

Adult English as a Second Language Program Navigation Resource

Statement of Need

Overview: I conducted a community-based needs analysis from 2015-2017 focusing on the needs of the immigrant and international community of Flint and Genesee County. The research began with community asset mapping with 15 non-profit organizations including three universities (UM-Flint, Kettering University, and Mott Community College), the Genesee Intermediate School District, two Hispanic-serving organizations, two Arabic-serving organizations, several religious organizations, the Flint Public Library, and several others. Then, in 2016-2017 I held focus groups with 112 immigrants from 26 countries currently living in Flint and Genesee County. The findings from these two research projects (discussed in more detail below) indicate that Genesee County is not meeting the needs of its foreign-born population and that many immigrants in this area are seeking better access to social goods. English language instruction for adults is one of the key needs that immigrants identified. There are several resources for English instruction existing in the community, but many are new or were unknown to the focus group participants. This proposal would develop a guide to adult English as a second language (ESL) programs in Flint and Genesee County so that those wishing to improve their English can confidently navigate the resources available in this area.

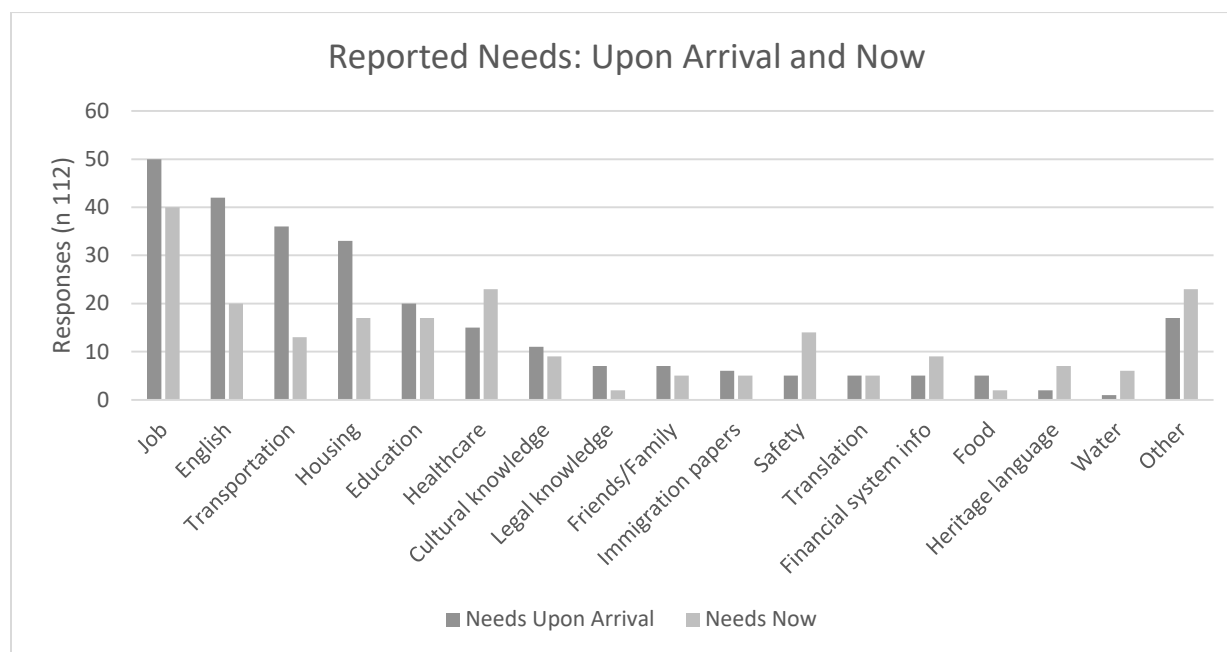
Asset Map of ESL Resources: The asset mapping project from 2015 showed that many years ago, Flint had multiple, established resources for adult ESL instruction including the Zimmerman Center, the International Institute, and a robust ESL program at Mott Community College. With the closing of two of these resources over ten years ago and the ESL classes at MCC not having been offered in approximately 20 years, a dearth of ESL resources for adult immigrants was the result. However, in recent years new adult ESL programs have been developed and old programs reinstated including programs at UM-Flint, Genesee Intermediate School District, MCC, and the Hispanic Technology and Community Center. Each of these programs is offered at different times, locations, and are appropriate for different levels of fluency. However, residents of Flint who do not speak English fluently or are not already aware of these programs will have a difficult time finding these opportunities to learn. Additionally, the Flint Public Library and other public libraries in Genesee County have free online language learning programs available to residents such as Mango Languages and Pronunciator. However, many of these programs and resources do not market themselves to a broad and multilingual audience. Some examples of limited marketing is below (organizations only use one of the following):

