

# **Building Community, Embracing Difference:**

Immigrants, Refugees, and Local Government  
Outreach in Rural Minnesota

## **Master of Public Policy Capstone Report**

The Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs  
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The Center for Rural Policy & Development

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PA 8081 Capstone Workshop  
Urban Planning  
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May 2021

## Abstract

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Immigrant and refugee populations in Greater Minnesota face distinct challenges and have distinct needs. Government responsibility for the wellbeing of immigrant and refugee populations in rural Minnesota is shared across state, county, and city levels. Government actions can be augmented by community groups and local employers, but all groups have the potential to play an improved role ensuring those who have settled in rural Minnesota continue to feel welcome, respected, and represented in their community. A growing body of literature on rural America's relationship with international migration highlights the influence of effective government communication and representation on successful integration, access to services, and social cohesion. This report draws upon the established body of research and interviews with twenty government staffers, elected representatives, and community members from four sample cities in rural Minnesota. These interviews assessed government perceptions of issues facing local immigrant and refugee communities and, in turn, how well connected these local governments are to those populations.

From this data we have determined that, while immigrants and refugees are now recognized as integral to the prosperity future of rural Minnesota by government officials, there remain barriers in access, communication, and representation that is often blamed on language differences and self-segregation. While it seems as though most local government officials have good intentions, they struggle to understand the systemic barriers, difference in cultures, and community-wide prejudices that lead to community distrust and disharmony. These findings have implications for county and city policies and funding, hiring and representation considerations, and the retention of immigrant and refugee populations in rural communities across the State of Minnesota and beyond.

### **Partner Organizations**

This project would not be possible without the Center for Rural Policy and Development (CRPD), the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs (MCLA), the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage (CMAH), the Council for Asian-Pacific Minnesotans (CAPMN), and the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

The Center for Rural Policy and Development is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization dedicated to issues affecting rural Minnesota. Created in 1993 by the Minnesota legislature, the Center's research helps guide policymakers and raise awareness about rural issues. CRPD's research staff was integral to the creation, planning, and implementation of this study.

## Table of Contents

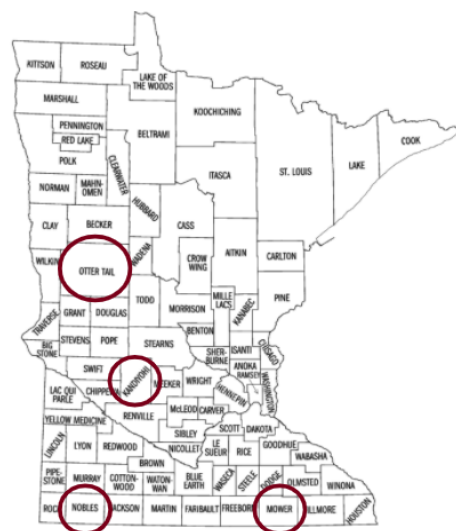
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<b>Abstract</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Research Strategy &amp; Methodology</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Community Profiles</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Literature Review</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Findings &amp; Discussion</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Looking Ahead</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>57</b>

## Executive Summary

Over the past 20 years, all of Minnesota's 87 counties reported measurable increases in racial and ethnic diversity. Although rural Minnesota is often stereotyped as a white, agrarian monolith, rural Minnesota's demography and economy has undergone significant changes since the turn of the century. One such change is the rise in immigrant and refugee populations in response to rural workforce needs, creating "pockets of diversity" across the countryside.

According to the Center for Rural Policy and Development's [2020 State of Rural Report](#), non-white and Latino populations typically make up a larger percentage of the population in southern Minnesota in comparison to northern counties. The counties with the highest BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People Of Color) population percentages generally reported population gains over the past decade, while rural communities with low levels of racial diversity tended to be in population decline.



Whether it is refugees resettling in Pelican Rapids, immigrants working at the Hormel plant in Austin, or families of color looking for a lower cost of living, growing racial and ethnic diversity in Greater Minnesota has been and will continue to be the norm. As such, it is important to investigate how local governments across rural Minnesota have welcomed growing immigrant and refugee populations and identify whether government actions are meeting the expressed needs of these communities. Our research thus attempts to answer these three questions:

1. What do local government officials and community partners identify as the most pressing issues facing their local immigrant and refugee populations?
2. What strengths and challenges do local government officials and community partners cite within their primary outreach and inclusion efforts?
3. In comparison to previous research from the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs, how are the issues identified in interviews similar or different when compared to the expressed needs of local immigrant and refugee populations?

Findings from this qualitative study are drawn from twenty remote interviews with local government officials and community leaders across four rural Minnesota communities:

1. City of Austin - Mower County
2. City of Pelican Rapids - Otter Tail County
3. City of Willmar - Kandiyohi County
4. City of Worthington - Nobles County

All cities are home to major meatpacking employers and have reported a considerable increase in racial and ethnic diversity in the last twenty years. Although there is census data that reflects this change, the literature on rural immigrants and refugees in Minnesota is extremely limited.

In fact, the 2020 Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs (MCLA) report “Latino Minnesotans in the Time of COVID-19,” is one of the only qualitative studies conducted within our target population. Because similar reports on other ethnic communities outside of Latinos are unavailable, we used this report as a proxy to represent general needs and concerns across other ethnic groups in Greater Minnesota, including East African, South Asian, and Eastern European groups. This assumption is not made lightly, but is rather based on the fact that the community concerns identified in the MCLA report reflect issues that broadly reflect the concerns held by immigrants and refugees, rather than issues specific to one ethnic group.

Interview results show that although government leaders recognize the social and economic contributions of their immigrant and refugee populations, they struggle to bridge gaps of self-segregation and promote cross-cultural community engagement. With differing opinions about government responsibility for immigrant and refugee outreach, as well as barriers in language translation, housing access, and local resources, interviewees stressed limitations in the scope and capacity of government programming.

Findings from this report include recommendations for further research and capacity building through public-private partnerships. While the reality of limited rural revenue precludes local governments from implementing large-scale inclusion efforts, partnerships with area employers can serve to amplify government messaging, improve community cohesion, and provide services that public institutions could not do alone.

## Research Strategy & Methodology

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Although this study relies upon a qualitative approach, quantitative data surrounding demographic change, racialized inequality, and immigrant and refugee populations provide an important foundation for our research. For transparency in our approach, the following section outlines the research process for this study, including:

1. Acquiring Participants
2. Conducting Interviews
3. Interpreting Responses
4. Data Limitations

### **Acquiring Participants**

To attain answers to the aforementioned research questions, the research team conducted a series of interviews and coded recorded transcripts using Atlas.ti. Interviewees were identified by the research team and advisory committee and were recruited over email and telephone. Each participant completed a Google Form questionnaire to gather preliminary information for the research team. This form included information on county of residence, job title, and connection to local immigrant and refugee communities. All interviewees were either local government officials or community leaders residing in our target communities.

Upon completion of the survey a member of the research team reached out to schedule a virtual interview over Zoom and provided the prospective interviewee with a document containing data privacy, confidentiality, and verbal informed consent information. This included confirmation that a participant could end the interview at any time, revoke their consent at any point up to the end of the interview, and information concerning the type of questions asked during the interview.

## Conducting Interviews

The interviews were conducted live via Zoom, with one participant and one interviewer from the research team. Before recording, each participant provided verbal consent to record, with the knowledge that their likeness and voice would at no point be included in any published material. The interview either continued with the listed questions, followed the participant's stream of consciousness, included unscripted qualifying questions, requested elaboration on a subject, or some combination thereof depending on the participant's responses and time limitations. Each interview was approximately one hour long.

The interviewees were asked a series of eleven or more questions during the interview. Sometimes the formatting of the questions varied slightly depending on the interviewee's past responses and there were additional clarifying questions that were specific to individual interviews but the core conversations being had between the research team members and the local government staff, elected officials, and community leaders remained the same across all twenty interviews. The intent of the questions selected for the interviewees was to hopefully contextualize and eventually answer the research questions. Table 1 distinguishes how the questions for the interviewees relate to a specific research question, with the third research question excluded as it relies upon comparison to the MCLA report.

**Table 1: Interview Questions as They Relate to the Study's Research Questions**

Research Questions	Related Questions for Interviewees
1. What do local government officials and community partners identify as the most pressing issues facing their local immigrant and refugee populations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you tell me a little about the similarities and differences in the immigrant and refugee populations in your community?</li> <li>- How would you describe and assess the local government's relationship with the immigrant and refugee population?</li> <li>- Do you know of any non-governmental organizations or institutions that service your community's immigrant and refugee population?</li> <li>- Can you tell me a little bit about the immigrant and refugee communities in the area? What do they contribute to the community? What sort of issues do they face?</li> </ul>

<p>2. What strengths and challenges do local government officials and community partners cite within their primary outreach and inclusion efforts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you share some examples of particularly successful/effective outreach and engagement efforts with the local immigrant and refugee community?</li> <li>- Are there any areas where you've noticed a distinct lack of connection or support for local immigrant and refugee communities?</li> <li>- What challenges have you experienced in your role as it pertains to immigrant and refugee outreach or equity and inclusion initiatives?</li> <li>- What is the relationship between local communities, governments, and employers?</li> </ul>
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## Interpreting Responses

Rather than relying solely upon interviewer notes all recorded interview transcripts were uploaded to Atlas.ti, a computer program that serves as a workbench for qualitative analysis, to foster a consistent application of thematic analysis across interviews. Through the program members of the research team coded interview transcripts three times over to determine the concepts, topics, and themes discussed in each interview. The team then identified the most frequently used codes to more conclusively identify which concepts arose most frequently across the full set of interviews.

This method of interpretation was originally developed specifically for qualitative psychology research by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (Caulfield, 2019). However, thematic analysis is a flexible method of qualitative analysis that can readily be adapted to suit this project's data and research questions.

## Data Limitations

There are some limitations to our data and the available literature. While this study relies on research previously conducted by the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs identifying issues that matter to Latino Minnesotans in rural and Greater Minnesota, a body of research on non-Latino immigrant and refugee communities in these areas does not exist. The research team recognizes that some challenges faced by Latino immigrant communities may or may not translate to other immigrant and refugee communities, and many issues faced by immigrants and refugees are not specific to their ethnic background and are specific to their immigrant or refugee status. In other words, some of what is known about Latino communities from MCLA's report is generalizable to other ethnic communities, while some may not be.

