John S. and James L.
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Writing the Story of Transformation

Organizations Focused On Immigrant Civic Participation Encourage Immigrants To be Part of the Broader Community

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Abstract
The first year evaluation report on the Immigrant Participation & Immigration Reform (IPIR) initiative tells a story of human and social development-newcomers joining and strengthening the democracy-among immigrants whose institutions engage them in organizational self-governance, leadership opportunities, and democratic civic activity. Indeed, evidence suggests that it is the quality of these organizations that draws immigrants into participation: Sixty-three percent of respondents said that one of their major motivations to be active in the community was that "I like being a part of an organization that does good work."

Knight Communities Included
Long Beach, Calif. and Miami, Fla.

ENGAGING IMMIGRANTS, ORGANIZATIONS AND COALITIONS:

2006 Evaluation Report from the Immigrant Participation and Immigration Reform (IPIR) Initiative

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ENGAGING IMMIGRANTS, ORGANIZATIONS AND COALITIONS:
2006 Evaluation Report from the
Immigrant Participation and Immigration Reform (IPIR) Initiative

Sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
and its American Dream Fund
in collaboration with the Four Freedoms Fund

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Background and Basic Design

In Spring 2005 the Knight Foundation and the Four Freedoms Fund commissioned from Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry an evaluation and learning endeavor that would span five years and encompass a broad, diverse cohort of their grantees in the immigrant field across the country. This document and its several appendices constitute the first full report of what has been called Immigrant Participation and Immigration Reform (IPIR): a baseline picture of the field, which will be built upon in subsequent months and years.

IPIR organizations have included:

- Three national advocates, each with its own coordinated local-to-national network of organizations, funded by the Knight Foundation. These are the National Immigration Forum (NIF) and its New American Opportunities Campaign (NAOC), working from Washington to disseminate accurate information and coordinate activities regarding legislative work on the Hill toward Comprehensive Immigration Reform; the Center for Community Change (CCC) and its Immigrant Organizing Committee (IOC)/Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), building a network among key regional coalitions and grassroots immigrant groups to agree upon principles and establish a voice in Federal immigration reform debates; and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) with its Latino Empowerment and Advocacy Project (LEAP), working with a cohort of grantees to help predominantly service-delivery organizations integrate into their work voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.

- Local and state immigrant integration organizations supported by Knight's American Dream Fund (ADF). ADF was established to support, in Knight Foundation communities, immigrant –focused organizations that encourage newcomer civic participation, including engagement in the democracy and other endeavors such as English learning, naturalization, and voting.

- Organizations that anchor state and regional immigrant participation networks, and other grassroots immigrant organizations, supported by the collaborative Four

Freedoms Fund (FFF). Knight helped to launch FFF and has allied its activities with the collaborative. FFF supports capacity growth for the protection of immigrant civil liberties and the promotion of newcomer participation in the democracy.

From its inception IPIR was established to engage grantees to the greatest extent possible in the evaluation. Its stated goal is to encourage participating organizations to build, from their practice, knowledge that can be used to improve the work of individual organizations and the field as a whole.

Engagement of participating organizations has been sought through the principles of collaborative inquiry:

- Participatory, to build ownership and maximize the usefulness to grantee participants and their funders.

- Collaborative, to help strengthen, through the shared work, relationships among organizations and their funders that can assist the field to move forward.

- Inquiry-based, to encourage organizations to ask questions relevant to their practice and seek credible evidence in answering these questions.

Following these principles, IPIR's aspiration has been to document results and progress over time, and to share the story of the work to a broad audience through a strong and compelling evidence base, helping to build support for the field. The evaluation has employed three strategies to build and begin to share its evidence base. IPIR has sought:

- Breadth through the development and implementation by participating organizations of annually administered surveys.

- Depth through intensive qualitative, ethnographic documentation of selected participating organizations.

- Peer learning through annual convenings designed by participants to reflect on data interpretation, share promising practices, and strategize together in a space more diverse and inclusive than is often available to them.

Evaluation Theory of Change and Questions

Developed consensually from the goals of the funders, IPIR has been informed by a fundamental hypothesis that three aspects must be at work in order to produce positive community change, strengthen the democracy, and promote productive policy change for newcomers in America:

- Immigrants themselves must be actively engaged in the civic life of their communities, learning to participate in the democracy and developing as community leaders.

- Democratically run immigrant organizations must have the capacities of strong infrastructure as well as the abilities to draw immigrants into civic life and to form coalitions with one another.

- Strong local-to-national networks of organizations must exist to develop trusting relationships, share relevant information, and strategize together.