- Information is available online in English, scattered across multiple websites
- Information is only distributed to families with children enrolled in public schools
- Information is advertised by word-of-mouth through non-profit organizations
- Information requires prior knowledge that the resource exists (e.g. Mango Languages, Pronunciator)

In Flint, there is no one-stop-shop for clear guidance on the adult ESL programs currently available, or how to choose the appropriate program based on fluency, career/educational goals, prices, childcare, citizenship goals, or other factors.

Focus Group Needs Analysis: The focus group data further support the finding that immigrants living in Flint and Genesee County are unaware of many of the adult ESL educational programs and resources

available in this community. The chart below lists the needs reported by the immigrants who participated in the focus groups. The survey asked participants to identify the top 3 needs that they had when they first arrived to Flint and their current top 3 needs. Overall, services that were reported as most needed when immigrants arrived include support for finding and applying to jobs, English as a second language instruction, accessible public and personal transportation, and safe/affordable housing. Established immigrants also reported a need for ESL services and better career opportunities.



ESL classes have been shown to be an important part of helping new immigrants settle in a community and connect to many of the needs listed above. ESL classes not only teach English, but also function as cultural guides who help immigrants understand the systems they must navigate on a daily basis: healthcare, housing, transportation, employment, education, civil rights, and so much more. In this way, ESL classes become a hub of information that affects immigrants' access to social goods. This means that not only are ESL programs wanted/needed by immigrants, access to these programs can improve immigrant families' access to social goods.

Proposal: Based on the needs analysis conducted using asset mapping and focus groups, there is a clear gap in the distribution of information about ESL programming in Flint and Genesee County. I propose creating a resource that can help immigrants navigate the existing ESL programs in the community. I will work with a student researcher and multiple community partners who offer ESL classes to develop a chart and map of the English language instruction available in our community. The information will be available in hard copy and online, with links to the organizations that supply these services. This will require several meetings with all participants, including representatives from UM-Flint's English Language Program, MCC's English for Academic Purposes program, GISD's Adult ESL program, the Hispanic Technology and Community Center, and others. The student researcher will also contact local public libraries to include the range of resources available there. The guide will be distributed to community partners that provide services to immigrants. This guide to ESL instruction will promote the educational resources in the community, connect immigrants to the appropriate resources, and increase capacity for economic development through increased English fluency in our immigrant population.

Impacts on local or regional economy

Immigrants have a powerful effect on regional economies, producing economic opportunity and assets for local economic development. Michigan in particular has seen a rise in the number of foreign-born populations who have been immigrating to the state. According to The Contributions of New Americans in Michigan, between 2010 and 2014 the United States saw an increase of 5.8% in the immigrant population while Michigan saw nearly double that in the same amount of time: 10.2% growth in immigrant population. Immigrants are known as entrepreneurs and have been found to be more entrepreneurial than the U.S. population as a whole (Morelix et al., 2015). In Michigan “33% of Fortune 500 companies based in Michigan were founded by immigrants or their children” (Partnership for a New American Economy, 2016). The studies on immigrants’ impacts on the local economy not only include entrepreneurial activities, but also work in the broader workforce, contributions of income and taxes, and innovations in STEM and healthcare, which all contribute to the economic value that immigrants bring to their new communities. Many cities across the Northeast and Midwest have embraced immigration as a tool for economic development and neighborhood stabilization, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Columbus, Dayton, and Detroit (Tobocman, 2014). The table below compares US Census Bureau statistics for Genesee and Wayne counties in 2011-2015 (US Census Bureau):

Census Data by County	General Population Change	Foreign-Born Population Change
Genesee County	Declined by -4.0%	Increased by +2.3%
Wayne County	Declined by -3.4%	Increased by +8.1%

Wayne County has a greater number of ESL classes across the city than Flint does, as well as established organizations that help immigrants navigate these resources such as Welcome MAT Detroit, Global Detroit, and the International Institute. These resources support immigrants’ integration through free or low-cost instruction in English. English language fluency plays a role in immigrants’ earning potential: jobs that require English proficiency tend to be higher-paid positions, and immigrants with higher English proficiency earn more than those who are not proficient (Chiswick & Miller, 2010).