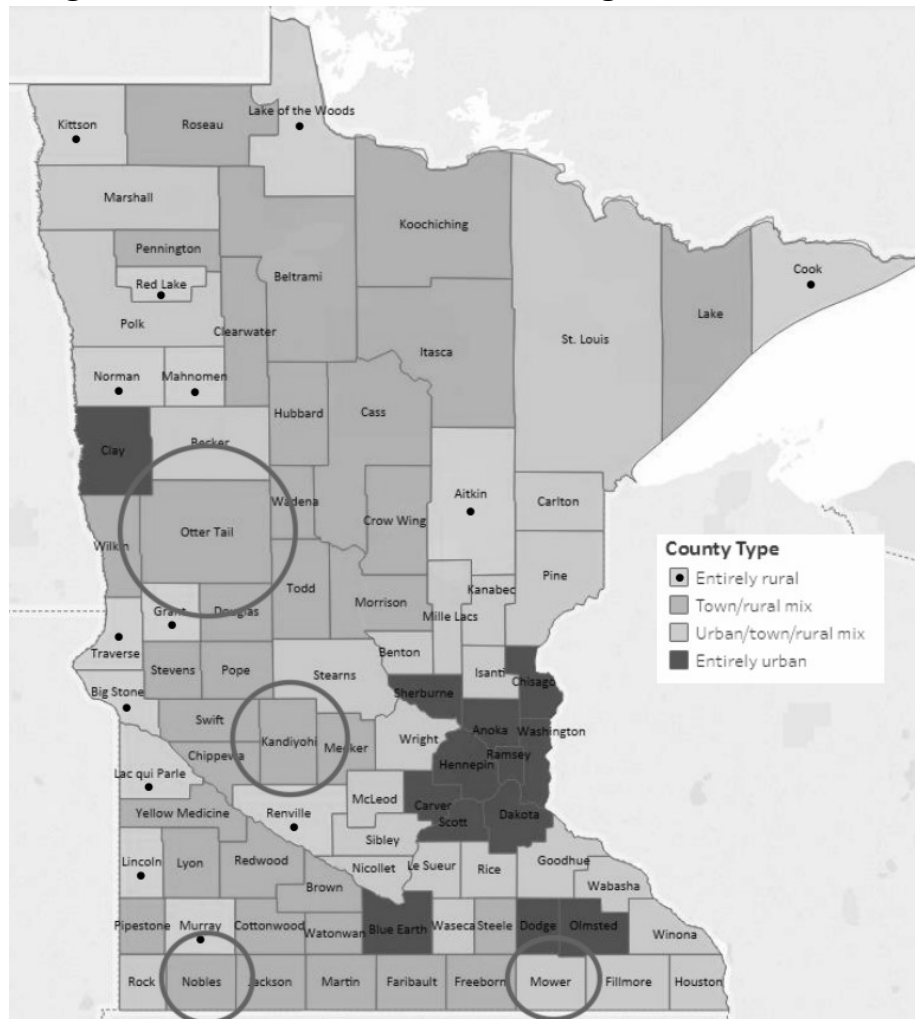


Additionally, this study was completed within a compressed timeline. With only a few months to schedule and complete interviews, the team simply did not have the time to explore all facets of this rich topic. The study's sample size was small and dependent upon those who were willing and able to connect and answer questions within this timeline.

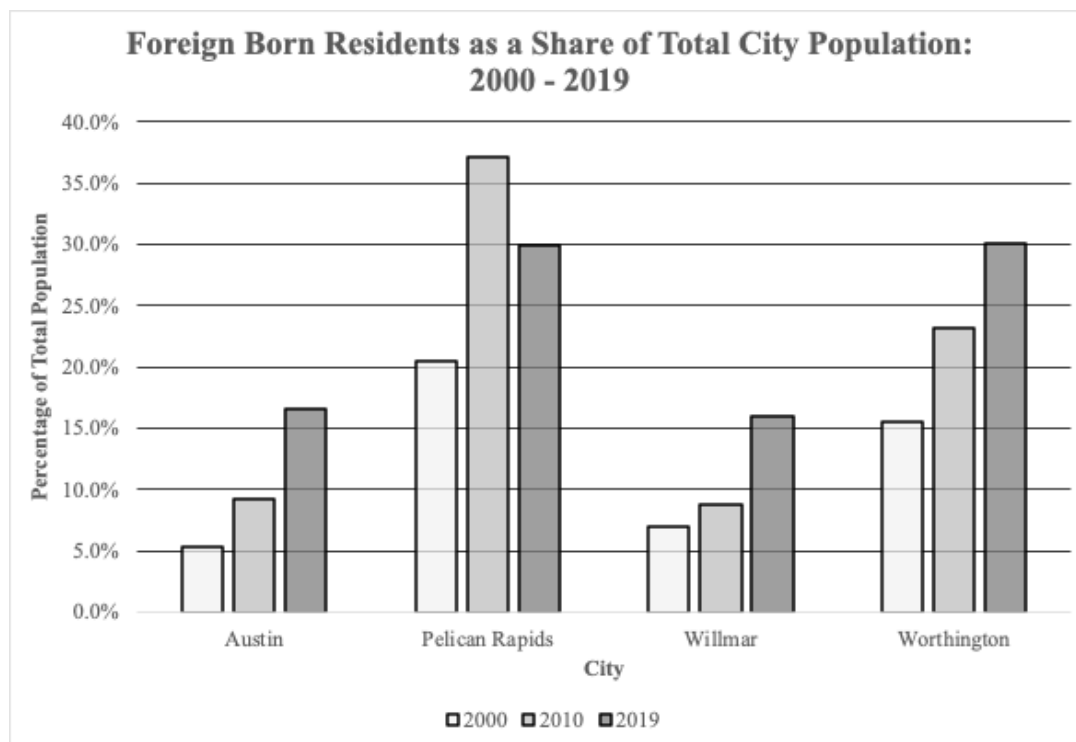
## Community Profiles

Austin, Pelican Rapids, Willmar, and Worthington were selected on the basis of published and informally available information on immigrant and refugee settlement and migration. All selected communities have reported significant changes to the racial and cultural makeup of their population over the past twenty years, including both long-standing and more recent migration and settlement (Figure 1). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes, all four counties are largely rural, with population densities below 55 people per square-mile. For comparison, the population densities for Hennepin County and the State of Minnesota are approximately 2,082 and 64.9 people per square-mile, respectively.

**Figure 1: USDA Rural-Urban Commuting Areas in Minnesota.**



*Minnesota State Demographic Center*

**Figure 2: Three of Four Cities Reported Doubling their Foreign-born Population**

DATA: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 & 2010 Decennial Census; 2019 ACS 5-year estimates

Population estimates show a measurable increase in foreign born residents as a share of total city population. Three of four cities featured in this study doubled their foreign-born population as a percentage of their total population over the past 20 years (Figure 2). Pelican Rapids, which reported the first wave of refugee resettlement in the 1990s, reported slightly slower growth from 2000-2019, although foreign-born residents make up a higher percentage of the overall population. By 2019, the BIPOC population now exceeds the white, non-Latino population in both Worthington and Pelican Rapids (Table 2).

**Table 2: White, Non-Latino Residents Now the Population Minority in Two of Four Cities**

	Target City Race & Ethnicity Trends: White, Non-Hispanic Population (2000 - 2019)					
	2000		2010		2019	
	Total	Percent of Population	Total	Percent of Population	Total	Percent of Population
<b>Austin</b>	21,122	90.6%	20,145	81.5%	17,898	69.7%
<b>Pelican Rapids</b>	1,740	73.3%	1,424	57.8%	1,145	45.5%
<b>Willmar</b>	15,048	82.0%	14,413	73.5%	12,661	62.6%
<b>Worthington</b>	8,000	70.9%	6,969	54.6%	5,179	38.3%

U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 & 2010 Decennial Census & 2019 ACS 5-year estimates

The following section outlines other characteristics of each city, including their geographic location, economy, and relationship to immigrant and refugee resettlement. Though each

community has its own unique identity and history, these profiles demonstrate the profound similarities between all three communities, which inform the findings to our study:

### **City of Austin**

Austin, Minnesota, the county seat of Mower County, is located at the intersection of U.S. Interstate 90 and U.S. Highway 218. Austin is colloquially known as “SPAM Town USA” thanks to Hormel Foods Corporation locating its corporate headquarters in the city. Since arriving in Austin, Hormel and its factories have become the city’s largest employer and are often one of the first points of contact for incoming immigrants. Hormel also created the SPAM Museum and sponsored the creation of the Hormel Institute, which has become a leading cancer research institute. The government, education, hospitality, and retail sectors comprise much of the remainder of Austin's employment base.

In an active effort to “cultivate a just and inclusive community where diversity is valued and human rights are respected,” the city of Austin created a Human Rights Commission. This Commission, made up of volunteers appointed by the Mayor, and the elected city officials subsequently collaborated to publish the Welcoming Report: Building a Strong and Prosperous Community in 2017 and then a Strategic Welcoming Plan in 2018. Austin is home to the Development Corporation of Austin, which partners with 79 area organizations and whose mission is to collaborate with public and private sector partners to support existing enterprises and attract new business and industries to the community.

### **City of Pelican Rapids**

Pelican Rapids, Minnesota, located in Otter Tail County, is situated at the intersection of U.S. Highway 59 and Minnesota State Highway 108. The city is known for its proximity to and love of the many local lakes and rivers, and is home to Maplewood State Park. Jennie-O is one of the largest employers in the area, and its local manufacturing plant, West Central Turkeys, is known as a viable employment option for many incoming immigrant and refugee families. The city’s first wave of Romanian refugees nearly doubled the total population in the 1990’s, leading to a rapid change in local culture that has continued to evolve with time. Pelican Rapids is home to the Pelican Rapids Area Economic Development Corporation, which partners with 17 area organizations.

Pelican Rapids, by far the smallest city in this study, does not have the Human Rights Commission as seen in Austin or Willmar but it does have a Multicultural Committee with local entrepreneurs and government officials that discusses community opportunities. Additionally, the following statement can be found in the Pelican Rapids Community Vision published by the city:

*“Community members are proud of their diverse cultural citizenship, recognizing the needs and celebrating the opportunities of this diversity. The community encourages, develops, and maintains the leadership, talents, and potential business opportunities, in a cooperative, trusting manner. All citizens enjoy bonds of mutual acceptance and respect.”*

### **City of Willmar**

Willmar, Minnesota, the county seat of Kandiyohi County, is located at the intersections of U.S. Highways 12 and 71. In 2001, the city was recognized as an "All American City" by the National Civic League, in part for its success as growing numbers of immigrants became part of the community. Since 1989, Willmar has experienced a large influx of immigrants from Latin America and Northeast Africa, mostly due to the demand for labor at the Jennie-O poultry plant, the city's largest employer. Willmar is home to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, which partners with 11 area organizations.

The city of Willmar created a Human Rights Commission in 1994 which continues to work with the City to ensure all plans and the current community culture are in line with human rights rules, regulations, and initiatives. Additionally, as a part of their Willmar Lakes Area Vision 2040, the city developed a Take A Stance Against Racism Initiative whose plans and action items are based on the following statement:

*“The individuals, organizations, and institutions undersigned affirm their commitment to recognizing, addressing, and opposing all forms of hateful behaviors, racism, and social injustice. Our communities’ futures require that all of us commit to fighting racism in all its forms. We must ensure that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color can safely and freely live, work, and play and that everyone's rights are respected, no exceptions.”*

### **City of Worthington**

The City of Worthington, Minnesota, the county seat of Nobles County, is situated in the southwest corner of the state at the intersection of U.S. Interstate 90 and U.S. Highway 59. Worthington is home to the JBS pork plant, which employs over 2,000 Nobles County citizens, including a diverse array of immigrants and refugees. The impact the plant has on the city was palpably felt when JBS shut-down for a period of approximately two weeks in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, gaining attention from various news sites as they were one of the first to do so, though many similar industry employers, including some in the other cities selected for this research, would end up doing the same. Worthington is home to the Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation, which partners with 60 area organizations.

Worthington is home to the Cross-Cultural Advisory Committee which consists of a board of volunteers who collaborate with the city on any initiatives that might involve diversity, equity, or inclusion. This nine-member committee, which includes one City Council member and eight local BIPOC representatives, had its first meeting in December of 2020 and has not yet had much opportunity to address community concerns or publish supporting documentation. At the time that this research is being conducted, Worthington does not have any published statements on the topic of diversity.

# Literature Review

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Our literature review consisted of a focused search for materials related to rural local governments serving immigrant and refugee populations. In general, literature that focused on local governments and their immigrant and refugee populations was available, however once the “rural” criteria is added, the field of literature diminishes significantly. In addition, while studies on topics like rural health may have been abundant, studies on rural immigrant and refugee health were not forthcoming. This led our literature review to focus on an unexpected theme: immigrant and refugee labor in meatpacking communities. Likely because meatpacking has become an especially rural industry that runs on immigrant and refugee labor, literature on rural meatpacking communities doubles as literature on rural immigrant and refugee communities. Finally, our literature review involves “Welcoming Standards.” These standards, compiled by the non-profit organization Welcoming America, established a set of best practices for welcoming immigrants and refugees to communities.