Animated by this hypothesis, the evaluation has pursued three related questions:

- How do immigrants grow, learn, and develop relationships in the community when they engage actively in civic life, and what is the role of immigrant civic participation in national movements for policy reform?

- What are the unique capacities—and therefore the capacity-development priorities—of community organizations that encourage newcomers to engage in civic life and that work in coalitions with one another on policy issues?

- How do local-national networks of immigrant organizations form and grow—and how do they grow best—in movement-building activity toward positive immigration policy change?

Timeline and Milestones through 2006

2003:   First FFF grants awarded in fall

2004:   Knight grants awarded to CCC, NCLR, NIF in spring

2005:   First ADF grants awarded at year's end

             IPIR Design Year: Voluntary National Design Team of current participating organizations designs Civic Participation, Organizational Capacity & Accomplishments, and Networking surveys[1], as well as March 2006 IPIR National Launch Convening in Chicago

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[1] The surveys are included as Appendix A in this report.

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Ethnographic qualitative documentation begins at selected organizations in Los Angeles/Long Beach, Chicago, New York, District of Columbia, and Miami

2006:   March 16-17 National Launch convening draws 89 organizations and 172 people (including newly awarded ADF grantees) and is considered a general success. Sessions include plenaries, skill-building, peer-to-peer learning, and preparation for survey completion. Some of the highlights from the convening's evaluation forms:

- Overall satisfaction (10-high scale), average 7.59, median 8.
- Desired outcome (all on 5-high scales) "Greater sense of belonging to the national field," average 4.33.
- Desired outcome "New and/or stronger relationships with others in the field," average 3.97.
- Desired outcome "Increased enthusiasm for using evaluation and data collection to strengthen your organization and field," average 4.20.
- Desired outcome "Readiness to fill out data collection surveys," average 3.93.
- Participants took the opportunity of the convening to plan a mobilization for Washington, DC, one of the Spring 2006 series of democracy rallies that took place around the country.

Throughout the spring and summer, despite the unprecedented activity of the mobilizations, 110 organizations (some non-grantee members of FIRM and NAOC networks) completed IPIR surveys, as follows:

- 19 voluntary organizations completed a total of 366 Civic Participation (CP) surveys by individual immigrants the organizations had brought into civic life.
- 63 organizations successfully completed Organizational Capacity and Accomplishment (OCA) surveys.
- 28 organizations completed Networking surveys for NAOC and FIRM.

In November and December, following their voter registration and get-out-the-vote work for the 2006 elections, NCLR's 17 LEAP-participating organizations completed a customized Networking survey. Analyzed results will be available in early 2007.

Throughout the fall and winter, Touchstone Center has produced[2]:

- Three full reports of analysis of the OCA surveys, one for IPIR as a whole and one each for the ADF and FFF organizations. Additionally, customized reports were prepared for all organizations so they could compare their

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[2] The survey reports are included as Appendices B, C and D in this report.

results with aggregate data to encourage self-reflection toward improvement. An analysis of southeast regional OCA data was also performed in response to a request to present findings to the first-ever southeast regional immigrant advocates conference on Dec. 3, 2006.

- Survey reports of analysis for both the NAOC and the FIRM networks.
- One full CP analysis report and 18 customized organizational reports, once again to encourage comparison and reflection among organizations.

In December, a newly constituted voluntary National Design Team began planning work for the second annual IPIR evaluation analysis and peer-learning convening, to be held in the spring of 2007.

Highlights of First-Year Baseline Findings

Immigrant Civic Participation

From both survey[3] and ethnographic data emerges a significant story of human and social development—newcomers joining and strengthening the democracy—among immigrants whose institutions engage them in organizational self-governance, leadership opportunities, and democratic civic activity. Indeed, evidence suggests that it is the quality of these organizations that draws immigrants into participation: Sixty-three percent of respondents said that one of their major motivations to be active in the community was that "I like being a part of an organization that does good work."

Surveyed newcomers gave high marks to these organizations for their learning and community outreach practices, with highest average scores for the following descriptors of the IPIR organization in which they are active:

- "encourages and helps me to grow as a human being;"
- "participates in coalitions with other groups, and encourages me to work with the broader community;"
- "has positively changed the awareness about immigrants in the broader community;" and
- "encourages and helps me as a member to learn about issues and think for myself."

Respondents were asked about the organizational activities that had generated these characteristics. Most reported participating in campaigns on immigrant or local issues. But majorities of those surveyed also reported reaching out to others and other organizations to amplify democratic activity: "helped or encouraged someone to join a campaign or action," and "became more active with another community group."

