



**IMMIGRANT
& REFUGEE
LAW CENTER**

Stabilizing Immigrant Families and Strengthening Cincinnati's Economy

Overview and Need

Immigrants are essential to Cincinnati's economic vitality, workforce growth, and neighborhood stability. Yet many immigrant residents face mounting legal, economic, and informational barriers due to a complex and shifting policy environment. These challenges undermine family stability, limit workforce participation, and strain employers' ability to attract and retain talent. Strategic, coordinated investment is needed to ensure immigrant communities, workers, and employers can fully contribute to Cincinnati's economic future.

Project Purpose

This proposal seeks funding to support a coordinated set of strategies that strengthen immigrant stability, workforce participation, employer engagement, and trust-building between City of Cincinnati leadership and communities. The initiative focuses on three direct service areas and toolkit development led by the City in partnership with Cincinnati Compass and the Immigrant & Refugee Law Center- two trusted partners with the City- to enhance City preparedness in the near-term while also ensuring the long-term continued growth of the City.

Focus Areas and Activities: Proposed \$300,000

- **Legal Services for Immigrants (Lead Organization- IRLC): \$100,000**
Funding will expand access to trusted legal assistance for immigrants facing deportation proceedings and for those encountering barriers related to employment, benefits, and public services. Services will include legal screenings, representation or referrals, and support addressing work authorization, wage theft, discrimination, and access to social services. These efforts help families remain stable, employed, and connected to community resources. The funds will enable organization to hire a new attorney and focus 50% of time on representing detained clients.
- **Employer Engagement and Support (Lead Organization- Cincinnati Compass): \$100,000**
Employers across Cincinnati are navigating increased complexity related to hiring and retaining immigrant and international talent. Employers are concerned with scrutiny, retaliation, and enhanced oversight disrupting daily operations and calling employee safety into question. This initiative will offer employer education, technical assistance, and convenings focused on legal compliance, workplace safety and support, and inclusive hiring/retention practices. These efforts will reduce uncertainty while supporting business growth and talent retention.
- **Know Your Rights and Community Awareness (City with IRLC, Compass, & partners): \$25,000**
Funding will support culturally and linguistically appropriate education on Know Your Rights, family preparedness planning, and how to recognize and respond appropriately to ICE activity in the community. Outreach will include workshops, printed and digital resources, and partnerships with trusted community organizations to ensure accurate information reaches those most impacted.
- **Toolkits and Trainings (City, IRLC, Compass, & partners): \$75,000**
The City will partner with IRLC, Compass, and partners to develop three multilingual toolkits to protect community members, businesses, and neighborhoods. We will create three toolkits:
 1. **Neighborhood Preparation and Protection:** This toolkit will provide neighborhood level training, using the SALUTE method to prepare and defend neighbors. It will include education on Know Your Rights, family preparedness planning, and how to recognize and respond appropriately to ICE activity in the community.
 2. **Small Business Preparation and Protection:** This toolkit will help small business owners understand their rights to protect staff and customers. It will provide guidance on Power of Attorney in case of need of adjustment of ownership, I-9 compliance, and preparation for visits, audits, and raids
 3. **Employer Toolkit:** This toolkit will help employers understand and prepare for I-9 compliance and E-Verify requirements, work authorization basics, overview of employment-based visas, and strategies both to support current employees and continue to hire and retain immigrant and international talent to meet workforce needs.

Outcomes and Impact

These integrated strategies are built on current, strong partnerships the City has with immigrant serving organizations. It will improve legal stability for immigrant families, increase access to employment, strengthen employer confidence, and enhance community preparedness. The result is a more resilient immigrant population, a stronger local workforce, and will help position Cincinnati as a city that recognizes immigrant inclusion as essential to long-term economic growth.