## Who are Rural Immigrants & Refugees?

It is often the case that immigrant and refugee communities are casually lumped together with no reference to the distinctions between the two. However, important distinctions do exist, particularly pertaining to their demographic characteristics and lived experiences in the United States. In this study, the use of the term “refugee” will be consistent with the term’s definition under the United Nations’ 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, which was enacted into U.S. law under the Refugee Act of 1980:

*“a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of a ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin.”*

More specifically still, our usage of the term will include asylum seekers who have passed a “credible fear interview.” By definition, asylum is a protection granted to foreign nationals who have either already entered the United States or have requested asylum at the U.S. border and who meet the U.N. definition of a refugee.

Unlike the term “refugee,” there is no universally accepted, legal definition for the term “immigrant.” For the sake of our research and use of the term, we have established the following definition, which draws upon the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) definitions of “migrant” and “immigrant:”

*“From the perspective of the country of arrival, a person who has voluntarily moved away from his or her country of usual residence, whether temporarily or permanently.”*

For the sake of the background research and analysis conducted by our team, we attempt to distinguish between this pair of separate communities whenever possible. However, it should be noted that not all of our team’s interview subjects were able to uniformly distinguish between the two in their assessments of local government’s relationship and interactions with their local immigrant and refugee communities. Similarly, it is also the case that not all local governments make the distinction in their outreach and engagement efforts.

### **Latino Minnesotans in the Time of COVID-19**

Our research builds on a 2020 report from the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs (MCLA) titled “Latino Minnesotans in the Time of COVID-19.” The study was done by completing community listening sessions with Latino communities in similar Greater Minnesota communities as our study focuses on.

Our research questions necessitated that we have a baseline understanding of what the interests and concerns of immigrant and refugee communities in Greater Minnesota might be. Our second research question asks, “how are the officials’ identified issues similar or different compared to the expressed needs of their immigrant and refugee populations?” This comparison requires knowledge of the expressed needs of immigrant and refugee populations. The MCLA report provides this knowledge, summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3: MCLA Findings on Latino Community Concerns, 2021**

<b>MNCLA Community Listening Sessions: Summary of Community Concerns</b>	
<b>Education</b>	<b>Economic Development / Taxes</b>
Access to Information Technology	Financing/Purchasing Homes
Teachers of Color & Bilingual Support Staff	Workplace Safety & COVID-19 Precautions
Anti-Racist Curriculum	Financial Literacy
ELL Program Funding	Affordable Housing Options
Translation Services & Visual Aids	Childcare Options
Adult Basic Education	Include ITIN Users in Tax Incentives
K-12 Spanish Classes for Latino Students	Extend Social Services to Undocumented Individuals
	Expand COVID-19 Renter Relief
<b>Social Services &amp; Healthcare</b>	<b>Immigration</b>
Information/Education on COVID-19	Driver’s Licenses for All
Recreational Opportunities	Funding for Latinx Community Organizations
Legal Services & Information on Rights	Non-Profit Funding to Serve Migrant Workers
Isolation from Government	
Census Completion Rates	
Healthcare Access	
COVID-19 Safety in Schools	
Interpreters at Community Clinics	

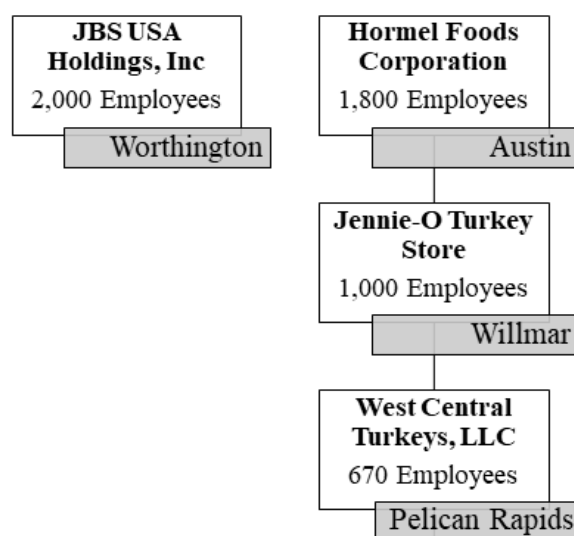


Though this study revealed a great deal about community concerns, there are some gaps in what it reveals. This study's narrow focus on Latino communities in Greater Minnesota does not provide enough information to answer our research questions. We are concerned with the full spectrum of races and ethnicities found in immigrant and refugee populations in Greater Minnesota. Detailed information like this on other ethnic and racial groups in Greater Minnesota would be valuable research to generate. However, many of the issues identified in the MCLA report are generalizable to non-Latino immigrant and refugee communities. These communities have enough in common as immigrants, refugees, and workers in similar industries to warrant generalizing for the sake of scope and approach.

### Meatpacking Communities

Meatpacking is a leading industry in each of the rural localities in our sample, and it is dominated by immigrant and refugee labor. Studies of meatpacking communities find that immigrant and refugee labor in meatpacking increases employment while also increasing the need for education and language services (Artz, et. al 2010; Dalla and Christenson 2005). Multiple studies demonstrate that immigrant and refugee communities in meatpacking communities need a variety of critical services that are in short supply (Artz et. al 2010; Dalla and Christenson 2005; MCLA 2020). Figure 2 demonstrates that despite the different processing plants present in each city, Hormel Foods Corporation actually owns three of the four plants studied: Jennie-O Turkey Store and West Central Turkeys, LLC are its subsidiaries.

**Figure 3: Meatpacking Corporations by City**



The “meatpacking communities” lens provides a focus on employment conditions that other studies may miss. Because meatpacking workers typically have virtually no protections against termination, workers may be especially hesitant to be critical of their employers on the record (Oxfam 2015). Studies may fail to assess community needs and struggles related to employment unless they build trust over time and directly ask about job-related issues. Dalla and Christenson ask directly about packing plant conditions over the course of a years-long study where trusting relationships were developed. Their study revealed numerous concerns about the packing plant. The processing lines were moving faster and faster, leading to more injuries and exhaustion. Exhausted workers couldn’t take advantage of the educational and language programs the employer sponsored. Promoting Latino individuals to management roles had a neutral or negative impact on workers’ perceptions of relationships with management (Dalla and Christenson 2005).

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, literature about meatpacking communities shifted towards a focus on health outcomes. News headlines declared outbreaks in several Minnesota meatpacking facilities (Orenstein 2021). Multiple studies confirm that rural communities with meatpacking plants are especially at risk to be exposed to COVID-19 (Peters 2020 ; Reid et al 2020). This literature also highlights the importance of rural communities developing social services. In his regression analysis, David Peters identifies a lack of social capital and a lack of access to social services as significant factors that increase COVID-19 risk in rural communities (Peters 2020).

The meatpacking lens provides a powerful argument supporting the generalizability of the issues described in the “Latino Minnesotans in the Time of COVID-19” report. Immigrants and refugees in Greater Minnesota are subject to the same hazards and occupy the same space within the local economy, even when they are from different racial or ethnic groups.

### **Welcoming America: A Framework for Assessing Local Government Support for Immigrants and Refugees**

Welcoming America is an organization dedicated to creating communities that are inclusive to everyone, including immigrants and refugees. One of the cities our report focuses on, Austin, is a certified Welcoming City. The “Welcoming Standard” is used as a framework for assessing an individual city’s welcoming capacity for immigrants and refugees. The standards include seven categories: Government Leadership, Equitable Access, Civic Engagement, Connected Communities, Education, Economic Development, and Safe Communities. These best practices contain both a requirement and indicators to assess whether or not requirements are being met. Take, for example, the Welcoming Standard’s first requirement for education (Table 4):

**Table 4: Education Requirements, Welcoming America**

<b>Education Requirements</b>	
<b>Requirement</b>	A partnership program is in place to work with the primary and secondary school system to attain more equitable educational outcomes for immigrant students
<b>Indicator</b>	The partnership program advances immigrant parent engagement in schools and supports immigrant parents in navigating the education system

As governments face the new and emerging challenges of establishing social cohesion in demographically changing communities, having a clearly defined set of best practices is invaluable to government officials who have limited time and resources. It might be argued that Welcoming America’s requirements are especially burdensome to small rural communities. Rural local governments have extremely constrained resources, and meeting the Welcoming Standards is not within the reach of local governments acting alone. Fortunately, Welcoming America defines what a partnership program is:

*“The Welcoming Standard uses partnership programs to refer to efforts achieved through partnership with other organizations or governments. Like programs, partnership programs do not need to be stand-alone initiatives, and will likely be achieved through coordinated activities of a number of different agencies and organizations. Local governments may or may not be the lead on the work of partnership programs.”*

Most Welcoming Standards involve a partnership program, rather than a program necessarily led by local governments and funded solely by their constrained resources. This does not solve the problem of limited resources in rural communities entirely. Local governments are not the only actors in small communities who face resource constraints. It could be argued that the smaller a rural community, the less capacity there will likely be to implement Welcoming Standards, even if the will exists.

A second aspect of the Welcoming Standards is that they provide a benchmark for establishing the needs of immigrant and refugee communities. By its nature, a set of best practices identifies a set of key issues that immigrant and refugee communities face, and proposes a course of action to address those issues. By using the Welcoming Standards (Table 5) to reverse-engineer a set of implied community needs and issues, we have developed a more well-rounded image of community needs than would otherwise be possible.

**Table 5: Welcoming America Standards Requirements**

<b>Sample of Welcoming Standards Requirements</b>	
<b>Government Leadership</b>	A policy is in place that designates a unit focused on immigrant inclusion work
<b>Equitable Access</b>	A program is in place to ensure language access across government agencies
<b>Civic Engagement</b>	A partnership program is in place to develop immigrant knowledge of local government workings and advance civic engagement
<b>Connected Communities</b>	A partnership program is in place to nurture connections between the immigrant community and the receiving community
<b>Education</b>	A partnership program is in place to advance educational and career opportunities for immigrant adults
<b>Economic Development</b>	A partnership program is in place to advance immigrants in starting, building, and growing businesses
<b>Safe Communities</b>	A partnership program is in place to strengthen relationships and promote regular communication between law and code enforcement agencies and the immigrant community

While the Welcoming Standards provide a good framework for best practices, it is clear that they are not tailored to small or rural communities. Many, if not most, of the standards describe a program or a partnership program being in place. This is reflective of a set of best practices that seems tailored to larger cities. There is likely some variation among rural cities in their ability to put such standards into practice.

Austin, with over 25,000 residents, is a certified Welcoming City that meets the Welcoming Standards. Pelican Rapids, with just over 2,000 residents, would be hard pressed to have the capacity to meet a set of standards this robust. It could be argued that partnership programs are not limited by the capacity of a local government, because they rely in whole or in part on private sector partners, nonprofits and community organizations, and others. However, the smaller a community is, the more limited the network of potential partners is as well. This is not to say small

communities cannot meet the Welcoming Standards, however the work involved to do so, on a per-person or per-entity basis, would likely be much higher for smaller cities.

# Findings & Discussion

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## *Part 1: Issues & Challenges*

*As Expressed by Rural Officials & Community Leaders*

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This section is dedicated to answering the first and second research questions:

1. What do local government officials and community partners identify as the most pressing issues facing their local immigrant and refugee populations?
2. What strengths and challenges do local government officials and community partners cite within their primary outreach and inclusion efforts?

With results drawn directly from our interviews, *Part 1: Issues & Challenges* is divided into five key sections:

1. Social Cohesion & Cultural Bias
2. Government Outreach: Attitudes & Barriers
3. Language & Communication Barriers
4. Representation in Government & Public Institutions
5. Rural Housing Deficit

Existing literature suggests that immigrant and refugee populations are often perceived as a “mixed blessing” by long-term community residents (Baker & Hotek, 2003; Dalla & Baugher, 2001). While these new populations fill important roles in the community, rapid population growth can create a great deal of stress on local government’s ability to adapt and provide services. This stress is experienced both culturally and materially, from the lingual barriers and the housing deficit to changes in education, healthcare, and welfare services, causing concern among local officials surrounding community cohesiveness and solidarity. Issues regarding resources and insufficient government outreach also exist, with many officials unclear on the best path forward.

