



Felicia Escobar, senior advisor for immigration policy at the Domestic Policy Council, Executive Office of the President, addresses a roundtable at LaGuardia Community College, Long Island City, N.Y. Photograph by Edward Hollins, used with permission.

OVAE Part of Federal Effort to Coordinate Immigrant Integration Efforts

Since the late 1990s, OVAE has been supporting efforts for adults who are learning English and the American style of civics (See text box below). Between 40 and 50 percent of adults who receive OVAE-supported services are English learners. As federal services for immigrants have expanded both in types and in breadth of involvement of departments and agencies, the need for coordination has become increasingly apparent. This has led to the New Americans–Citizenship and Integration Initiative. OVAE is one of the offices representing the Department in this effort, sponsored by the White House Domestic Policy Council. The initial federal effort conceptualized three pillars of efforts to assist immigrants in integrating into U.S. society and communities: linguistic integration, civic integration, and economic integration.

As part of helping develop federal strategies to meet the various needs of immigrants to the United States, OVAE staff recently joined others in [going “on the road”](#) to assess and gain feedback about the three pillars. Eight federal agencies formed pairs to visit two sites each. ED’s OVAE staff joined colleagues from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in visits to New York City and Dearborn, Mich. In addition to presenting information to those attending, federal staff listened and noted feedback from immigrants, employers, advocates and others. The feedback featured both concerns and suggestions about service coordination, information flow and accuracy, and proactive services to be provided in advance of immigration to those known to be coming to the U.S.

New York City: In New York City, three roundtables were held in late July at: (1) [LaGuardia Community College](#), with help from its [Center for Immigrant Education and Training](#), where attendees included immigrant students and graduates, service organizations, as well as representatives of the college; (2) New York City Hall with Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Commissioner of the [Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs](#) Fatima Shana, attended by community leaders, policy makers, advocacy and research groups, funders, service providers, and business representatives; and (3) the [Literary Assistance Center](#) with a group of interagency city teams from Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City, where over 40 percent of the U.S. immigrant population live. The group participated in the close-out session of the OVAE-sponsored Great Cities Summit.

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Needs identified by the New York City groups included: more opportunities to learn English, increased accessibility to information about available services, library involvement in providing information and services, increased sharing information about what works, and federal incentives for education and housing integration through immigrant and receiving communities.

Dearborn, Mich.: In Dearborn, three roundtables were held in early August at: (1) [Henry Ford Community College's M-TEC Center](#), in conjunction with the White House Business Council, attended by business representatives, policy makers, and other leaders from state and local organizations actively involved in working to support immigrant integration into the economy; (2) the [Michigan Works! One-Stop Service Center](#) attended by service deliverers and immigrants; and (3) [ACCESS](#), attended by community leaders, including faith-based leaders, advocacy groups, funders, service deliverers, and business representatives.

Participants in the three Dearborn sessions highlighted needs in the following areas: ESL services, job training, information on local services for newly arrived immigrants, access to capital for immigrants to open small businesses, better coordination between law enforcement and immigrant communities, increased cultural competency in receiving communities, and the need to reform U.S. immigration policies to make it easier for immigrants to integrate into their local communities.

Statement about the Department's views on language acquisition of adults and its *English Literacy and Civics Education State Grants (EL/Civics)*

The Department views language acquisition and basic skills acquisition for older out-of-school youth and adults as integral (i.e., core) components to immigrants' integration into the U.S. society and workforce and as critical factors to their children's school success. The Department supports these efforts through *Title II of the Workforce Investment Act*, also known as the [Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998](#), (Public Law 105-220). Formula grants are awarded to states and outlying areas to support programs that help adults become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. These funds also support programs that help parents obtain the skills required to be full partners in the educational development of their children and to assist adults to complete a secondary education. Adult education providers offer classes in adult basic education, adult secondary education, and English as a second language. State educational agencies must use 82.5 percent of the state allocation under this program to make grants to local entities that provide adult education services. Appropriations for FY2009, FY2010, and FY2011 were \$554,122,000, \$628,221,000, and \$596,120,370 respectively. The annual appropriation also provided a \$75 million set-aside for *English Literacy and Civics Education State Grants (EL/Civics)* in FY 2010. Programs funded through the set-aside provide instruction to assist adult immigrants wishing to learn about American civics and questions related to citizenry. The instruction may be integrated into regular adult education classes or provided within separate classes.