**AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL &
WELCOMING AMERICA**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR
THE GATEWAYS FOR GROWTH CHALLENGE, ROUND VI
JULY 2025**

SUMMARY

The Gateways for Growth Challenge (G4G) is a competitive opportunity for local communities to receive support from the American Immigration Council (the Council) and Welcoming America to improve immigrant inclusion. In response to the current political climate and evolving local needs, the **Gateways for Growth Challenge, Round VI** will offer a **12-month opportunity** for communities to receive targeted, flexible support that strengthens local welcoming efforts. The structure of Round VI will differ from previous rounds: the new model emphasizes resilience, coalition-building, rapid-response support, and practical value, without requiring full-scale strategic planning to create a welcoming plan.

Up to 12 communities will be selected for this round. Selected communities will participate in a **12-month engagement** that includes tailored research reports, technical assistance, and a community of practice that reflects their current capacity and context. Communities that are new to G4G and those that have participated in previous rounds are encouraged to apply.

There is **no cost to participate** in G4G Round VI. Research support, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities are provided at no cost to selected communities.

Applications for G4G Round VI are due by **September 30, 2025, at 5pm local time**. Final selections will be announced by **Wednesday, November 19, 2025**. The 12-month G4G Round VI will kick off with an orientation in **December 2025**, officially begin in **January 2026** and conclude in **December 2026**, with a cohort-wide debrief in **early 2027**. Research reports are expected to launch **as early as mid-2026 and continue through early 2027**, although exact timing is subject to change. A more detailed timeline is below.

BACKGROUND

In recent decades, communities across the United States have been reshaped by immigration, seeing their demographics shift with new populations that have revitalized neighborhoods, added vitality to business corridors, enriched communities with vibrant cultures, increased the tax base, and spurred innovation. Communities have the opportunity to promote belonging by uplifting the myriad economic, social, and civic contributions immigrants make in their communities, but face challenges meeting the needs of changing community demographics. At the same time, changes in federal immigration policy have put communities in a precarious position as they work to ensure all of their residents feel protected and welcome. In response, local leaders prioritize community safety, harnessing the contributions of newcomers, and ensuring all residents can thrive. In 2016, Welcoming America and New American Economy–now the American Immigration Council–launched the [Gateways for Growth Challenge](#) (G4G) as a competitive opportunity to support communities in building and sustaining immigrant inclusion infrastructure.

We are pleased to announce a call for applications for the Gateways for Growth Challenge, Round VI. G4G Round VI will continue to offer support that the G4G network has come to rely upon, including tailored research on immigrants' economic and demographic contributions. This is coupled with **new streamlined technical assistance and a community of practice** that retains the rigor and impact of previous G4G rounds while building in the flexibility required of this current moment. Over the course of 12 months, participants will have access to:

- **Tailored local research** from the Council on immigrants' economic and demographic contributions to inform local priorities, strengthen coalition strategies, and affect narrative change.
- **Customized direct technical assistance (TA)** from the Council and Welcoming America staff, tailored to each community's capacity and goals.
- **Participation in a community of practice** with opportunities for peer-learning with other Round VI communities and briefings from G4G alumni and experts in the field.

ROUND VI SUPPORT

The Council and Welcoming America will partner with **12** urban, suburban, and rural communities through this competitive opportunity. **Selected communities will have access to the following types of support:**

1. Tailored Local Research

In many communities, limited information about who immigrants are and how they contribute to the local economy and workforce makes it harder for local leaders to recognize their needs and potential, leading to fewer targeted programs and support. G4G Round VI awardees will receive customized research reports from the Council that

highlight the economic and demographic impact of immigrant residents locally, including their tax contributions and spending power, roles in the local labor force, population and demographic trends, and other key information. This research can be used to inform existing inclusion efforts, start a conversation on why a community should develop an immigrant inclusion strategy, guide conversations on local policies and state legislation, and counter harmful narratives about immigrant populations.

Round VI awardees are expected to release their completed research report as early as mid-2026 through early 2027. As appropriate, releases should be accompanied by a public event, like a press conference or panel discussion. **Research reports will include 2024 American Community Survey data, and follow our standard G4G report template.** A few examples of past G4G research reports include: [Fort Wayne](#), [Pittsburgh](#), [Santa Clara County](#), and [Santa Fe](#).

