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# STRONGER TOGETHER

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Making the Case for Shared  
Prosperity Through Welcoming  
Immigrants In Our Communities

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WELCOMING

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▲ *Building a Nation of Neighbors*

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This country is built on the  
contributions of immigrants, whose  
different perspectives and ideas

**CREATE NEW  
POSSIBILITIES FOR  
ALL AMERICANS.**

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**ROBERT IGER**, CEO & President, Disney

A welcoming community isn't just tolerant  
of newcomers and cultural diversity.

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# A TRULY WELCOMING COMMUNITY

actively seeks to engage  
all of its residents—  
including immigrants.

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It embraces the contributions they make  
and leverage the assets they bring for the  
benefit of the whole community.

As the movement to create more welcoming communities across the country has expanded, more and more people are interested in hearing how welcoming our immigrant neighbors can be a force for economic growth.

This toolkit is intended to help advocates for immigrant integration connect with and enlist the support of people who are more interested in constructive conversations about shared prosperity than divisive arguments about immigration policy—local government officials and business leaders, small business owners and community boosters—people who know that their communities, and their businesses, are stronger when everyone in them feels welcomed and included.

On the following pages, you'll find information on the key audiences likely to be moved by this messaging, and themes to explore in your communications work. You'll also find ideas about how to use data to support your argument, pitfalls to avoid and exercises designed to help you craft the messages that make the most sense for your community.

Although the messages recommended in this toolkit are pragmatic in nature and focused on the economic benefits a community receives by welcoming immigrants, each of them is still rooted in the core values of the welcoming movement—the belief that we are all better off when everyone who lives in a community feels like a part of it.

It's our hope that you'll use these messages to make new connections and find new partners as you work to make your city or town more welcoming—a community with fewer strangers and more neighbors.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Lubell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

**DAVID LUBELL**

Welcoming America

## AUDIENCES

The cornerstone of any successful communications effort is understanding who your audience is and what they really care about. It's important to help them see how your work is an expression of their values, and how their support of your work will help them achieve their vision of success—for their company, the community or our entire society.

The following audiences are offered as a starting point for thinking about your own audiences—groups that we believe may be open to economy-focused arguments for building a more welcoming community. The exercise on the next page is designed to help you think through the specific audiences for your own work.

### ELECTED OFFICIALS

have been at the forefront of making an economic argument for immigrant integration in communities across the country, from Chicago to Houston to Dayton, Ohio. As civic boosters for their city, town or county, they are interested in leveraging the human capital in their communities into a competitive advantage that attracts new businesses and individuals looking for new opportunity, broadening the tax base in the process and allowing their communities to provide high-quality services that attract other newcomers. The chance to reach new residents of their communities—who might be turned into new voters—is an added benefit.

### APPOINTED OFFICIALS

are those individuals in local government charged with running their communities—city managers, chiefs of police, heads of offices of economic or workforce development. Ensuring that the services provided by their offices are reaching all of their community's residents is often a point of professional pride for members of this audience. They also have a vested interest in seeing greater cooperation between different parts of their community, new connections made and increased prosperity. They succeed when their communities succeed.

### BUSINESS COMMUNITY LEADERS

have a variety of reasons for supporting more welcoming communities. As business owners or Chamber of Commerce members, they want to see a growing economy that brings new customers to their business and makes it easier to attract new talent. They may see immigrants as potential customers for their business or recognize how immigrant entrepreneurs have helped revitalize a downtown business district. More than any other audience, they are likely to be open to an argument about how immigrants are contributing to their bottom line.

### IMMIGRANT EMPLOYERS

are leaders at companies with a large immigrant workforce. Often, they have seen the benefits of immigrant integration efforts within their companies in improved morale or increased productivity—but sometimes they don't recognize the policies they've implemented to be more welcoming to immigrants as part of any kind of concerted effort. Explaining how their efforts fit into a larger context—and the benefits to be gained when similar policies are adopted at a community-wide level—is key to gaining their support.

## YOUR TURN

Think about the people in your community you think might be open to an economic argument about being more welcoming. Do they fit into one (or more) of the categories above? Or are they part of another category?