English as a second language (ESL) programs and educational resources are key to the increase in English language proficiency and integration of new immigrants into a community. Not only can ESL programs support the earning potential of new immigrants, but also increased fluency in English can help families improve their health, increase parents’ involvement in their children’s schools, and help them develop stronger social networks in their communities. The economic potential that immigrants bring to the community needs to be supported by robust services to ensure that they have the tools for success. ESL programs can be a boon to a community’s economic development through increased support of new immigrants in their earning potential, knowledge, and integration into the community. However, connecting the immigrants who need these services to the services in Genesee County requires better tools and a comprehensive plan for the dissemination of information.

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US Census Bureau <https://www.census.gov/en.html>

Partners (academic and non-academic)

The idea for this project was suggested to me by research collaborators at MCC and GISD, so they are the primary partners. They believe that there is value for such a resource to be created and shared broadly throughout the community and believe that it will increase their enrollments and the expansion of their services. The secondary partners are those who are serving immigrants and offer ESL classes or tutoring. I have developed and maintained these partnerships from the asset mapping and focus group research. The secondary partners will be invited to contribute to the development of the resource by providing information about their ESL classes/tutoring and will help ensure that the information is shared more broadly across the community. Many of these organizations also provide translation and interpretation services, making the information even more accessible to immigrants.

Partnering organization	Reason	Level of partnership
Mott Community College	Academic ESL program	Primary partner
Genesee Intermediate School District	Conversational ESL program Citizenship ESL	Primary partner
UM-Flint's English Language Program	Academic ESL program	Secondary partner
Hispanic Technology and Community Center	Conversational ESL program Computer access	Secondary Partner
Genesee County Hispanic Latino Collaborative	Services for immigrants (and occasional ESL classes)	Secondary Partner
Public Libraries in Genesee County	ESL resources	Secondary Partner
Arab American Heritage Council	Legal resources (and occasional citizenship ESL tutoring)	Secondary Partner
International Center of Greater Flint	Programs serving immigrants	Secondary Partner
Sylvester Broome Center	Adult Literacy (and occasional ESL program)	Secondary Partner
Jewish Community Services	Adult ESL for Russian-speaking immigrants	Secondary Partner
Chinese Association of Greater Flint	Connection to Chinese immigrants	Secondary Partner
Muslim American Leadership Alliance	Connection to immigrants	Secondary Partner

Deliverables

This research will culminate in a guide to help immigrants navigate the community's ESL programs. The document and website will include input from many community organizations and be distributed back to the organizations in both hard-copy and digital formats. The document will have a map with contact details, information about the English fluency levels, times and dates the programs run, and whether there is childcare available. The document will be constructed as a chart, but will be additionally supported by a web-based portal with links to the various contributing organizations. The format and details will be collaboratively developed by the researchers and community partners.

Timeline

Month	Tasks	Outcome
May, 2018	Meet with primary partners	Identify key goals for the project, identify capacities for digital resources, assess secondary partners list
	Review other city's ESL navigation resources	Survey of existing community-wide ESL navigation resources, marked for ideas we want to include
	Set up meetings with other organizations	Initial contact made to identify details about their services
June, 2018	Meet with organizations to present the project and get their information for ESL services	A spreadsheet with comprehensive information about the times, dates, locations, skill levels, etc. of the ESL resources at each location.
	Submit research proposal to Michigan TESOL Conference	If the proposal is accepted, it will mean dissemination of this research project to the academic community
July, 2018	Development of the document and digital resources, based on information from partners	Rough draft of the resource (flowchart, digital document, poster, and flyer)
	Send to partners for review	Make adjustments or corrections to the resource based on partners' feedback
August, 2018	Finalize and have community partners link to the resource	The ESL resource is rolled out online
	Distribute the resource back to the community	The ESL resource is shared in hard copy with the partners