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[3] A quick glimpse of the sample of organizations and individuals surveyed (more information can be found in the full report in Appendix B): 10 ADF and 9 FFF organizations in 13 separate states; 54% of respondents came from the traditional gateways of CA, FL, IL, and NY and 46% from nine other new gateway states; respondents were born in 52 different countries, with one-third from Mexico and another 28% from elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean.

What can organizations do to strengthen participation further? Two-thirds of respondents asked for "information about my rights and how else I can contribute to my community," with 59 - 60% asking for "information on the issues that concern me," "training opportunities for how to mobilize people to act (for example, recruiting volunteers, team building)," and "training on communication (for example, public speaking, writing, persuasion skills)."

By a large margin, the highest self-reported challenges holding immigrants back from civic activities with their organization were "time with my job(s)" and "time with my family."

The theme of increase in democratic participation recurs throughout the survey. For example, when immigrants were asked about their personal learning and growth through their organization in the past year, items that received the highest percentages of "some" or "a lot" of growth included the following:

- the skill "to resolve conflicts;"
- the knowledge of "how local and national governments work and how they affect my life;"
- the attitude of "I could run for an elected position;"
- the behavior of "acting more powerfully in my community and public arena;" and
- relationship-building with "people who have influence, authority, and/or power."

Yet belief that "I could run for a public position" also received one of the highest percentage scores of "no growth" on the survey, joining knowledge of "how to become a U.S. citizen" and "how to register and vote in local and national elections," possibly an indication of eligibility.

Lowest percentages of "some" or "a lot" of growth were recorded for:

- "my desire to pursue more educational opportunities;"
- "my tolerance of people with backgrounds (race & ethnicity) different from mine;" and
- "my desire to really listen to people with different views from mine and try to understand them."

The latter two challenges appear in analyses of coalition building among organizations, as well, and represent areas of focus as feedback is offered to organizations.

Indeed, the story of immigrants' growth and their civic participation through organizations contains a degree of nuance. For example, majorities of respondents reported that they are "already strong" in several dimensions, including:

- "my desire to really listen to people with different views from mine and try to understand them;" (note that this was an area of low growth for others above);
- "how to work with other people;"
- "how I can contribute to my community;"
- "my desire to get involved in my community beyond this organization;" and
- "being more informed about what is happening in my community and around the U.S."

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This suggests that these organizations have a strong core of existing leaders. Did these leaders come to the organizations with high capacities, or develop their strengths through participation? It may be that the groups tend to attract individuals with high readiness to engage civically. However, since 45% of respondents said they have been active in these institutions for more than a year, they may have developed the strengths through those experiences. The results will bear following over time to better understand the role organizations play in facilitating the development of such attributes.

Survey results indicate that staff organizers play an important role in facilitating the growth of leadership in individual immigrants. Responses to the open-ended question of "how leadership growth best happens for you" point to encouragement and "pushing" by staff as important contributors to leadership growth. Qualitative documentation confirms that growth in immigrant leadership occurs through highly intentional activity by staff members of organizations encouraging newcomer civic participation in the democracy. Staff organizers start where individuals are and encourage them to move to the next stage of leadership, asking them to take on new, more challenging roles in a broader public arena. In the words of a director of an organization highly focused on leadership development, "We want to see them progress as leaders every year. Instead of just coming to meetings, we want to see them call meetings, run meetings themselves." Individual growth is highlighted and placed within the development of common cause and the context of forces shaping society. Organizers behave as educators, attentive to what is being learned by members as the organization shapes campaigns to improve community conditions or public policies. Staff organizers often are drawn from the leadership ladder of members as they have grown in individual capacity.

It is important to note that civic participation and leadership development among the groups constituting the full IPIR cohort includes but is not limited to naturalization and voter engagement activities. Indeed, in the national sample, 41% reported that they "helped or encouraged people to register to vote and/or to vote" in the past year. Another 27% "helped people to become citizens," and 15% "became a citizen." But electoral participation is seen as a part of a continuum of civic activity that is just as likely to begin with a campaign to keep open a local library—starting where people are and helping them to climb the ladder of community and civic leadership.

Organizational Capacity and Accomplishments

The institutions that orchestrate this human and community development of the country's newcomers report in IPIR surveys that their highest capacities are in Networking and Collaboration with other organizations and in Civic Engagement and Organizing with immigrants. This corroborates what immigrant members themselves report and the IPIR hypothesis of what is needed to improve conditions for immigrants. Among the highest self-reported scores in these areas were the following:

- "Organization turned out more people this year than last year;"
- "Organization has extensive and useful working relationships with allies;"

- "Organization decides whether to participate in a coalition based on whether it strategically supports a current core priority;"
- "Organization chooses to engage in coalitions that support the building of the organization's power base;" and
- "Organization is widely known within its community (beyond just constituents and members)."

