



Local Immigrant Integration & Inclusion Grant (LIIG) Project Report to the Board of Supervisors

Executive Summary

This report provides the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors with a comprehensive update of the Local Immigrant Integration and Inclusion Grant (LIIG) project. To date, 1,012 individual surveys and 70 organizational surveys have been collected and analyzed, representing a diverse cross-section of Sonoma County's immigrant communities. This report highlights key findings, identifies urgent gaps in services, and offers data-driven recommendations to guide investment and planning. As the project continues, the Secure Families Collaborative and its partners will build a comprehensive resource asset map by supervisorial district to support targeted solutions and equitable service delivery.

Background

In September 2024, the Board of Supervisors authorized execution of the \$141,235 LIIG grant from the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). This initiative launched a partnership between the Economic Development Collaborative (EDC), the County Administrator's Office (CAO), and the Secure Families Collaborative (SFC) to better understand and respond to immigrant community needs through data collection, resource mapping, and targeted recommendations.

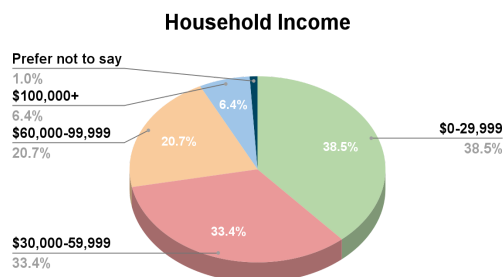
Methodology

SFC and its partners, including United Way of the Wine Country / 211, employed a mixed-methods approach, including 15 community listening sessions, 1,012 bilingual individual surveys, 49 agency interviews, and comprehensive service mapping. This approach ensured that voices of historically underrepresented residents were included in shaping the recommendations.

Survey Participant Profile

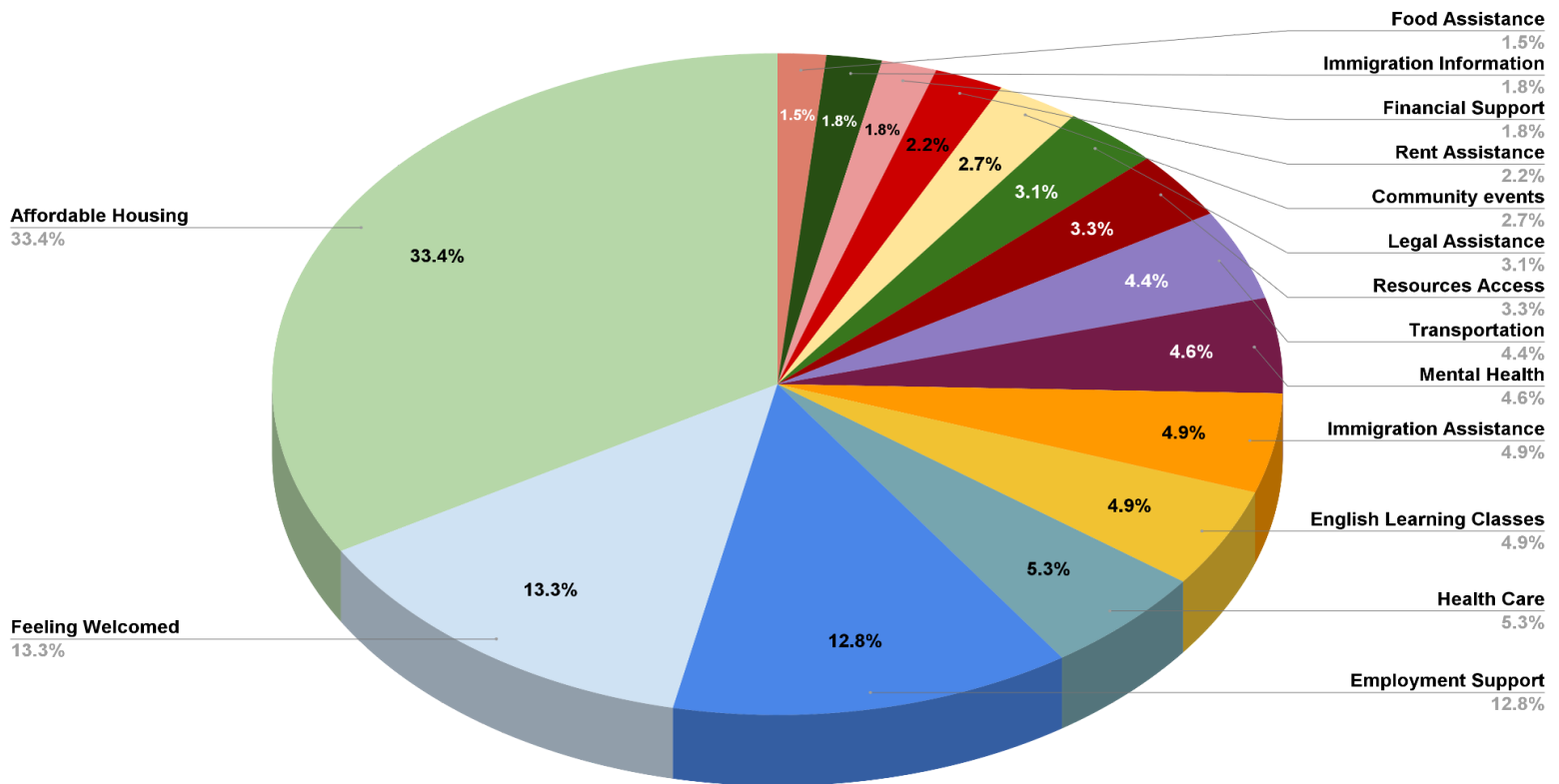
Individual Survey Results

Individual survey respondents represented a broad spectrum of the community, majority female (66 percent) and Spanish-speaking (over 80 percent). Most respondents were from Mexico (79 percent), followed by Haiti, China, and Central American countries. Household incomes were low, with 38.5 percent reporting annual income under \$30,000 and average household sizes of four, underscoring economic vulnerability.