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

Describe their demographics (age, race, socio-economic background):

Describe their day-to-day lives (what kind of car do they drive? What does their family life look like?). What do they care most about—what values do they hold that your organization holds?

What's stopping them from supporting your work?

Who do they trust? These individuals or groups could carry your messages to them.

Where do they get their information? Consider earned media (e.g. an Op Ed by a business leader in the local business journal) paid media, or direct outreach (e.g. presentation to city council or Chamber of Commerce) to connect through these channels.

Keep your answers for each audience in mind as you create messages for them later in the kit.

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Throughout its history, Chicago has benefited from the immeasurable economic contributions of its immigrant populations, and from the rich fabric of distinct and vibrant neighborhoods they helped to create. Today, Chicago's immigrants remain crucial drivers of our economic growth and cultural vitality. As we build a thriving 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, we must work together to attract and retain immigrants by helping them to succeed and grow in

# A SAFE AND WELCOMING CITY.

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**ADOLFO HERNANDEZ**, Director of Chicago's Office of New Americans

## MESSAGE THEMES

The messages you create for your initiative should speak directly to the concerns of your intended audiences. Below you will find a number of potential themes, with sample messages for each, along with some ideas for the kinds of audiences with which each will be most effective.

Remember that while the themes below are pragmatic and focused on economic benefits, they are still rooted in values rather than a transactional or numbers-first approach to communications. As you develop messaging to reach key audiences in local government or the business community, it's a good idea to remind yourself of the values at the core of the Welcoming movement: inclusion, cooperation, and building more prosperous, connected and successful communities.

The sample messages below are meant to make a connection with key audience members, while also providing them with language to make the case for a more welcoming community themselves, as ambassadors for your work.

### STRONGER TOGETHER

Our community's success depends on making sure everyone who's a part of it—including immigrants—feels welcome here.

Becoming a more welcoming community means more customers for our local businesses, more jobs created by immigrant entrepreneurs, and a thriving economy that benefits us all.

By recognizing the contributions that we all make to creating a vibrant culture and a growing economy, we make our neighbors feel more included and our community more welcoming to new Americans and to everyone who calls our community home.

**WHO TO USE IT WITH:** This theme is closest to the Welcoming movement's core messaging around welcoming and inclusion. It is the most broadly applicable theme, and especially useful in communities experiencing significant immigration. It could be used with both local government officials and business leaders.

### INNOVATION

Immigrants are innovators: entrepreneurs and small-business owners whose contributions are helping us grow our local economy.

Immigrants bring new ideas and a willingness to work hard to see them succeed. They start businesses that bring jobs to our community—and that's good for all of us.

We need to welcome everyone with the ingenuity and innovative ideas to help us create a thriving economy.

**WHO TO USE IT WITH:** This theme could be employed with local government officials, both elected and appointed, or with leaders of the business community.

## VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Immigrants are a vital part of our community—they bring fresh perspective and new ideas, start businesses and contribute to the vibrant diversity that we all value.

Immigrants make a huge contribution to the cultural fabric of our community—making it a place all kinds of people want to come and be a part of.

**WHO TO USE IT WITH:** This theme could be effective with many audiences, but is particularly useful in communities with large immigrant populations or existing diversity (e.g. university towns), or with business owners who employ immigrants.

*[Atlanta] isn't competing with Birmingham and Chattanooga, it is competing with New York, Chicago, Shanghai, and Mumbai."*

Atlanta's unparalleled economic and population boom is attributed "both to entrepreneurial immigrants determined to succeed in America and to Atlanta's own determination to capture the world's imagination, capital and talent.

**"FOCUS ON ATLANTA."** Partnership for a New American Economy

## TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ECONOMY

Competing in a twenty-first century economy will require taking full advantage of our most important resource—our people. And that means welcoming the new Americans who are starting businesses, committing to our community, and helping build a stronger local economy.

Communities across the country and around the world are in a race to the top to attract the human capital that will allow them to thrive in a global economy. Becoming a more welcoming place for immigrants gives us a leg up in that competition and helps us retain talented people of all backgrounds.