### **1. Social Cohesion & Cultural Bias**

Since Austin, Pelican Rapids, Willmar, and Worthington were predominantly white before the turn of the century, the recent increase in BIPOC residents is often cited by interviewees as a turning

point in these communities. The continued waves of migration create new challenges, just as community members feel they have adjusted to the challenges of the first wave of immigration. Our interviewees cite older white residents as those most likely to be uncomfortable with demographic change, with prejudice highly linked to both racial identity and the recency of a demographic's arrival. This ongoing local tension is what the interviewees identified as one of the most pressing issues facing their local immigrant and refugee populations.

In all four communities, Latino immigrant communities first arrived between 1990 and 2000, while migration of Eastern European, East African, and South Asian communities picked up following the turn of the century. Most city officials interviewed in this study attributed differences in hostility across cultures to the growing pains of being “recent arrivals,” while others highlighted a culture of self-segregation as the driving issue.

*“The biggest issue I run into is that people are still incredibly siloed. And even within their own immigrant communities end up being siloed. And this was even pre-pandemic, and the pandemic certainly hasn't helped with that.”*

These siloes move in both directions. Lack of trust can be mutual, with arriving and receiving communities showing little trust in one another. Interviewees recognized that trust and respect vary, depending upon either race or ethnicity or the recency of arrival into the community.

*“The Spanish population has been around obviously the longest and you know they've done well to assimilate into our community. They own homes, they own businesses. They're doing quite well. The Somalis are a different story, they just want to be, you know, kind of off on their own.”*

The Austin Human Rights Commission issued a Welcoming Report that lists “lack of interaction between groups” as the first barrier to building a welcoming community. This report provides less nuance than we observe here: the Welcoming Report does not identify any one group as being especially well connected to other community groups, or one group that is especially isolated (2017). It is possible that this varies between communities. Interviewees in Pelican Rapids pointed out that their East African communities were highly mobile, frequently moving between Pelican Rapids and other locales. This dynamic was not cited elsewhere. However, based on comments about religious and racial or ethnic bias towards East African immigrants and refugees, it is possible that barriers to social cohesion for East Africans is widespread.

Other interviewees recognized that refugees had particular difficulties:

*“From the refugee side, most of the people are very isolated. You know, when they come to America, they're like, ‘ah, I don't know if I can do that, I don't fit in that location.’ We*

*have this disconnect between refugees and the natives here. So for so many years when refugees moved to Austin, the only thing they had in common with other Austin residents was the work that they were doing at QPP or Hormel. But when it comes to community involvement, you know, there's a disconnect."*

While interviewees often focused on issues like trust and forming connections, racism and bias were also frequently noted. Racism was discussed almost exclusively as being targeted towards East African communities, Black people, and Muslims:

*"I think there's more racism directed at Blacks than there is at Latinos. And particularly Muslims. It seems like a lot of the frustration [from receiving community members] is with the Somalis. We have a community of Karens here also... I mean I'm sorry there doesn't seem to be as much consternation about Karens as there is about Somalis."*

### **Code Violations & Social Cohesion**

Our interviews revealed that there is also a relationship between code violation enforcement, and racist or biased behavior. One interviewee describes the issue as being more related to receiving community residents reporting code violations to police:

*"Yeah, last spring when we were first in lockdown, there was a group of Somali teens that were playing soccer at a park. And the cops got calls daily complaining about them. And I thought, 'if they were white kids, would people have cared as much?'"*

It is common to see warnings and fines issued. In this example, the police are not targeting immigrants and refugees, but because they are reported more, and are less likely to know the codes in the first place, they may be disproportionately cited. This creates a cyclical pattern in which immigrants and refugees are punished for not knowing the rules or not following existing cultural norms. In the following quote, code violations are the subtext of what an interviewee is saying:

*"I'm not going to just paint the Hispanics, because there are... regular white Caucasian Americans like this, but they're not used to living the way we live, and there might be four or five broken down cars sitting in the front yard, or you know just a bunch of clutter or garbage."*

In this example, the specific code violation is described. When the interviewee is speaking of newcomers not being used to living the way the receiving community members live, a big part of that is a lack of knowledge of the area's cultural practices and the city codes that shape them. Paying special attention to code enforcement communications with immigrant and refugee



communities on the front end means less conflict-laden and punitive code enforcement on the back end.

### **Existing Strategies for Social Cohesion**

All of the sample cities have worked diligently with their respective communities to foster opportunities for social cohesion by creating intentional opportunities for cultural sharing and open discussion and by ensuring that spaces and events that serendipitously bring people from various backgrounds together remain funded and accessible to everyone who might wish to participate.

#### *Multicultural Festivals*

A common theme across our interviews was the presence of multicultural festivals in each city. These events included sharing food, dance, art and music from various cultures represented within the cities. Some smaller communities hired performers or groups from the Twin Cities in order to support a more robust festival.

#### *Multicultural Discussion Groups*

In Willmar, we heard about multicultural discussion groups that would meet over food. These were facilitated by community leaders and restaurant owners who had the capacity and space to host events like this.

#### *Sports*

Sports were often cited as something that brought the community together. Some interviewees explicitly described how students of color on basketball and soccer teams led their programs to success that excited the community. They were also described as a sort of community meeting place. One interviewee reflected on how their time volunteering at the concession stand at the local athletic complex was a valuable way to connect with the immigrant and refugee populations.

#### *Youth Social Relationships*

Some interviewees described how youth built social cohesion and cross-cultural contact in their cities. One interviewee described a canoe trip his teenage son was taking with friends, saying “it’s not lost on me that he’s the only white kid.” This interviewee valued the fact that young people were building social relationships across ethnicities.

#### *Integrated Neighborhoods*

One interviewee suggested that neighborhoods are more integrated in their city than they are in many suburban locales. They described having Sudanese neighbors and indicated that the integration of immigrant and refugee communities into receiving community neighborhoods was good for social cohesion. Our research has not independently confirmed the extent to which our focus cities are integrated.

### *Language & Friendship Groups*

Language and friendship groups are an innovative approach to social cohesion seen in Willmar. These groups pair English learners with fluent speakers to have conversations. Participants would share meals together and “just talk about life” according to one interviewee. This program was geared to provide an opportunity to practice the informal English language skills for social interaction, rather than the formal language learning that takes place in the adult education classrooms.

### *COVID-19 Impacts*

Several of these events were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Sporting events were cancelled, social groups were cancelled, and in some cases the restaurants that supported these events were sold or closed. COVID-19 has had an especially large impact on communities’ ability to support events that promote social cohesion. Some, like sports, will come back with time, but others will take the focused efforts of government and community leaders to prioritize the reinstatement of events like the ones described above.

## **2. Government Outreach: Attitudes & Barriers**

Attitudes towards and philosophies of government outreach varied substantially across communities. Despite their differences, a quote from one local official represents a unifying theme shared across all the communities:

*“Involvement in city government with members of our immigrant community has always been a challenge.”*

### **Pro-Government Outreach Attitudes**

Though united through the challenge of inclusion, communities fell into two camps: those who saw outreach to immigrant and refugee communities as part of their purview and those that did not. Among the pro-outreach cohort, challenges persist. Some interviewees wonder why certain communities are difficult to reach for commission appointments:

*“We put together a housing committee and we invited [a Somali leader]... he heads up the multicultural center. He came to the first meeting... but he never came back to another meeting... I tried to reach out to him and tried to get him involved, but for whatever reason he didn’t come back.”*

Other interviewees understood that many immigrant and refugee community leaders struggle to serve because they are overtaxed:

*“So from a macro standpoint, getting immigrants, migrants, or persons of color involved in committees, involved in public meetings, when we have roundtable discussions, it's the same ones. We need to identify new partners at the table, I think we find half a dozen or a dozen solo individuals, and everybody's asking them to be on the same committees and we just overwhelm them.”*

What each of these attitudes have in common is their proactive efforts to recruit immigrants and refugees to serve on committees and be involved in public life. They perceive outreach and inclusion work as part of their purview. This is an equity lens. Immigrant and refugee communities typically require higher levels of outreach than receiving communities to elicit similar levels of inclusion in local affairs. What leaders don’t have answers to is the question of how: how do you develop leaders in immigrant and refugee communities? What partnerships will this entail? What financial costs will need to be covered? Answering these questions is the next step for communities with pro-outreach attitudes.

One answer may be found in Austin, the only city which currently has an immigrant or refugee on the city council. Austin created an honorary council member position targeted towards young immigrant and refugee people, and frequently sees those same young people serve on boards and commissions.

### **Anti-Government Outreach Attitudes**

Another cohort of officials believes the onus of participation resides with local community members. Based on interviews with some of these officials, that position is based upon both ideological and practical considerations. As one official stated outright,

*“I’ve told people, the elected officials are middle to older age white people. If you want a say in how decisions are made, you need to come forward. Lack of involvement or education is going to leave us making decisions based on what we know.”*

*“If you don’t tell us what the shortcomings are, we won’t know that there are shortcomings. So I’m not shy about putting the responsibility back on other individuals that they need to step-up and work with us.”*

Some local officials also cite time and budgetary constraints as barriers to more robust outreach efforts to immigrant and refugee communities. They expressed exasperation and/or resignation at the scope of resources available to them in relation to existing duties and responsibilities:

*“I think one of the things that we have been striving for is to educate people as to the limitations of local government, that we’re not in a position to address all of the concerns that people have.”*

Attitudes emphasizing that local government power and resources are limited overlapped with anti-government outreach attitudes. Interviewees who put the onus on citizens to reach out to the government were also more likely to express distaste for some citizen groups who did put in the work to reach out to government:

*“We work at fostering a good relationship with various groups. That sometimes can be a challenge. I occasionally get frustrated with some groups whose advocacy I think may be more self-serving.”*

Some leaders in this cohort recognize in one breath that immigrant and refugee leaders are overtaxed, while in the very next breath they express confoundment at why these same leaders are struggling to serve on commissions:

*“[Immigrants and refugees have] attitudes where you work six days a week for twelve hours a day. That leaves you little time for involvement in various city committees or organizations. So that has always been a degree of frustration with trying to involve people with the organization. Several times we’ve had people join committees, and I don’t know if it ended up being a lack of interest or a lack of perceived importance that they ended up leaving those boards and commissions.”*

Anti-government outreach attitudes can pair with pro-government outreach attitudes. At times, interviewees do appear to hedge their comments putting the onus on citizens to reach out to the government and imply that it is “a two-way street.” In addition, interviewees with anti-government outreach attitudes still appear to value inclusion, or at least not oppose it.

## **Educating Immigrants & Refugees on Government Structures**

The bureaucratic intricacies of U.S. governance are difficult to grasp for even long-time residents, let alone newly-arrived immigrant and refugee communities. Having been historically underrepresented in the United States, immigrants and refugees may assume their engagement and feedback is not wanted. Diverting their time and energy away from the rigors of everyday life to attend government functions is not obviously a trade-off worth making, especially when they are uncertain about what kind of access they have to public officials, and what it costs to access them:

*“[Immigrant and refugee populations] feel like, maybe we’ll call the mayor and it will cost us money, but I told them, ‘No, you can call the mayor to come and speak at your event. It doesn’t cost any money because he’s our leader, he represents us.’ So everyone was like, wow, so... we can call the police chief, if we have something where we feel like we are not represented, anyone can call the police chief.”*

In this view, the barrier to government outreach lies in educating immigrant and refugee communities not about the limited capacities of local government, but about the accessibility and public-facing nature of American local government.