Key Findings & Gaps

Types of Support Immigrants Believe Would Improve Their Lives



Community feedback emphasized affordable housing (33 percent), employment support (13 percent), and community belonging (13 percent) as top priorities. Significant gaps exist in housing navigation, immigration legal services (long waitlists), and awareness of available county services. These gaps are most pronounced in low-income and Spanish-speaking households.

Organization Survey Results

Survey	Submitted	Completed
CBO's	127	48
Clinics	20	6
County	62	14
Employers	27	2
Totals	236	70

The Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) supported outreach to county departments, businesses and employers, encouraging participation in the organizational surveys and helping SFC identify service and workforce gaps.

In addition to organizational surveys, SFC employed a mixed-methods approach to gather deeper insights from service providers. This included structured interviews, follow-up calls, and

facilitated focus groups with community based organization staff and county agency representatives. These methods provided qualitative context to the survey data, revealing not only what services exist but also barriers to access, fiscal and staffing challenges, and opportunities for cross-agency collaboration.

Data-Driven Recommendations

1. Housing Navigation & Advocacy: Dedicate funding to housing navigators and reduce wait times for affordable housing placement. Inflation and housing affordability are key concerns for immigrants surveyed, nearly 40 percent of whom make under \$30,000 annually. Policy changes and solutions to address the affordability of housing would drastically improve the quality of life for Sonoma County's immigrant communities.

2. Multilingual Workforce & Navigation Expansion: Strengthen 211 and county service navigation, co-locating multilingual staff in trusted hubs. Immigrants no longer exclusively speak English or Spanish. Haitian creole, indigenous languages, and East African languages are now spoken county-wide. Accessibility issues should be addressed.

3. Legal Concerns & Rights Education: Increase capacity for deportation defense and DACA renewals through legal partnerships. Immigration legal services capacity is grossly insufficient as per the demonstrable need of immigrant communities. All area nonprofit service providers have considerable waitlists and are unable to hire new attorneys due to the exorbitant cost of living.

4. Belonging Initiatives / Develop a Countywide "Welcome Campaign": Expand peer support networks and bicultural community health workers / promotoras to reduce isolation. Nearly one in seven of surveyed immigrants believe feeling unwelcome to be their top or one of the top issues. County and local immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations must address this by creating additional initiatives for immigrant well-being. We recommend launching a coordinated campaign promoting Sonoma County as a welcoming place for immigrants - reducing fear, highlighting available services, and reinforcing community belonging.

5. Mental Health: Immigrant communities have reported poor mental health. These concerns are exacerbated by not experiencing feelings of belonging and an inability to find employment that pays a living wage. These factors, coupled with the lack of affordable housing, contribute to poor mental health in communities that are already experiencing significant trauma and mental health issues.

6. District-Level Resource Mapping: Continue developing a public-facing asset map by supervisorial district to guide future policy and funding decisions. To properly address policy changes, community feedback is vital.

7. Additional outreach within communities underrepresented in this report. This includes immigrants from the African and Asian diasporas as well as indigenous speakers from Mexico

and Central America. SFC partners like KBBF, the African Advocacy Network, and the Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition of the North Bay are assisting in this effort.

8. Continuation of the work already started to address geographic gaps in service - this should include partnerships with the County, cities, community-based organizations, and trusted bilingual / bicultural messengers. For example, survey results confirm that there are fewer services available in rural parts of the county, such as the coastal areas of the Fifth

Supervisory District. Trusted messengers, like the promotoras / community health workers of the Bienestar Collective, could help bridge this West County gap.

9. More comprehensive collaboration and capacity-building efforts with small and medium-sized immigrant serving organizations. This collaboration could take many forms including sharing resources, cross-training employees, and convening focus groups.

10. Additional surveys: Although 1,012 surveys are significant, they are still not enough to fully represent Sonoma County immigrant communities. There are over 100,000 immigrants in Sonoma County and with recently-arrived groups from Venezuela, Haiti, Ukraine, and other countries, there is a demonstrable need to receive updated information.

Conclusion

60 percent of the County's immigrant communities list affordable housing, not feeling welcomed, or employment concerns as their primary concerns. The County, its partners, Greater Bay Area organizations, and local community-based organizations serving immigrants must respond accordingly. Through a cohesive and collaborative approach, immigrant service providers can build a county that is more welcoming to immigrants and offers them a high quality of life.

SFC and its partners propose a phased approach to implement these recommendations over the next 12-18 months. The next phase, which is outside of this scope of work and not part of the LIIG Program, will prioritize the creation of the asset map and pilot navigation support expansion. Additional funding opportunities - including state integration funds and philanthropic partnerships - must be explored to sustain and scale efforts.