Hispanic community. More should be done to encourage taking part in the census, and, for that, a clear message should be

conveyed about what the benefits are to participation. Hispanic media, businesses and the churches should collaborate in getting out that message.

- Hispanic businesses stand out for their timeliness and overall ability to repay bank loans. And while banks cannot single out Hispanic customers for preferential treatment, there should be greater communication about Hispanics' general reliability as customers. **Funding for Hispanic small businesses** is currently very scarce. Access to credit for starting a business would facilitate this population's successful economic integration.
- A greater effort should be placed on teaching financial literacy at a younger age so that youth can learn how to save and don't become burdened with debt. A successful model is for the banks to go into the schools to educate students and provide the opportunity for youth to open bank accounts on site. Banks play an important role in fostering economic and social integration by offering more bilingual services and easing immigrants' **access to credit and savings, obtaining mortgages or loans, and investing**. Financial literacy programs are also needed in relation to **public safety** as immigrants are targeted by criminals for their money, given that they generally hold cash instead of keeping money in bank accounts.