### 3. Language & Communication Barriers

Interviewees frequently noted language barriers as a major roadblock in government outreach among immigrant and refugee populations. The cost barrier to providing comprehensive language services (translation, interpreters, etc.) makes it nearly impossible for rural communities to engage every language group in the community, given there are hundreds of first-languages spoken across the state. Table 6 demonstrates the actions each of the four cities has taken to bridge this communication gap.

**Table 6: Language Services by City**

<b>Has a program been established to ensure language access across government agencies, with the goal of expanding equitable access to programs, services, and activities?</b>	
<b>Pelican Rapids</b>	Language access needs are sourced informally through sporadic partnerships with West Central Turkeys, who have translators. The Multicultural Resource Center began providing language translation and support services in 2019, but it is unclear if this is still the case.
<b>Worthington</b>	Language access services are provided on a case-by-case basis. The city will hire bilingual individuals to perform discrete language access tasks. One recent task included providing language services for businesses owned by non-native English speakers so that they could apply for CARES Act funding. The new Cross Cultural Advisory Committee also hopes to “help bridge miscommunication”

<b>Austin</b>	The Welcome Center is the centralized source of language access services. Government agencies will access services provided by the Welcome Center for appointments with non-English speakers. School systems enhance language access through the Success Coach program.
<b>Willmar</b>	Translated materials, including some videos, are provided on a case-by-case basis.

All four cities work either formally or informally with their local meatpacking plants to translate and disseminate important information to immigrants and refugees. In Austin, Willmar, and Worthington, city agencies also purchase additional language services “when necessary.” Pelican Rapids and Austin have multicultural and welcome centers, respectively, that provide language services, though Austin’s services are far more extensive.

While language translation felt like an insurmountable hurdle for some of the interviewees, Welcoming America’s writings on connecting to immigrant and refugee populations places the emphasis on intentional outreach and built trust rather than the more technical act of translation. Outside of translating government documents and outreach materials, making a commitment to contact-building work and knowing and catering to the intended audience will allow for more consistent and established communication and is a more effective means of connecting to these populations than only working to translate documentation.

One community leader from Worthington took a non-traditional approach to discussing language and communication barriers. This interviewee did not frame the conversation solely in terms of limited English proficiency among immigrants and refugees, but rather acknowledged how the Worthington government lacked some modern language and communication tactics. They state, “*we have an entire city staff that are not strong in social media.*” This interviewee posited that by investigating the social media networks used by the local Latino community, their city could ensure that the money spent on translation had a greater reach and impact than government memos or emails alone.

#### **4. Representation in Government & Public Institutions**

Like language barriers, there was almost universal acknowledgement among interviewees that local governments must improve immigrant and refugee representation within their institutions and administrative decision-making processes. Nearly as universal was the uncertainty over how to accomplish that goal, or trepidation over making it a local priority:

*“I think that one of the concerns I have is that, as much as we say we want to do these things, are we really genuine in what we do about what we say?”... It’s like me saying,*

*‘Okay, we should come-up with a way to help integrate diversity inside city hall.’ But I’ve been on the Council since 2013 and we haven’t found a way to do that. I have this conflicted feeling; I recognize that but what have we done to make that happen?’*

Generally speaking, interviewees’ uncertainty or hesitancy around local inclusion and diversification focused on three perceived barriers: lack of community interest, non-traditional hiring qualifications, and/or overtaxed community leaders. Concerns about community interest stemmed from a perceived lack of involvement from immigrant and refugee communities in local government functions; a sentiment similarly expressed in the previous section about government outreach. This lack of involvement was often portrayed as “self-segregation” and reflective of local difficulties in efforts to fully integrate immigrant and refugee communities.

Attempting to explain this perceived lack of local involvement, many interviewees cited the day-to-day rigors and time constraints associated with working, raising a family, and adjusting to new social and cultural norms. Interview subjects seemed to empathize with the difficult tradeoffs and prioritizations thrust upon their immigrant and refugee communities; understanding why traditional forms of civic participation might not be considered a top priority. While those feelings of empathy are important foundations for creating a shared point of understanding between the communities, they did not answer questions about how to effectively foster and promote greater levels of participation in civic functions and institutions. As one interviewee succinctly stated,

*“I would say we’re just beginning to look at how our government and our schools find a way to be more successful in reflecting the diversity of the community.”*

Discrepancies between worker qualifications and traditional hiring requirements were also frequently cited as an explanation for the lack of diversity and representation within public leadership positions. Based on their observations, immigrant and refugee job applicants do not historically possess the academic and professional qualifications traditionally valued in the hiring process. Most interviewees expressing that sentiment did so in their capacity as observers to the hiring process, themselves acknowledging the benefits of having immigrants and refugees represented within local institutions but referencing difficulties convincing various hiring authorities to view the situation similarly:

*“The [police] chief feels like we don’t want to lower our [hiring] standards, and I said ‘Well, it’s not lowering our standards, it’s just having different standards to better meet what our needs are.’”*

Finally, interviewees also referenced overtaxed community members and community leaders as a barrier to greater political representation. Most officials readily acknowledged and sympathized with the notion that when confronted with the hardships of working, raising a family, and adjusting

to life in the United States, civic participation is oftentimes not a major priority for community members. As such, the research team found that civically active immigrant and refugee community members quickly become overtaxed as local institutions identified and started relying on them as de-facto representatives for their respective communities by the virtue of their participation. This creates a perception that civic participation is a major investment in terms of time and/or resources, which many in the community cannot afford and subsequently discourages their involvement.

*“As the only person at a leadership table, it’s hard to be the token voice for your entire community and be a spokesman for the entire community. It’s unfair to ask people to do that. I think, in terms of building that support at a leadership level, it’s been tough.”*

*“I feel like the ones who are active in things are active in everything, and they’re really spread thin. So, we almost need to encourage people more.”*

## **Representation Case Studies**

While immigrant and refugee representation within local governments and other institutions has undoubtedly been a challenge, each of the four sample cities have made distinct efforts to promote representation: by having honorary positions, creating inclusive committees, commissions, and boards, and having additional programming in areas of need such as schools and hospitals.

### *Election of City Councilmember Oballa Oballa & Austin’s Honorary Council Member Position*

In November 2020, residents of Austin elected Mr. Oballa Oballa to City Council, the first time in the city’s recorded history that a former refugee has been elevated to public office. Across numerous interviews, rural government officials from both within and outside Austin referenced Councilman Oballa’s victory as an encouraging step in the direction of greater representation and inclusivity in rural Minnesota. Indeed, it was the case that over the course of its interviews, the research discovered a number of local efforts and initiatives aimed at improving representation and inclusivity within Austin’s local institutions, enabling future generations of immigrant and refugee community members to follow in Councilman Oballa’s footsteps.

One of the most notable of these initiatives is Austin’s Honorary City Councilmember position, a position in which Mr. Oballa served prior to his election as a full councilmember. Local resident voters are eligible to apply for a four month position and, if selected, are invited to attend and participate in a number of local government functions. For example, the Honorary City Councilmember is eligible to participate in city council meetings and discussions, attend advisory board and commission meetings, receive all correspondence directed to the city council, and attend staff briefings and tours. The goal of the position is to show community members how local government works on a day-to-day basis, familiarizing them with local processes and resources,



and helping them to make connections within the community. Subsequently, local officials hope Honorary Council Members will share their experiences and learnings with members of their networks and communities, so as to add transparency to government processes and encourage civic participation amongst residents.

### *Multicultural Committees, Commissions, & Boards*

- Austin Human Rights Commission
- Pelican Rapids Multicultural Committee
- Willmar Human Rights Commission
- Willmar Park and Recreation Board
- Worthington Cross Cultural Advisory Committee
- Worthington Economic Development Corporation Board

Each of the sample cities maintains at least one committee, commission, or board that provides an opportunity for various needs to be discussed and prioritized by a diverse body of citizens with common interests. These groups additionally promote diversity by having community members volunteer to hold positions or by having elected officials select members they believe would best fulfill the obligations of the role and bring in a unique perspective on addressing community concerns. These selection processes remove some of the barriers that exist in elected positions or in government staff roles, such as the need for significant amounts of free time, funds, or long-standing relationships with established community leaders, allowing for a more diverse sample of citizens to participate in the decision making process.

### *Success Coach Program*

Another instance where there have been exciting efforts and future opportunities for community representation is within rural school systems. Nowhere is the diversity of the project's target communities more apparent than within their respective school districts, where some of the local schools have majority minority student populations. Unfortunately, the level of diversity amongst school staff and administrators has not kept pace with that of the student population. However, the introduction of Success Coaches and a corresponding suite of equity initiatives in the Austin Public School District represents a deliberate and seemingly successful effort in the right direction. Most notably, the program has established requirements for recruiting and retaining BIPOC teachers and staff to narrow the gap in diversity between the district's staff and students.

### *Local Scholarship Programs*

Interviewees also referenced local scholarship programs as a way to foster inclusion and representation within certain professional fields and institutions, most notably within the domains of healthcare and education. In Austin specifically, the team was informed about scholarship opportunities for local students entering into the fields of elementary education and social work, with some former recipients having already completed their programs and returned to Austin to work in these fields. These opportunities help provide community members with academic opportunities in fields of acute, local need and eventually, improve diversity and inclusivity within those professions locally.

### *Culturally Responsive Medical Care*

Several Willmar-area interviewees shared stories about the positive impact of having a nurse of Somali descent working in the community. With many of the challenges related to immigrant and refugee outreach involving barriers such as language, trust, and cultural norms, having someone who can address these challenges and connect directly with community members in need has been a real net benefit, especially in an area as sensitive and vital as the medical field, and during a pandemic.

While we use the term “representation,” it is important to distinguish between communities valuing “token” representation vs. valuing the skills and perspectives diverse representation brings. In our conversations interviewees never referred to representation as an end unto itself. Instead, representation was discussed in terms of the value having immigrants and refugees in these roles provides to the community.

## **5. Rural Housing Deficit**

The housing deficit was discussed in some capacity by every single interviewee. From the lack of market-rate housing to the unique housing needs of immigrants and refugees, housing access remains an integral challenge to creating equitable and cohesive communities. As one city government official put it,

*“Housing is the biggest challenge for refugees. It is easier for someone who has been in America longer to get a house or to get an apartment compared to a refugee who just moved here... most immigrants who moved to Austin have multi-generation families. You know, they have a family of more than four and more than five. So with housing or apartments built in Austin before they had all those refugees and immigrants, it's all one or two bedrooms or a small house.”*

Although housing access is an issue statewide, rural Minnesota's inability to attract developers poses specific challenges to immigrant and refugee communities. Meatpacking jobs tend to be well-paying compared to other options, pricing workers out of traditional "affordable housing." In addition, salaries are not high enough for most workers to own a home large enough to accommodate intergenerational families, leading many packing plant employees to live outside of the city limits.

The CRPD has documented the rural Minnesota housing crisis and notes a distinct lack of affordable and market-rate housing available in rural areas. Seniors tend to stay in their family homes much longer in these regions, leading to significantly less rotation in the housing market. Developers are hesitant to begin projects in rural areas as well given the low property values and median rent. In fact, housing development in rural areas often only occurs when a property owner chooses to build a home for themselves. As such, there is the dual issue of needing more housing and needing that housing to be affordable for renters and owners alike.