Lower capacities were reported in areas of Internal Administration and, in particular, Fundraising. The picture that emerges is of organizations that accomplish a great deal with infrastructures that need strengthening. [4]

With respect to internal capacity, organizations reported high average scores on the following:

- "Board members are strongly committed to organization's vision, mission and success;"
- "Board meetings are held regularly, are well-planned and well-attended;" and
- "Board represents the constituent community's diversity."

Yet scores dropped substantially for "board members raise and contribute money," and lowest scores on the survey were reported in diversification of income, including "non-grant income," "member dues and earned income," and "major gifts."

Organizations scored themselves as relatively strong, however, in financial management of their limited resources.

Among other low self-reported rankings was the existence of a "routine, ongoing system for evaluating its work using diverse sources of data and evidence."

Consistent with these patterns, when asked their top priorities for capacity growth in the coming year, organizations aspire to strengthen internal infrastructure and raise more funds. Asked to name barriers to growth, most often cited was the trio of limited time, staffing, and resources. Training was the technical assistance approach most often preferred for addressing these barriers, although individual consultation was named by most groups for improving internal administration.

Organizations were also consistent with self-reported strengths when asked to list their accomplishments in the past year. Most often they named successes in advocacy and organizing. Consistent with what member immigrants said in their own surveys, organizations reported that "members and leaders can speak about power, self-interest, and relationship building," and that "people who turn out understand the issue being addressed." The spring of 2006 was of course a record moment in immigrant mobilizations for democracy, and it is no

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[4] An overview of the OCA survey sample: Of the then-current 41 FFF and 36 ADF grantees, 31 and 32 organizations, respectively, successfully completed OCA surveys (two attempted but failed). Respondents included 18 groups working in the West, 20 in the Midwest, 24 in the Southeast, and 16 in the Northeast (seven groups work in two or more regions). Of these, ¾ report using strategies of community organizing, coalition building, and policy advocacy; almost ½ work at all four levels of local, regional, state, and national.

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surprise that the highest mean score reported was that organizations had turned out more people this year than last.

IPIR's hypothesis that organizations need to form coalitions to build the democracy is born out in both immigrant and organizational surveys. But digging a bit deeper reveals coalition work to be extremely challenging. Survey scores dropped when organizations were asked whether they can "maintain participation in coalitions without undue strain." Staff resources are stretched thin, sometimes to the breaking point. Tensions arise between ethnicities, around strategic decisions and the selection of campaigns, across organizational missions, over power, turf and money issues.

Ethnographic documentation supports these observations. In one state struggling to create a new statewide coalition during the spring 2006 rallies, meetings were "90% relationship management and 10% strategy or action planning," according to the leader of one of the strongest organizations. Challenges were felt across multi-issue versus immigrant-only-issue groups, across organizations with a membership base and non-affiliated individual activists. Yet despite the tensions, the new coalition was able to organize the largest democratic demonstration in the state since the Vietnam era.

Qualitative observation of another statewide coalition, still relatively young, witnessed the importance of effective planning, capacity building, and trust building through multiple and creative campaigns to overcome such challenges. But trust building takes work together over time, and good planning and capacity building demand resources to bring on talented staff and consultant assistance. Support of such sort cannot be underestimated if coalition work is to succeed.

Yet despite the many challenges of coalitions, survey data indicate that groups in the field reach out to help and work with one another. The median number of organizations that surveyed institutions "added as members and allies in the past year" was 6.5. When asked to name "allies or potential allies" they "would like to see receive more funding and why," responses (142 in total) were generous and diverse, with 124 different organizations receiving nominations. Many of the organizations cited were grassroots in nature, small in size, and working with specific or emerging communities. The most common reason given for recommendation was because their approach was considered strategically important for the field. Others were nominated because they reach key communities, were seen as top candidates for capacity growth, or because they play key roles in coalitions.

Local-to-National Networking

As described in Touchstone Center's September 2005 IPIR report, coalitional strains often exhibit themselves most dramatically in local-to-national networking, where the cultures of bottom-up and top-down approaches in our representative democracy meet and attempt to work out their differences.

Certainly these tensions have been observed in ethnographic fieldwork for the evaluation. The heady days of the spring 2006 mobilizations in communities around the country represent a high point in local-to-national coordination and communication. But they were followed by disappointment among many local groups (and some regional coalitions) that little of consequence was accomplished nationally on comprehensive immigration reform. There was a return to a sense (often voiced in the past) that local groups were not listened to in subsequent planning for September rallies, and decisions were made in organizations around the country that they must turn attention back to local and state issues in their civic participation campaigns.