Working together to build a twenty-first century economy means making sure everyone who lives here feels welcome and included, no matter where they were born.

**WHO TO USE IT WITH:** This theme is most effective with government officials and business leaders in larger cities interested in competing for talent and businesses at a national or international level.

## SHARED VALUES

Our community was built by immigrants—hard-working people, our parents and grandparents, who believed in the American Dream. We should welcome those who are following in their footsteps and doing their part to create a thriving community.

From those who cook the food that we eat to those who create innovative businesses, new immigrants realize the value of working hard and doing your part to help build a stronger community.

When you look at immigrants in our community, you see people who share our values—people working hard to provide for their families and build a stronger economy for all of us.

**WHO TO USE IT WITH:** This theme is broadly applicable with both business and government officials, as well as a wider audience of the Unsure—people who are open to the idea of creating a more welcoming community, but unsure of what to make of the debate around the subject.

Without the energy and intellect and innovation of our immigrant community, Montgomery County would, quite simply, be incomplete. “New Americans” are a critical piece in building a better future for all County residents.

**IKE LEGGET**, Executive of Montgomery County, Maryland.

## FRIENDLINESS

Our community has always been a welcoming community. We don't care where you came from or what you look like, we care about what kind of person you are.

We want people to know that our community is always willing to extend a hand in friendship to those who want to be a part of it.

Around here, we take neighborliness seriously. It's just who we are.

Around here, teamwork isn't just a slogan. Our company prides itself on making sure everyone who works here feels welcome—like a part of our team.

**WHO TO USE IT WITH:** While not specifically focused on the economic benefits immigrants bring, you might consider using this theme with elected officials or business leaders. These messages should be highly localized and draw on traditional understanding of a community's welcoming nature (e.g. “southern hospitality.”)

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Nothing is more powerful to remaking Detroit as a center of innovation, entrepreneurship and population growth, than embracing and increasing immigrant populations and the

**ENTREPRENEURIAL  
CULTURE AND GLOBAL  
CONNECTIONS THAT THEY  
BRING AND DELIVER.**

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Global Detroit Study, 2010





## THE BOTTOM LINE

More than many people, the local government officials and business leaders who make up the key audiences for this messaging are interested in the bottom line—the facts and figures that demonstrate the economic contributions immigrants are making to their community or company. Because of this, it's a good idea to support your messaging with numbers to back up your claims.

Remember that numbers (and facts in general) are almost never persuasive by themselves. They need to be placed in the context of the story you're telling about immigration in your community and used to support values-based messaging. Numbers are important, but connecting with your audiences on an emotional level is even more important.

A number of organizations have made the case for the economic benefits of immigration at the national level, and some of their figures may be useful in making your case. But even more important is understanding the economic impact of immigration in your local community.

You may be lucky enough to have data on the subject already compiled for you, as was the case in when the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Economics Department and Office of Latino/ Latina American Studies partnered on Nebraska's Immigrant Population: Economic and Fiscal Impacts. More likely, you may need to do some research yourself. Among the questions you will want to answer are:

*How many immigrant-owned business are in your community, and how much revenue are they generating?*

*What is the dollar value of goods and services purchased by immigrants in your local community?*

*How many jobs have been created by immigrant-owned businesses in your community?*

*How do immigrant employees contribute to businesses in your community?*

In order to answer these questions, you could partner with a local university or Chamber of Commerce; local government may be able to provide some data, as well. Compiling comprehensive data about the economic impact of immigrants in your community is probably beyond the scope of your initiative, but that doesn't mean you can't find some answers that help tell your story.

And once you've found numbers—through your local government, the Chamber, or at local businesses—remember that your work isn't done. Telling the story of a local immigrant entrepreneur, or a US-born business owner who relies on immigrant employees or customers is a great way of helping your audience understand that real people live behind the numbers you're sharing—and that the economic benefits of welcoming immigrants to a community extend to the whole community.

## PITFALLS TO AVOID

As in medicine, the first rule of messaging is “Do no harm.” While that’s sometimes easier said than done, it’s always a good idea to think about how the messages you develop might inadvertently reinforce negative stereotypes or lead you into unproductive conversations. Here are a few pitfalls to avoid as you begin a conversation with new audiences.