All interviewees were very aware of the challenges associated with attracting developers to rural areas and the consequences this deficit had on their community. As another city official stated:

*"Being able to build housing is the number one barrier to growth for Austin, as it is, frankly, for a lot of rural communities... What it comes down to is that the economics of building in Greater Minnesota and rural areas, at least at this point, don't always match up with the economics of what it costs to build. And so, you know, it costs me \$250,000 to build a house, well, maybe in Austin, I can sell it for \$280,000. Whereas if I build that same exact house in Burnsville, I can sell it for \$425,000."*

While there is no clear solution to the current housing crisis, the state and the city governments need to ensure that they are incorporating the diverse and distinct needs of their immigrant and refugee populations when attempting to build viable housing options for their communities. Current evidence suggests that local leaders may be overlooking the single most affordable source of housing in the state, manufactured housing:

*"We have a mobile home park on the west side of town... how do we allow people to live like that? Yet you can't shut it down because they need a place to live, and where are they going to go? And for some people this is better than where they came from. However, in my mind it's just not acceptable kinds of buildings."*

In this example, the interviewee identified themselves as an advocate for affordable housing, but did not see manufactured housing as an acceptable form of affordable housing. Conceptions of the quality of manufactured housing have, generally speaking, not changed over the past half century, even as the quality of a new manufactured home rivals a site-built home today (Johnston 2020).

Other interviewees indicate even stronger opposition to manufactured housing. One interviewee described a mobile home park whose residents were seeking to form a cooperative and purchase the property. The park consisted entirely of people of Hispanic and Southeast Asian descent. When trying to coordinate with the city to gain financial support for the project (housing deals typically require funding from a long list of partners) the interviewee describes the following:

*“This is local ownership... we’re putting the ownership back in control of your local citizens... Most of what we heard [from the city] was ‘this is an issue property. The roads are terrible, there’s rule violations... They did not embrace the idea.’”*

*“You have to remember that the history of municipalities with [mobile home] parks across the country is that they acquire them and demolish them. That’s the modus operandi. I see that happen all the time. This city bought a park several years ago and demolished it.”*

There is an internal contradiction when it comes to manufactured homes. Cities which otherwise describe a need for more housing, especially affordable housing, are hostile to manufactured home parks. They actively demolish them, fight against community ownership of parks, or just fail to see parks as community assets. Reevaluating the local government's stigma surrounding manufactured housing is a next step that could greatly benefit rural areas as a whole but immigrant and refugee communities as well.

## *Part 2: Comparing Interviews & Literature*

### *Gaps & Overlaps Between the Interviews & the MCLA Report*

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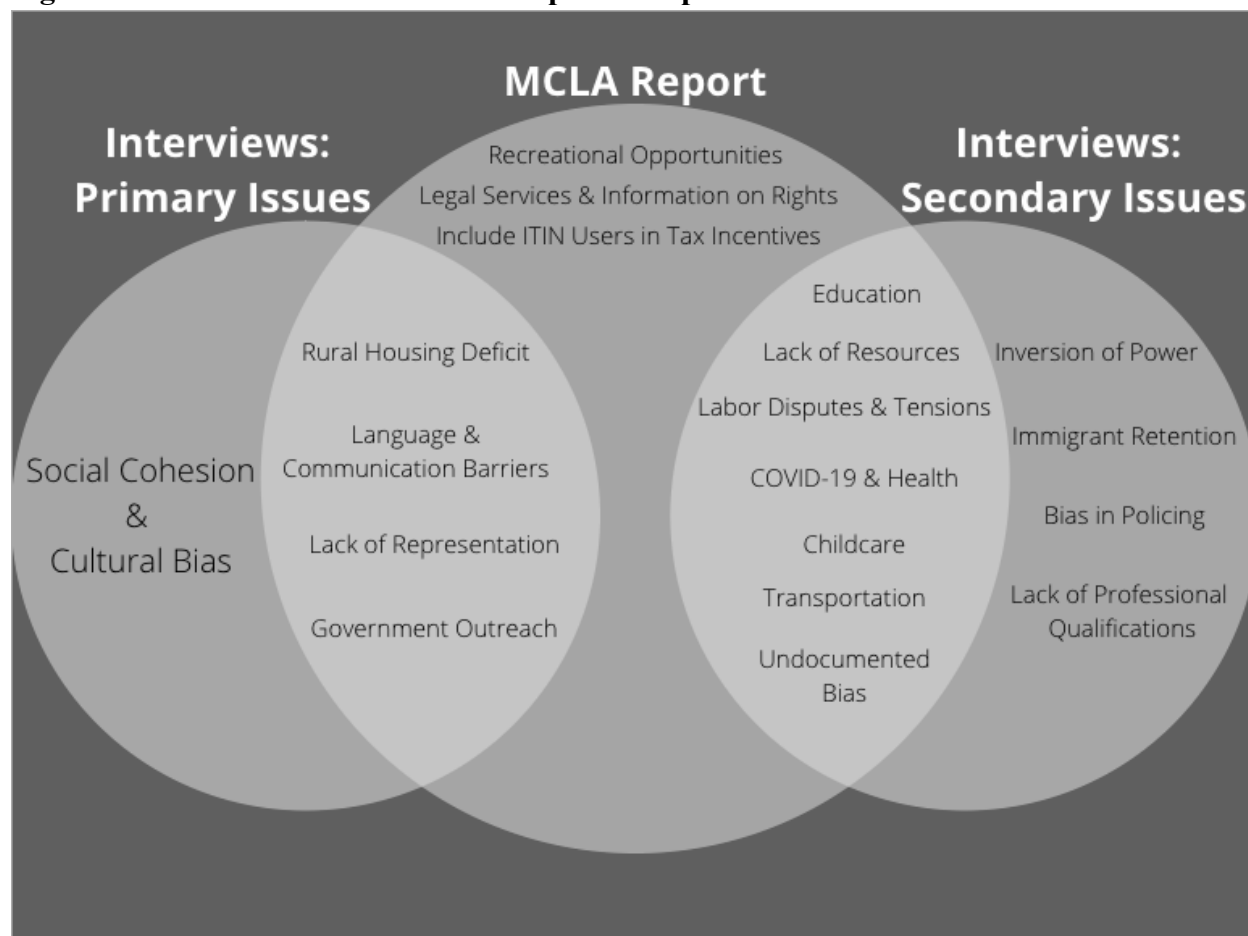
In Part 1, our report highlights issues and challenges experienced by local immigrant and refugee communities, as identified by local officials. Part 2 of our analysis compares the items addressed in Part 1 with those issues and challenges identified by rural immigrant and refugee communities in MCLA's 2020 report. The purpose of this exercise is to identify gaps and overlaps between the experiences and perceptions of the two groups of interviewees.

Because the self-identified issues and challenges experienced by rural immigrant and refugee communities are derived from MCLA's 2020 report, we must reiterate the biases previously identified in the "Data Limitations" section of the report: because responses were drawn from a solely Latino pool of interviewees in MCLA's 2020 report, they are biased towards the experiences and perceptions of Minnesota's rural Latino immigrant and refugee communities. As such, they do not perfectly represent Minnesota's full spectrum of rural immigrant and refugee communities, though we contend that many of the issues and challenges identified can be generalized across various immigrant and refugee communities, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Figure 4 below illustrates the aforementioned gaps and overlaps in perception. Before consuming that graphic, please take note of two items. First, the vocabulary used to identify issues and challenges varies between this report and the MCLA report. Therefore, our team utilized available context and best judgement to determine whether a particular issue or concern overlapped or not in our comparison. In an effort to be transparent about that process, a comparison chart can be found in the report's appendix.

The other item to note is the graphic's distinction between primary and secondary issues, as identified by local government officials. In Figure 4, "primary issues" refer to those identified in Part 1 of this report's "Findings & Discussion" section, which our team determined to be the primary issues and challenges identified in our interviews. The "secondary issues" refer to items that were mentioned by local officials but which were not mentioned with enough frequency or widespread conviction to be considered a "primary issue." By including the "secondary issues," we specify that those issues did not go entirely unacknowledged, while also distinguishing them from the issues that were most frequently and adamantly cited.

**Figure 4: Interview Issues v. MCLA Report Comparison**



As illustrated in Figure 4, four of the five primary issues identified across the team’s interviews with local officials were also raised by community members in MCLA’s report. The fifth issue however, “Social Cohesion & Cultural Bias,” has no explicit equivalent amongst those issues identified by MCLA. However, it is likely that challenges related to social cohesion and cultural bias underpinned a number of the issues MCLA identified. Having not conducted those interviews firsthand, it was deemed inappropriate to explicitly ascribe motives of bias and/or racism to the issues in MCLA’s report without greater context or direct insight into their interview process, interview subjects, and/or other relevant factors.

With that being said, the primary challenges and issues identified by rural government officials were largely consistent with those identified in the MCLA report. The only ones not, in some form or another, addressed by rural officials concerned recreational opportunities, legal services and information on rights, and the inclusion of ITIN users in tax exemptions. More than likely, the lattermost of those is beyond the usual scope of local government and therefore, not something the team’s interviewees would have referenced. On the other hand, recreational opportunities and legal services and information on rights are topic areas that can and should be squarely within the

purview of local government. As such, the omission of those from the team's interviews represents a potential gap in understanding of immigrant and refugee community needs.

The secondary issues in the venn diagram represent those mentioned with less frequency and/or considered less acute by the research team's interviewees. It is worth noting that while these items may have seemed secondary within the context of the team's interviews, they represented major challenges for many of MCLA's interviewees. Future research should more closely examine the discrepancies in perception that exist between government officials and immigrant and refugee communities when assessing the severity of local issues.

## *Part 3: Building Community through Embracing Change*

### *Analyzing Partnerships & Flow of Resources Toward Outreach & Inclusion Efforts*

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Local governments in Greater Minnesota have limited capacity to perform inclusion work. This is not uncommon nor surprising, as the limited tax base in rural counties negates the possibility of robust county and local government funding. In each city, government funds were less likely to flow towards inclusion work versus infrastructure or policing, to name two. Infrastructure, policing, and other services such as property tax administration, landscaping, and maintenance are all mandated services they are required to provide, whereas inclusion work is, at this time, a non-required service that these already overstretched governments have to opt into and divert resources to invest in. Consequently, inclusion work tended to rely on partnerships with local organizations, and the willingness of community leaders to conduct their own independent outreach. As one interviewee sums up,

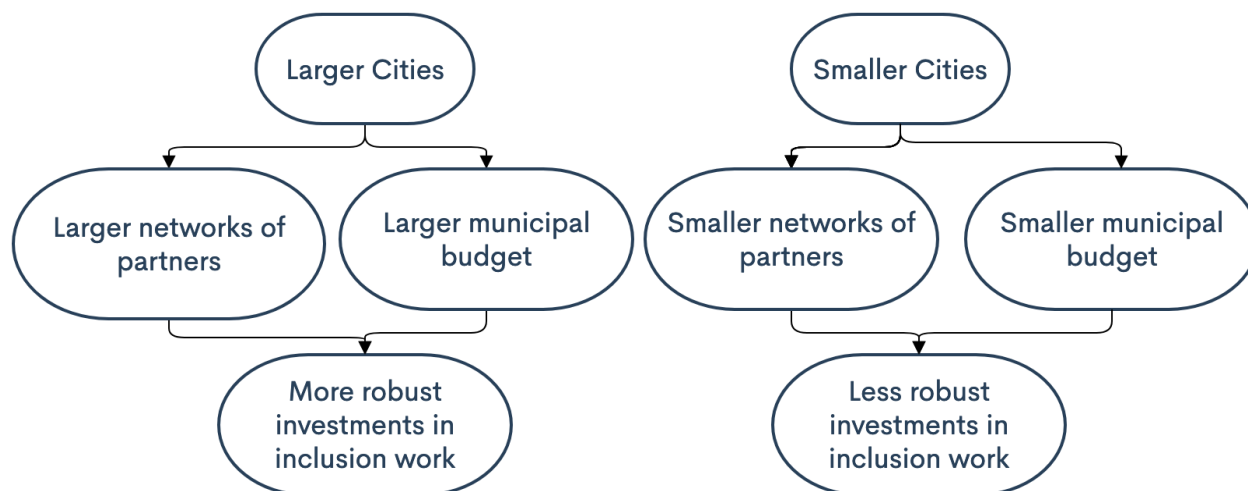
*“One of the things I’m trying to communicate is what the role and limitations of local government are... Making sure that our mowers are tuned up and running and our snowplows are ready to go. That’s a lot of what we do.”*

According to Welcoming America’s best practices, community partnerships are one of the most effective means for improving community cohesion and government interaction with immigrants and refugees. Nevertheless, the lack of robust organizational networks in rural areas does pose an issue for this method of outreach and inclusion.

