



## The Plan

**Kent County Welcome Plan:** A community plan intended to address the top priorities and barriers for New Americans in Kent County to work towards a more inclusive and welcoming Kent County. Feedback was gathered from New Americans in our community via 800+ surveys and 25 focus groups. This data informed the Kent County Welcome Plan which was created by a task force of 40+ organizations across Kent County and released in September 2020.

Feedback from our New American community revealed these five top priorities:

1. Freedom to work in my desired profession
2. Freedom to maintain my culture, religion, and traditions
3. Achieving desired level of English
4. Being actively involved in my children's education, safety, and future
5. Having Americans understand my culture, religion, and circumstances

The Kent County Welcome Plan (KCWP) is organized into five categories:

1. Engaged Communities
2. Maximize the Economic Potential of New Americans
3. Improve New Americans' Educational Outcomes
4. Provide Equitable Access to Services
5. Ensure all Kent County Residents Are and Feel Safe

## Get Involved

The KCWP Steering Committee, along with a 40+ organizational task force established goals and metrics for each category to begin the implementation phase of the KCWP. Being welcoming is a minimum effort and must be backed by community wide actions to show that we welcome new Americans and we are working to create a community of inclusion, belonging, and a place where individuals and their families will thrive. Our next step is to form the Kent County Welcome Plan Collaborative, a multi-organizational group to include members that reflect the diverse communities we serve. Members of the KCWP Collaborative will choose a priority workgroup where their unique perspective and experiences will have the most impact. To become a member of the KCWP Collaborative community members are invited to fill out this brief survey:



## Background

Kent County is home to residents from approximately 112 countries who speak upwards of 40 languages. The Kent County Welcome Plan was established to welcome new Americans and ensure a sense of belonging so that we may grow and thrive together. In both 2018 and 2019 our community received Gateways for Growth grant awards. Gateways for Growth (G4G) is a national initiative that helps communities create customized economic impact reports on New American populations as well as tailored strategic planning support to create multi-sector plans to be more welcoming and inclusive for New Americans. It is a collaboration of two organizations, [Welcoming America](#) and [American Immigration Council](#) (previously New American Economy). Grand Rapids is one of 71 different localities across 35 states who have received G4G support. As a grant recipient our community received support to create a customized economic research report on our local immigrant community, and later support was received to tailor a community Welcome Plan.

## Data

Here are a few highlights from the data that was gathered:

- Immigrants were responsible for 24.1% of population growth in Kent County between 2011 and 2016
- Immigrants contributed \$3.3 billion to Kent County's GDP. Immigrant households earned \$1.3 billion in income and held nearly \$950 million in spending power (2016)
- In Kent County 27% of our immigrant population aged 25 and over and 21.8% of our refugee population aged 25 and over held a bachelor's degree or higher (2016)
- There were 2,031 immigrant entrepreneurs in Kent County (2019)
- There were 55,595 immigrants that called Kent County home making up 8.6% of our population (2019)

### Helpful Links:

See the full plan in English or Spanish here:

[www.kentcountynewamericans.org](http://www.kentcountynewamericans.org)

Stay up to date on social media:

[www.facebook.com/KentCountyWelcomePlan](https://www.facebook.com/KentCountyWelcomePlan)

Welcome Plan Coordinator:

Hollin De La Cruz: [hollin.delacruz@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:hollin.delacruz@kentcountymi.gov)