**USING DIVIDING LANGUAGE.** Ensuring that the messages you create are inclusive rather than divisive is the most important step you can take in crafting messages that do no harm. That means focusing on the benefits to the entire community of becoming more welcoming, rather than the benefits for any one part of the community, including immigrants. You should also try to avoid drawing distinctions between immigrants—high skilled and low skilled, for example. This plays into negative stereotypes of “good immigrants” and “bad immigrants,” and takes away from your central message of communities becoming stronger when everyone feels included and can contribute to their culture and economy.

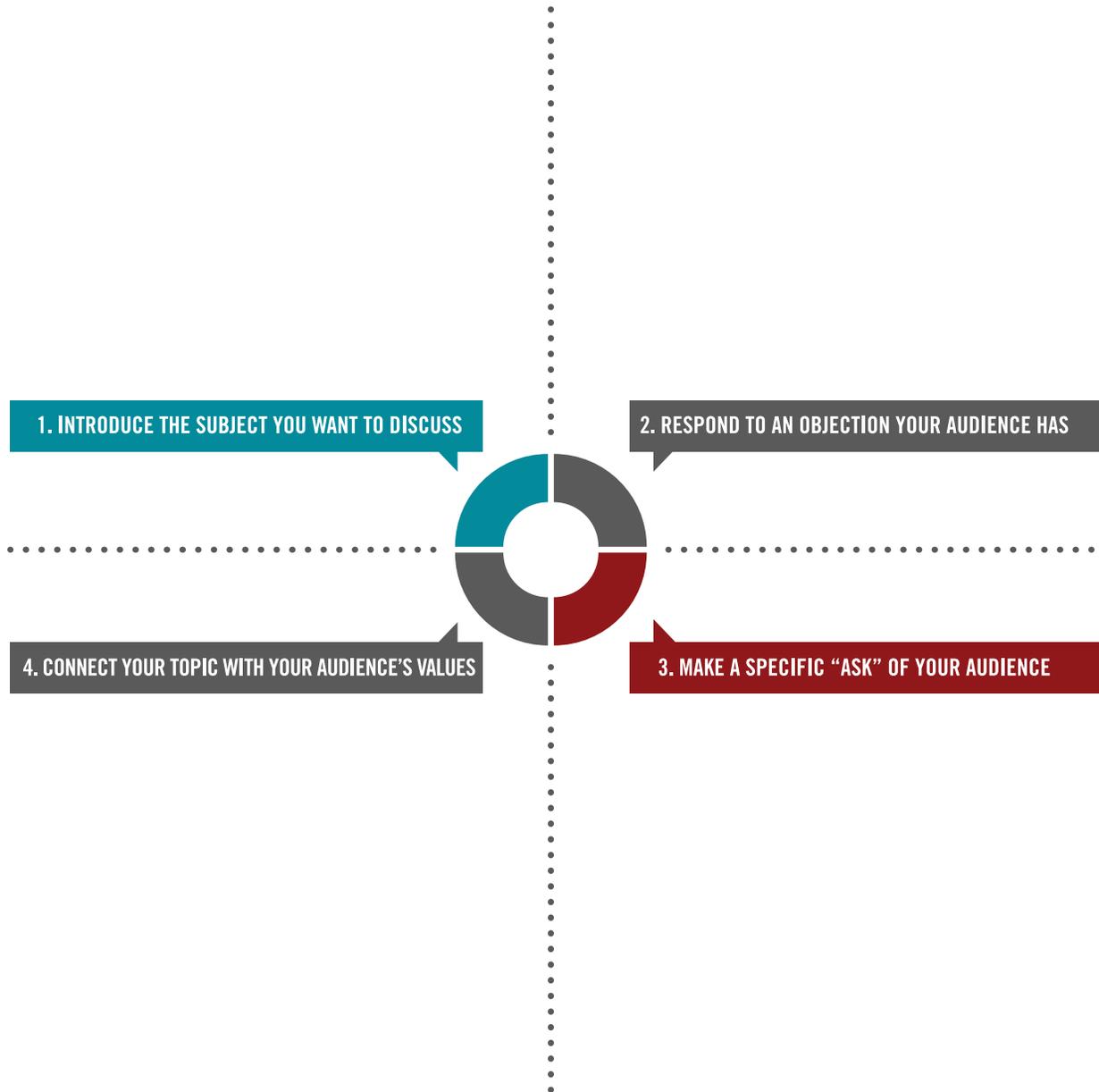
**IGNORING ECONOMIC INSECURITY.** As our economy continues to recover from the financial crisis of 2008, economic insecurity is still a huge issue and fears of immigrants “stealing jobs” are very real for many Americans, and particularly those communities hit hardest by the recession, including African Americans. As you develop your messages, make sure you always combine the idea of immigrants as workers with immigrants as consumers and the contribution they make to a growing economy that benefits an entire community.