Figure 6 demonstrates how local governments in smaller cities face an uphill battle in providing immigrant and refugee inclusion services: they have smaller budgets and smaller networks of organizations to partner with to share the burden of service provision. This difference is quantifiable when looking at the partnerships present in cities’ economic development corporations (EDCs). Willmar’s EDC boasts 91 partners, Austin’s EDC has 79 partners, Worthington’s has about 60, and Pelican Rapids has only 1. This analysis yields three questions:

1. What can cities do to maximize partnerships with the organizations they do have?
2. What targeted investments can be made in smaller Minnesota communities to expand their capacity to do immigrant and refugee inclusion work?
3. How can the state government invest in immigrant and refugee inclusion in smaller communities where private-sector investment capacity is less robust?

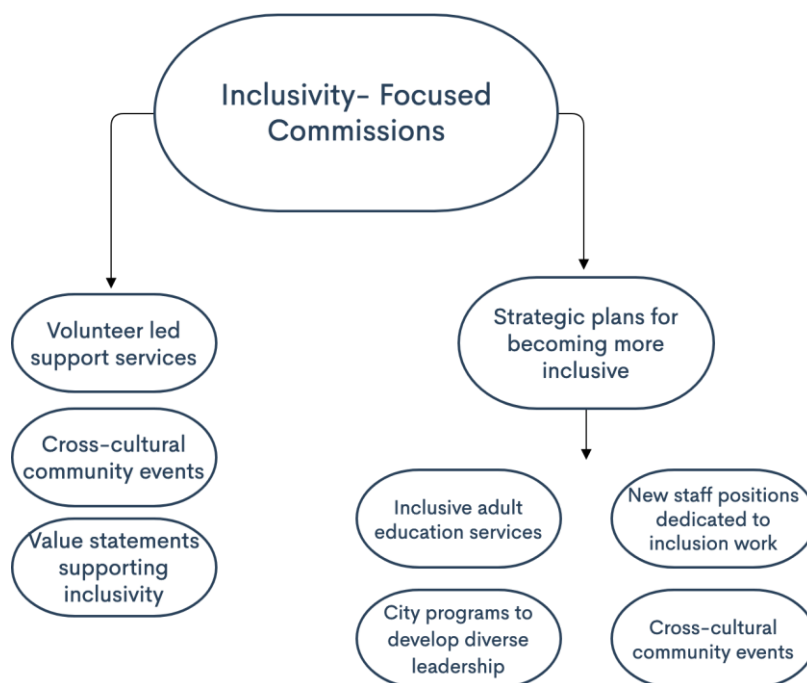


**Figure 6: Local Government Partnership Capacity**

### **Inclusivity-Focused Commissions**

Optimistically, all four cities researched have inclusivity-focused commissions at the city level. These commissions, a Human Rights Commission in Willmar and Austin, a Cross Cultural Advisory Committee in Worthington, and a Multicultural Committee in Pelican Rapids vary significantly in their age and what they do. The Austin Human Rights Commission has published several documents, including a strategic welcoming plan that has the support of the city council, while the Worthington Cross Cultural Advisory Committee was formed in December of 2020, and is still establishing a framework for the work that they will do.

**Figure 7: Possible Outcomes of Inclusivity-Focused Commissions**



Our research showed two main paths for commissions: one path sees the commission work to complete ad hoc goals. This is pictured on the left. The second path sees the commission act more systematically, creating formal documents like strategic plans, which lay out several steps for the local government to take. In general, no commission appeared to be able to do more than the one that created a strategic plan (Strategic Welcoming Plan–Austin, MN 2018). However, under a commission structure, the real power lies with the city council, so commissions may consider how much support they have for their goals on council when drafting their strategy. A strategic plan may be beyond the capacity of some commissions to create, while some commissions may have the capacity but not the cooperation of a city council. Commissions likely consider their own capacity and the extent of support they have from the council when drafting their agenda. Nevertheless, this analysis yields several questions:

- 1) How does a commission build the capacity and consensus necessary to create a strategic plan for inclusion that the city council will carry out?
- 2) How can inclusivity-focused commissions communicate with one another and learn from the strategies employed by other cities in Greater Minnesota?
- 3) In a given community, what type of commission work is most valuable and effective?

## **Meatpacking Employer Support**

In Greater Minnesota, local governments rely on local employers to give back to the community with service provision and investments. Entire networks of local employers support these investments, but meatpacking employers warrant special focus for two reasons:

- 1) They are the largest employer in each community
- 2) They are the largest employer of immigrants and refugees in each community

As such, meatpacking employers are especially likely not just to invest, but to invest in immigrant and refugee inclusion. Table 7 lists the support that meatpacking employers provide in their communities. Pluses indicate a support described to us during our interviews, while blanks indicate services that were not mentioned in interviews (though they may be present).

**Table 7: Meatpacking Employer Community Supports**

	<b>JBS USA Holdings, Inc. (Worthington)</b>	<b>Hormel Food Corporation (Austin)</b>	<b>Jennie-O Turkey Store (Willmar)</b>	<b>West Central Turkeys, LLC (Pelican Rapids)</b>
Transportation		+		
Education		+	+	
Economic Development	+	+	+	+
Recreation	+	+		
Language Services		+	+	+
Targeted Immigrant Services		+	+	

As noted previously, Hormel owns Jennie-O, and Jennie-O owns West Central Turkeys, so the overlap in provision of these services may reflect corporate policy. These companies are not entirely separate, which comes through in the comments from one Willmar area interviewee: “Hormel down there, they get more money from the [Hormel] foundation... than what we get in Willmar.” Another informed us that “Austin has something called the Hormel foundation... and there is a certain percentage of the profits that go into that foundation each year that have to be spent in Austin.”

A final distinction to make regarding meatpacking employer support has to do with the formality of the supports provided. More formal relationships tended to develop in larger cities with larger companies. In Pelican Rapids, West Central Turkeys has an informal relationship with the local government in which they will consult on housing developments. They also provide information dissemination and translation support for the local government sporadically. The rural toolkit for welcoming refugees in rural communities suggests that establishing formal partnerships where roles of each partner are clearly defined is especially supportive for immigrant and refugee communities (Welcoming Refugees in Rural Areas, 12).

This analysis yields two questions:

- 1) How can smaller communities develop formal partnerships with clearly defined roles in order to better serve their immigrant and refugee communities?
- 2) Do JBS, Hormel, Jennie-O, and West Central Turkeys have the capacity to ramp up their investments in providing services for their workforce and the greater immigrant and refugee community?

While most of our questions are geared towards further research, our team believes that Hormel’s ownership structure and access to capital make them uniquely positioned to make a multitude of community investments that cannot be matched in other locales. Other meatpacking employers may have the capacity to increase investments in their communities, but not on the scale we see from Hormel in Austin.

## Looking Ahead

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It is clear that an immigrant presence in rural communities is extremely beneficial in long-run community development, as well as short-term community rejuvenation. However, to obtain long-term benefits from a diversified population, community cohesion and outreach must be prioritized. Murray and Keller (1991) report that immigrants' contentment with rural residence has as much to do with economic success as it does with social and psychosocial factors, and it is the responsibility of local governments to establish connections and provide the necessary services and opportunities for representation in decision making to ensure that this integration is possible.

Looking ahead involves making recommendations that are actionable now while acknowledging that more research needs to be done in order to build more thorough understandings of how best to develop rural governments that serve their immigrant and refugee populations well within their funding and capacity constraints.

### **Questions for Further Research:**

- What can rural cities do to maximize partnerships with local organizations?
- What targeted investments can be made in smaller Minnesota communities to expand their capacity to perform immigrant and refugee inclusion work?
- How can the state government invest in immigrant and refugee inclusion in smaller communities where private-sector investment capacity is less robust?
- How can a commission build the capacity and consensus necessary to create a strategic plan for inclusion that a city council will carry out?
- How can inclusivity-focused commissions communicate with one another and learn from the strategies employed in other Greater Minnesota cities?
- How can smaller communities develop formal partnerships with clearly defined roles in order to better serve their immigrant and refugee communities?
- Do JBS, Hormel, Jennie-O, and West Central Turkeys have the capacity to ramp up their investments in providing services for their workforce and the greater immigrant and refugee community?

## **Future Considerations**

The following section outlines five major considerations for state and local governments as they consider best practices for outreach and inclusion among rural immigrants and refugees in the future:

1. Further Research
2. Intentional Public-Private Partnerships between Local Government & Employers
3. Direct State Investments in Inclusion Programs
4. Workforce Development Investments in Modular & Manufactured Home Construction
5. Partnerships between Inclusion-Focused Commissions

### **1. Further Research**

Further research must be conducted to better understand the landscape of governance and outreach in racially and ethnically diverse rural communities. Given the lack of study on rural diversity and inclusion, as well as the major differences between diverse rural and urban environments, it is important this topic is more adequately explored moving forward.

### **2. Intentional Public-Private Partnerships between Local Government & Employers**

Local governments can increase their capacity for diversity and inclusion programming by partnering with local employers and nonprofit organizations. Although the partnerships available to rural communities are limited (Figure 6), opportunities for improved collaboration exist across our target communities. Under this framework, employers may be under-utilized as partners in outreach programming. The city of Austin has the most robust partnership program of any city in our study, though this is largely due to the economic power and philanthropy of Hormel. Our research does not establish the extent to which local employers provide funds and form partnerships that benefit immigrant and refugee communities.

A better understanding of how communities can expand their partnerships with local businesses and organizations is required in order to grow and promote local economic development. A brief analysis of the membership in economic development corporations suggests that some communities have a robust network of employers at the table, while others have mostly government and non-profit partners in economic development. Best practices also suggest that clearly defined partnership roles and goals will yield the best results for immigrant and refugee

communities. Cities may have existing informal or ad hoc partnerships that they can consider formalizing for the benefit of immigrant and refugee communities and the city as a whole.

### **3. Direct State Investments in Inclusion Programs**

Outreach and inclusion programs are not feasible in many rural communities because neither local government nor local partners have the capacity to make them a reality. Still, rural communities express a desire to perform more inclusion work with immigrant and refugee communities. State government could step in and create a fund dedicated to supporting the expansion of existing inclusion programs to smaller communities. This might involve providing funds to an organization like the Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute (BCLI), a Twin Cities program that “supports, trains, and helps place people of color and other underrepresented community members on city and county publicly appointed boards and commissions.” Funds would be directed to BCLI to fund the expansion of their programming to a rural locale that is interested. According to BCLI, their organization has discussed expanding programming to Greater Minnesota, but they do not currently have the capacity to do so. Investing here targets funds to organizations that couldn’t expand their work without this state investment.

### **4. Workforce Development Investments in Modular & Manufactured Home Construction**

Stakeholders across the state recognize the high cost of construction driving up development costs in housing. This limits supply, and limited supply means higher prices for consumers. Investing in targeted workforce development programs in construction and maintenance means good jobs for Minnesotans and increased capacity for Minnesotan companies. This will be especially important in emerging and underutilized industries, such as modular and manufactured homes. Modular and manufactured homes cost less to build than site-built homes, and modern manufactured homes rival site-built housing in quality. However, construction expertise in these forms of housing is especially low. Investing in workforce development for manufactured and modular homes is one piece of the puzzle to lower development costs, get more homes built, and address the housing crisis in Minnesota.