2. <u>Direct Technical Assistance & Community of Practice</u>

G4G Round VI awardees will receive ongoing technical assistance from the Council and Welcoming America that is scaled to each community's capacity and goals from January 2026 through December 2026. Each community can choose from a flexible menu of deliverables to develop over a 12-month period and present at the end of the program. Example deliverables include:

- A short-term strategy memo, plan, or shorter reference document used to guide activities in the moment and over the next 1-2 years.
- A plan to strengthen cross-sector coalitions or internal welcoming and rapid response infrastructure.
- A data and/or narrative change campaign aligned with local values.
- A plan to host facilitated sessions for reflection, planning, or community engagement.
- A roadmap for sustaining welcoming work beyond 2026.

Communities are also encouraged to propose alternative deliverables that align with their specific goals and needs.

All TA projects are designed to be **achievable within a 12-month period**. At the conclusion of G4G Round VI, communities will present their work and final deliverable(s) to the cohort.

Individual TA and support from the Council and Welcoming America staff will be paired with participation in a community of practice, creating opportunities for peer learning within the Round VI cohort, and briefings from G4G alumni and experts in the field.

During the 12-month period, communities are expected to participate in a minimum of **four individual TA calls** through which the Council and Welcoming America will provide consultation on the planning and implementation process, help troubleshoot challenges, and connect communities to resources, as appropriate. Communities will

also attend **six virtual community of practice calls**. In early 2027, after the conclusion of the program, communities will participate in a final reflection and evaluation session.

The direct technical assistance and the community of practice are designed to:

- Frame welcoming work as a tool for **resilience, safety, and solidarity** in a time of political uncertainty.
- Provide data and TA coaching.
- Center community autonomy while offering tools for strategic pivots and reflection.
- Allow alumni and new communities to choose from **diverse TA projects** that meet them where they are and participate in a community of practice model designed to foster peer-to-peer learning.
- Prioritize **data-informed storytelling** and cross-sector coordination in streamlined, achievable ways.

Example TA Projects

Below are several examples of how communities could use G4G Round VI to advance welcoming work:

- A city's Human Rights Commission partners with a local refugee resettlement agency to participate in G4G Round VI. They are concerned about rising anti-immigrant sentiment ahead of the 2026 election cycle. Through G4G, they develop a short-term narrative strategy that aligns with their community values. Together, they co-create messaging in multiple languages, host facilitated storytelling circles, and launch a voter education campaign that emphasizes belonging, safety, and civic participation.
- A rural nonprofit coalition, comprising a food pantry, school district, and public health department, applies to G4G Round VI to improve the coordination of services for immigrant and mixed-status families. They work with the Council and Welcoming America to identify communication gaps across agencies and over 12 months, they design a "welcome navigator" system, streamline referrals, and host quarterly cross-sector meetings that make service access more efficient and culturally responsive.
- A mid-sized city that completed a welcoming plan in 2021 joins the program to revisit and update local priorities in light of staff turnover and shifting political will. Instead of developing a new plan, they use G4G Round VI TA coaching for support in conducting a community pulse check. They interview key stakeholders, assess what's still working, and co-develop a 2026–2027 strategy memo that centers community voice and builds momentum for future funding opportunities that support welcoming work.

ROUND VI PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must demonstrate:

- A commitment from **one lead organization** (e.g., city/county government, local chamber, nonprofit) to anchor the proposed project.
- **Staff capacity** from the lead organization to appoint at least one individual to coordinate all aspects of the production of the research report, and participate in individual and group TA (amounting to **2-3 hours per week for 12 months**).
- Eligibility for the research report. **Communities of all sizes are encouraged to apply,** however research reports require a population base of **at least 100,000** (region, metro area, multi-county, county, or city). Smaller communities may need to propose a larger geographic scope in order to produce a research report.
- **Support or endorsement** from either:
  - The **private sector** (e.g., a local chamber of commerce, economic development entity, or another business-focused nonprofit or association); OR
  - The **public sector** (e.g. city/county government).
- A commitment to **develop deliverable(s) by <u>December 2026</u>** that:
  - Engage community leaders in the planning process;
  - Includes concrete recommendations;
  - Outline an implementation process and timeline; and
  - Provide a mechanism for adjustment.