**FORGETTING IMMIGRANTS ARE PEOPLE.** One of the easiest traps to fall into in creating this kind of messaging is using language that places a solely monetary value on immigrants, which is dehumanizing and counterproductive. Always try to frame messages about the economic impact of immigrant integration in terms of shared prosperity that benefits an entire community, and remember to broaden the frame to include the cultural contributions that immigrants make to a vibrant, diverse and welcoming community.

**FORGETTING TO START WHERE YOUR AUDIENCE IS.** Rather than try to convince people of the truth of your viewpoint, it’s far more productive to begin a conversation that may feel more intuitively “correct” to your audience. A great example of this is taxes. Public opinion polls have consistently shown that most Americans don’t believe immigrants pay them. Instead of trying to convince your audience that immigrants do, in fact, pay taxes, you might make a broader point about the contributions immigrants make to culture and economic growth, for example, or the values of hard work, family, entrepreneurship and innovation that immigrants share with US-born residents of your community.

## YOUR TURN

The message wheel is a tool to plan initiative messaging based on a conversation you might have with a member of your key audience. It has four parts that:



Ideally, each message wheel you develop will create a four-part message that utilizes a single theme from those outlined above in order to ensure the clarity of your message. Remember, the message wheel is a circle so you can start writing (and start the conversation with your audience) wherever you want—it's often easiest to start writing with the ask, because it's so specific and simple.

## EXAMPLE

**AUDIENCE:** Elected Officials

**THEME:** 21st Century Economy

### 1 INTRODUCE

Competing in a twenty-first century economy will require taking full advantage of our most important resource—our people. And that means welcoming everyone who wants to contribute to our success—including the new Americans who are starting businesses, committing to our community, and helping build a stronger local economy.

### 2 RESPOND

(to the idea of dividing high-skilled and low-skilled immigrants)

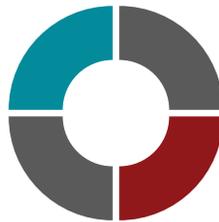
A twenty-first century economy needs engineers and artists, people to cook our food and to care for our elders. Creating a city that's welcoming to new Americans means creating a community where all kinds of people feel welcome.

### 4 CONNECT

When we find ways to be more welcoming of new Americans, our city becomes a beacon of opportunity and a community that can compete for the best and the brightest.

### 3 ASK

Support our Welcoming City resolution to ensure our city can compete in a global economy.





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# WE ARE A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS

who have come to this country  
to enrich their lives, and in turn,  
enrich our country.

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**ANTONIO VILLARAIGOSA**, Mayor of Los Angeles

Building the base of support for creating a welcoming communities means explaining how the whole community benefits when everyone feels included. The message themes contained in this toolkit, while pragmatic and focused on economic growth, are rooted in shared values—of cooperation, connection, cultural vibrancy and broadly shared prosperity.

We hope that you will use this toolkit as a starting point for reaching new partners in your own community, building on its recommendations to create messages that resonate with your particular audiences and that reflect the local context you know best.

If you're interested in learning more about Welcoming America or how we can support you in making your community a more welcoming one, please contact us at [info@welcomingamerica.org](mailto:info@welcomingamerica.org).

And please let us know if you've used this toolkit and the messages in it in your community. We would love to hear from you!



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