Mary Tingerthall, a former Minnesota Housing director, argues that modular and manufactured housing are especially good targets for workforce development investments (personal communication, 2021). This is because workers in this field can be trained to perform discrete tasks assembling homes in a factory setting. Training employees to work in a manufactured home setting is simpler and more cost effective than in a site-built setting. Employees in manufacturing specialize in discrete tasks, which lowers the amount of training necessary to prepare for a job. This contrasts with site-built construction employees, who must acquire a broad range of skills related to home construction to fulfill their job requirements. A workforce development program

focused on training employees to fill jobs in manufactured and modular housing would be low-cost, and it would address a critical need in an industry where a workforce shortage is limiting housing production.

This approach addresses underlying issues of supply-side affordability concerns, which was a key concern of several interviewees. They expressed that the subsidy was not enough; that they had to get costs under control to make development more feasible in the short and long term. While not being targeted towards immigrant and refugee communities, this method would take a supply-side approach to addressing the housing shortage.

Finally, it should be noted that our research did identify some negative attitudes towards manufactured housing in the communities we studied. However, these attitudes tended to be directed at existing manufactured homes and aging manufactured home parks. Multiple interviewees spoke highly of investments in new manufactured housing, with one interviewee even indicating that one of the city's largest employers had expressed interest in funding the construction of a new manufactured home park. While the attitudes our study revealed may pose challenges for investments in preserving existing manufactured homes, we do not anticipate any opposition to programs supporting new construction.

## **5. Partnerships between Inclusion-Focused Commissions**

Each city we looked at has a commission focused in some way on inclusiveness towards immigrant and refugee communities. These commissions could form valuable partnerships to share strategies and approaches. This would be especially valuable as new commissions come online. Worthington's Cross Cultural Advisory Committee is the youngest inclusion-focused commission in the four sample cities, and a network of committees from across Greater Minnesota could help guide this and other newer commissions towards more impactful action more quickly than if they were to completely start from scratch without any access to precedent or advice from similarly oriented groups.

In addition, commissions could choose to partner on specific issues. As mentioned in our analysis, outreach to immigrant and refugee communities is a stated value to some, while others see it as the citizens' job to reach out to the government. Similarly, some communities may value outreach, but struggle to implement a good outreach strategy. Still others may both value outreach and have success implementing a plan for immigrant and refugee outreach. When commissions partner on the topic of outreach, they could develop narratives that promote outreach in their communities as well as strategies for outreach that have been tried elsewhere. Such collaboration could be done on a variety of issues.

## **Conclusion**



As this paper has demonstrated, there is high variability in local government, employer, and community responses to the need to connect with rural immigrant and refugee populations. This variability has been summarized and the most pressing issues and barriers addressed with recommendations for next steps by the Minnesota state legislature, local governments in Greater Minnesota, and organizations interested in advocating for immigrant and refugee communities in rural areas. These responses differ from the established literature by focusing efforts on addressing disparities in perspective and proposing solutions that can be adopted by communities in Greater Minnesota regardless of which specific immigrant and refugee populations call their cities home.

The task of thinking through immigration's impact on the social fabric of Greater Minnesota and fully addressing the community needs that arise from these changes is a complicated yet pressing issue. Local governments have the ability to build community through embracing difference, though this can only occur through significant government investment and community collaboration. While the sample cities discussed in this report have all worked to make immigrants and refugees feel welcome, there is more that can and should be done in communities across rural Minnesota.

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## Glossary of Terms

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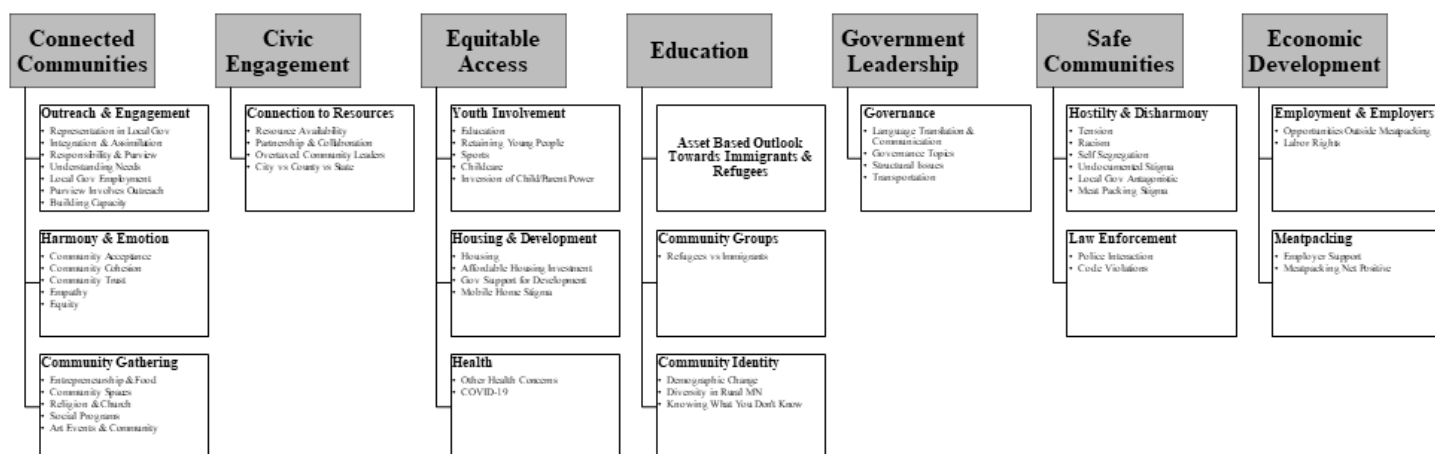
- **Arriving Communities:** Community members, including immigrants and refugees, arriving in a community anew.
- **Greater Minnesota:** All 80 Minnesota counties outside of the 7-county Twin Cities Metro. This term is useful to describe broad trends outside of the Twin Cities but is not synonymous with rural Minnesota. As such, the term “Greater Minnesota” does not necessarily reflect conditions of rurality in the state.
- **Rural Minnesota:** Rural means different things to different people. For the purposes of this study, rural communities are cities/counties that exclude economic centers like Duluth and Rochester. Rurality is defined on a case-by-case basis, see [The Rural Atlas](#) for our rurality breakdown.
- **Local Government:** City or county governments, public health officials, schools.
- **BIPOC:** Broad term that includes Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Can include both Minnesota-born populations and immigrant and refugee populations.
- **Latino:** Broad term that includes people who hail from Latin America and/or are descended from those who were from Latin America.
- **Immigrant communities:** Populations that chose to immigrate to the United States from abroad, whether they are documented citizens or not.
  - **Department of Homeland Security Definition:** “An alien admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident.” Permanent residents are also commonly referred to as immigrants; however, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) broadly defines an immigrant as any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigrant categories (INA section 101(a)(15)). Lawful permanent residents are legally accorded the privilege of residing permanently in the United States whether by visa or citizenship.

- An “**illegal alien**” who entered the United States without inspection would be technically defined as an immigrant under the INA but is not considered a “**permanent resident alien.**”
- **Receiving Communities:** Community members who reside in the community prior to the arrival of a new immigrant or refugee group.
- **Refugee Communities:** Populations that were displaced from their country of nationality and/or residence and relocated to the United States on humanitarian grounds.
  - **Department of Homeland Security Definition:** A refugee is a person outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.
- **Well-being Indicators:** Objective well-being is often assessed using indicators that measure aspects of education, physical and built environment, community, and economy. This approach tends to capture a societal rather than an individual perspective on well-being that is based on material, tangible and quantitative indicators. Subjective well-being is characterized by the individual’s internal subjective assessment, based on cognitive judgments and affective reactions, of their own life as a whole. There are various sub-dimensions that investigators consider within the domain of subjective well-being. These include psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of well-being. Framing of well-being within this study will depend upon the data and considerations used by local governments and other institutions we consider.
- **Public Health:** The health of the population as a whole, especially as the subject of government regulation and support.
- **Government Outreach:** Any service, fund, listening session, or joint-planning commission where local government entities reach out to all or specific members of the community, including but not limited to BIPOC outreach.

- **COVID-19 Relief:** Refers to any/all forms of community assistance offered in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with examples including, but not limited to: informational communications, monetary assistance, testing, childcare services, etc.

# Appendix

**Additional Figure: Interview Analysis Code Tree**



**Additional Figures: Coding Logic for Issues Overlap Venn Diagrams - Primary & Secondary**

Issue Identification Overlap - Primary Issues	
Interviews - Primary Issues	MNCLA Report
Rural Housing Deficit	Financing / Purchasing Homes Affordable Housing Options Expand COVID-19 Renter Relief
Language & Communication Barriers	Bilingual Support Staff ELL Program Funding Translation Services & Visual Aids Interpreters in Community Clinics
Government Outreach: Attitudes & Barriers	Census Completion Rates
Lack of Representation in Government & Public Institutions	Teachers of Color & Bilingual Support Staff Isolation from Government Census Completion Rates

<b>Issue Identification Overlap - Secondary Issues</b>	
<b>Interviews - Secondary Issues</b>	<b>MNCLA Report</b>
Lack of Resources & Infrastructure	Access to Information Technology Financing/Purchasing Homes Funding for Latinx Community Organizations Non-Profit Funding to Serve Migrant Workers
Labor Disputes / Tensions	Workplace Safety & COVID-19 Precautions
COVID-19/Health	Information/Education on COVID-19 Healthcare Access COVID-19 Safety in Schools Interpreters in Community Clinics Workplace Safety & COVID-19 Precautions Expand COVID-19 Renter Relief
Childcare	Childcare Options
Education	Teachers of Color & Bilingual Support Staff Anti-Racist Curriculum Adult Basic Education K-12 Spanish Classes for Latino Students COVID-19 Safety in Schools Financial Literacy
Transportation	Driver's Licenses for All
Bias Against Undocumented Individuals	Extend Social Services to Undocumented Individuals Driver's Licenses for All

<b>Only Referenced in Interviews - Primary Issues</b>
Social Cohesion & Cultural Bias



**Only Referenced in MNCLA Report**

Recreational Opportunities

Legal Services & Information on Rights

Include ITIN Users in Tax Incentives

**Only Referenced in Interviews - Secondary Issues**

Inversion of Power - Child/Parent

Immigrant Retention

Bias in Policing

Lack of Professional Opportunities

## Acknowledgements

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This paper and the research behind it would not have been possible without the exceptional support of our academic supervisor at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs Professor Greg Lindsey and our project supervisor at the Center for Rural Policy and Development Kelly Asche. Their enthusiasm for the work, knowledge of their fields, and extracting attention to detail have kept this project on track and furthered our passion for rural advocacy.

The staff of the Center for Rural Policy and Development (CRPD), the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs (MCLA), the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage (CMAH), and the Council for Asian-Pacific Minnesotans (CAPMN) all assisted at various points by providing context through their own research, locating potential interviewees, and reading over the drafts of this report, ensuring that the research conducted expanded our current understanding of the relationships between rural government and the local immigrant and refugee populations. Various professors, teaching assistants, and University staff also contributed to this work by answering questions, providing supplemental literature, and by serving as an additional source of information and inspiration over the past two years.

This research would also not have been possible without the many local government staffers, elected officials, and community members who volunteered their time and insights as interviewees. Without their expertise and willingness to contribute to a greater dialogue surrounding this complex topic, this research and the conclusions drawn from it would not exist.

Finally, it is with true pleasure that we as a team recognize our partners, friends, and family members who provided an extra pair of eyes or ears and infinite patience over the course of the past eight months. The combinations of compassion and criticism that only they could have provided have proved invaluable and their influence on our collective motivation cannot be overstated.