Community Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Lead Organization:** Preference for a local government or chambers of commerce; nonprofits will also be considered.
- **Staff Capacity:** Demonstrated ability to dedicate 1-2 staff members to lead the project.
- **Program Commitment**: Willingness of the lead organization to fully engage in all components of G4G Round VI, including tailored research, direct technical assistance, AND the community of practice.
- **Partnership Strength:** Strong existing local partnerships and potential to engage new, cross-sector collaborators.
- **Goal Clarity:** Tangible, measurable, and achievable goals for each component of the program.
- **Leadership and Vision:** Evidence of commitment to immigrant inclusion and long-term impact.
- **Community Context:** Communities experiencing rapid immigrant growth and shifting dynamics or communities actively seeking to attract immigrant residents.

- **Community Engagement:** Emphasis on engaging both newcomers and longtime residents.
- **Inclusion Awareness:** A clear understanding of local inclusion needs, opportunities, and challenges.

Participant Expectations

Successful TA projects will vary in focus, but all will include:

- Engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including meaningful participation from immigrant and refugee communities.
- Convening and coordination led by the designated lead organization.
- Identifying and achieving a clear, tangible goal.

We strongly encourage lead organizations to be a **city or county government** or **chamber of commerce**, though **nonprofits and community foundations** are also eligible. Regardless of type, applicants must demonstrate institutional support from a local government and/or chamber of commerce.

G4G Round VI Calendar

Activity	Dates
Orientation and onboarding call (1 hour)	December 2025
Up to 6 virtual peer or learning sessions (1-1.5 hours each)	January 2026 – November 2026
At least 4 TA sessions (1 hour each)	January 2026 – December 2026
Final reflection and evaluation session (2 hours)	Early 2027
Community-led stakeholder management, planning, documentation, and implementation	Ongoing

Program Commitment

Tailored Local Research: Communities will collaborate with the Council and Welcoming America for up to 12 months. **Most reports will require at least six to nine months** of production to allow time to analyze the data, develop the report, and release the final report.

Direct Technical Assistance & Community of Practice: Communities should anticipate spending **approximately two to three hours per week over 12 months** to plan

and execute their proposed project. This may include engaging stakeholders, convening working groups, and implementing recommendations from existing strategic plans. Selected participants will commit to:

- Co-designing and implementing one TA project with support from the Council and Welcoming America, including setting realistic goals for the program year.
- Participating in TA sessions, peer learning opportunities, and brief program evaluation.
- Contributing to light-touch documentation and story-sharing to support broader learning.

ROUND VI APPLICATION TIMELINE, PROCESS, AND QUESTIONS

Applications for **G4G Round VI** will open on **July 28, 2025,** and are due by **September 30, 2025, at 5pm local time**.

Final selections will be announced by **Wednesday, November 19, 2025**.

Application Timeline

7/28/2025: G4G Round VI application opens.

8/1/2025 - 9/30/25: Office hours will be made available during this time period to answer questions. More information to sign up can be found on the G4G website, https://www.gatewaysforgrowth.org/apply-round-vi/.

8/20/2025, 2-3pm ET: Applicant FAQ Briefing Webinar #1, [Register here].
                              &
9/3/2025; 2-3pm ET: Applicant FAQ Briefing Webinar #2, [Register here].
- Note: Both webinars will be recorded and will be made available upon request for those unable to attend.

9/30/2025: PDF applications are due to challenge@gatewaysforgrowth.org by 5pm local time.
- Follow up questions, if necessary, will be sent on a rolling basis and must be answered within seven days of receipt.

11/19/2025: All communities will be notified of the selection committee's decision.
- Selected communities will receive information about a December 2025 orientation and kick-off call.

12/5/2025: Selected communities must complete, sign, and return program forms required for participation (including, but not limited to, a community agreement) by **5pm local time**.

1/5/2026: G4G Round VI begins.

Application Questions

Answers to application questions must be in 12-point font, total no longer than four one sided pages (not including letter(s) of support), and submitted in a PDF format. Please do not include a cover letter.