Despite the inherent challenges of such efforts, however, IPIR surveys demonstrate that careful, deliberate, and patient work can create networks of mutual support, trust, and positive impact. Survey data for the evaluation have come from the New American Opportunity Campaign (NAOC), with the National Immigration Forum (NIF) as its "hub" organization, and the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), with the Center for Community Change (CCC) at the hub. Both surveys exhibited tension between federal- and local/state-level organizing, yet the larger picture is quite positive.

Overwhelmingly, groups in both networks reported that "all told, participation in the network adds value to the work of our organization," with 75-80% of respondents "agreeing" and the remainder "strongly agreeing." Strong majorities of participants indicated overlap of their own goals with those of the networks.

Participation was reported as high in network activities such as "strategized jointly," "used common message framing/talking points," "increased media contacts," and "strengthened relationships with legislators." Least common in both networks was "joint fundraising."

Products of the networks, too, were reported generally to be effective. These included "policy analysis," "talking points," "legislative analysis," and "policy/legislative updates." "Sample op-eds" were rated least effective in both networks, and translation of materials into other languages was recommended.

Leadership in both networks was reported to be strong, although both surveys indicated a desire to increase accountability among participants. Majorities in both networks agreed that:

- "relationships among members are characterized by trust and mutual respect;"
- "lines of communication are well tended and effectively managed;"
- "staff are responsive and accountable to local organizations;" and
- "a collective sense of energy, synergy, and proactive strategy" characterized their common work.

Such descriptors are key components of successful local-to-national networking, leading to majority agreement that both networks "have become stronger" in the past year, and have been "effective in moving toward policy goals."

Conclusion

In summary, evaluation data from 2006 show a network of organizations with strengths in civic engagement and organizing, and in collaboration and networking. Most organizations report having strongly committed boards, visionary leadership and an encouraging array of skills. These organizations demonstrated impressive capacity to mobilize immigrants and others in peaceful civic participation, as the largest public demonstrations in more than a generation took place in numerous American cities in the spring of 2006 in support of comprehensive, humane immigration reform – demonstrations noteworthy for their dignified and orderly character.

At the same time, the evaluation found that both coalitional work and grassroots engagement and leadership development are difficult and time-consuming. IPIR organizations displayed impressive stretch and reach in 2006 but now is a time to consolidate those gains through growth in organizations' internal capacities and strengthening of shared vision for collaboration in the field.

Participating organizations are hungry for more time to dialogue with one another for peer learning and so that important differences in analysis, strategy, and immigrant constituencies can be bridged more effectively. They also are eager to strengthen their fundraising capacities and diversify their funding base; to broaden and deepen their leadership pools; to work on local and state-level immigrant integration issues as well as federal policy reform; to expand their capacities for communication and self-evaluation; and to become more effective at voter registration, education and mobilization. The upcoming Spring 2007 national IPIR learning conference offers an important opportunity to address these priorities and nurture the further emergence of a powerful, capable field of immigrant organizations.

It is important to note that 2006 represented a baseline year of survey data collection and qualitative documentation. We are gathering a first picture of the field. 2006 was also a year of extraordinary volatility and historic activity in the immigration field. Mass mobilization on the scale of 2006 may not happen again soon, but civic participation is likely to flourish in other forms as groups build on the experiences – both the exhilaration and the frustrations – of 2006. The full legacy of 2006 will only unfold gradually, and its future shape cannot be easily predicted. Similarly, the national context in 2007 is also substantially different, with a dramatically different Congress and reconfigured political alliances.

Yet due to the extraordinary opportunity of long-term commitment from the funding agencies, IPIR will be able to follow field trend lines into the future. And the overall field view in 2006 is one of great diversity, commitment, enthusiastic motivation, and—notwithstanding tight budgets and greatly stretched staff—growing strength.

Individual immigrants are being drawn into civic participation: learning, growing, and integrating into their communities through active community problem-solving. Organizations are identifying and strengthening their capacities, overcoming their differences to form successful coalitions and encouraging immigrants to take on leadership roles in the democracy. Local-to-national networks are learning from earlier challenges to increase communication,

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collaboration, trust, and effectiveness, and they played key roles in the massive outpouring of public support for comprehensive immigration reform seen in the spring of 2006.

The collaborative, participatory effort of IPIR is designed to encourage such learning and foster reflective practice among participating groups. Overall, the evaluation efforts have begun well. We look forward in 2007 to seeing how the field deals with its challenges and builds on the gains shown in 2006.

Appendices