1. Identify the lead organization, including:
    a. Organization name
    b. Contact person and title
    c. Address
    d. Phone, email, and website address
2. If the lead organization is applying with any partner organizations, please include a letter of support from each one.
3. If the organization applying is not a local government or representative of the private sector, please identify a partner from the government and/or the private sector who will support this process and detail how this partner will be engaged. **Please include a letter of support from the identified partner organization(s).**
4. Describe your community, including its geographical boundaries, total population, and estimated immigrant population–including countries of origin. Explain why your organization is applying for G4G Round VI and outline the local challenges and opportunities that participation in the program can help address.
5. Briefly summarize your organization's experience working on immigrant inclusion issues in your community.
6. Please provide the following information about your participation in G4G Round VI:
    a. **Research Scope and Use:** Identify the geographic area for your proposed research report (e.g., city, county, metropolitan region), keeping in mind that the population must be at least 100,000 to ensure valid analysis. Describe how you plan to release the research findings and how you intend to use the data to inform local efforts after its release.
    b. **Technical Assistance Goals and Deliverables:** Describe your proposed project, including the measurable and achievable goals you aim to accomplish during the 12-month program. Explain how these goals will support the needs of immigrant residents and strengthen local inclusion efforts. Identify the specific deliverables you plan to develop—for example, a strategy memo, a communications plan, or a coordination framework—and describe how these will be created, who will be involved, and how responsibilities will be shared between the lead organization and local partners. Include a general timeline for planning, drafting, review, and dissemination (if relevant).
    c. **Importance and Feasibility:** Explain why advancing immigrant inclusion is important to your community at this time and given your local context. What local factors (e.g. community buy-in, political will, existing

infrastructure, etc.) make your proposed work feasible? What obstacles, if any, do you anticipate and how will you address them?

7. Identify who, in addition to the lead organization, will contribute to the development of the research report and technical assistance process. Describe each participant's role, reason for involvement, and community or organizational affiliation.

8. What is your strategy for engaging immigrant communities in your proposed project? What strategies will you use to ensure their sustained and meaningful engagement?

9. Who will be the key contact(s) for participation in the program and serving as the liaison(s) with the Council and Welcoming America? How many hours per week can the key contact(s) devote to participating in the program and advancing deliverables? Describe the contact(s) leadership position and decision-making authority. For example, does this person have the bandwidth and authority to execute strategies on behalf of their organization or convene multi-sector community partners, etc.?

10. Provide a timeline of the key milestones you expect to reach during your participation in G4G Round VI, including the development and release of your tailored research report and technical assistance deliverables. Explain how you will track progress and know when each milestone has been achieved, and how you will measure the impact of your work after G4G Round VI's period ends.

CONTACT FOR INQUIRIES

All questions about the application process should be sent to challenge@gatewaysforgrowth.org.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR AWARDEES

1. Welcoming America Membership

   The communities/organizations selected for G4G Round VI who are new will receive **membership** in Welcoming America's membership network, the Welcoming Network. The Welcoming Network offers tools, resources, technical assistance, and a global network to help nonprofit and government partners transform communities into more welcoming places. Participating members connect with their peers to share good ideas and receive recognition for their efforts in local, national and global settings. Members access a host of resources to assist them in advancing the policies, programs, and strategies set out in the Welcoming Standard. These memberships are valid through 2026 with an option for support in 2027 as well.

2. Global Talent Chamber Network Membership
   Chambers of commerce selected as lead or convening partners will have the opportunity to join the Council's Global Talent Chamber Network. The Global

Talent Chamber Network (GTCN) brings together chambers of commerce from across the country that see immigrant integration as an economic growth strategy. Members of the network have access to plug-and-play advocacy opportunities, communications and messaging guidance, policy analysis, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, online resources and toolkits, and annual convenings.

3. Peer Learning Opportunities

   Communities selected for G4G Round VI will have access to peer-learning opportunities with their Round VI cohort and communities from prior rounds of the G4G Challenge, including mentorship from a G4G alumni community during Round VI. These connections will allow recipients to learn from the experiences of similar communities and, over time, will help build a community of colleagues implementing multi-sector strategic plans at the local level. Peer learning opportunities may include one-on-one phone calls, webinars, and in-person meetings at Welcoming America's conference, the Welcoming Interactive.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

American Immigration Council
The American Immigration Council works to strengthen America by shaping how America thinks about and acts towards immigrants and immigration and by working toward a more fair and just immigration system that opens its doors to those in need of protection and unleashes the energy and skills that immigrants bring. The Council brings together problem solvers and employs four coordinated approaches to advance change—litigation, research, legislative and administrative advocacy, and communications. Follow the latest Council news on Bluesky @immcouncil.org.

Welcoming America
Welcoming America leads a movement of inclusive communities that are becoming more prosperous by ensuring everyone who lives there feels like they belong and has the opportunity to thrive. Through a membership network of 300+ local governments and nonprofits, Welcoming America connects and supports place-based initiatives that work to reduce divisions and support greater civic, social, and economic participation among new and longtime residents alike. Through the Welcoming Network, participating members access peer learning opportunities, technical assistance, tools, and training to help transform their communities into more welcoming places. Learn more at welcomingamerica.org.