

Becoming a --- **WELCOMING SPACE** for Immigrants & Refugees



Leverage Your Programs. Relevant programming increases the chances immigrants will utilize the children's museum or library in the future,¹ and immigrant-led cultural programs are effective bridges to these groups.²



Connect with Community Partners. Partnerships can provide insight, build connections, and increase the impact of both library and community organizations' work.³



Be a Community Presence. Being a positive presence in places in your community where immigrant groups might frequent helps build trust and visibility.⁴



Provide Accessible and Diverse Materials. Access to materials in both English and immigrants' native language helps support the transition to life in a new country³ and demonstrates that the museum or library is for all members of the community.⁵



Involve Community Members. Involving key leaders of immigrant and refugee groups increases understanding of those groups,⁶ and encouraging other community members to be involved in these efforts can help ensure the whole community welcomes its new neighbors.⁷



Hire and Train Culturally Competent Staff. Seek out hires who are able to work effectively in cross-cultural situations with people of various backgrounds or experiences and offer ongoing initiatives to develop cultural competence among all members of the staff.

Don't Forget!

Physical space communicates a lot about who is welcome in the space, what behaviors are expected, and if it is a safe space for families. Consider these factors in making your space more welcoming and safe for immigrant and refugee families:

Decor. Flags, art, and other pieces of decoration can provide a cultural connection for families to their home country.

Furniture. Comfortable seats, which are clearly available for use, help show this is a space to relax in.

Signage. Graphics, rather than text, offer quick help and wayfinding regardless of language spoken.

Sound. Silence can be alienating—background music, conversations, and children playing can be cues to families that this is a space for everyone.

Surveillance. Many immigrants may be fearful or wary of governmental institutions; consider how security guards, police, cameras, and photo-ID requirements might present barriers to service.

White Papers, Resources, & Toolkits



< **Scan this QR code** for links to the bulleted resources below and for additional information and resources!



- **New Americans Library Project**, American Library Association
- **Engage, Cultivate, Provide, Assess**, ALSC white paper
- **ALA Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table**, Guidelines and Standards
- **How to Serve the World Toolkit**, ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services
- **I'm Your Neighbor Books**
- **Increasing Racial and Ethnic Diversity on Museum Boards**, American Alliance of Museums
- **The Library Service to Underserved Children and their Caregivers Toolkit**, ALSC
- **Museum & Community Partnerships: Collaboration Guide** and additional resources, National Science Foundation
- **Providing Immigration Help with Community Partnerships**, ALA eLearning
- **Reimagining Equity and Access for Diverse Youth**, Project Ready

Works Cited

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2. Delgado, L. H. (2023). Creating welcoming spaces: How immigrant-led cultural programs shape public libraries and the communities they serve. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 1–17.
3. Khoir, S., Du, J. T., Davison, R. M., & Koronios, A. (2017). Contributing to social capital: An investigation of Asian immigrants' use of public library services. *Library & Information Science Research*, 39(1), 34–45.
4. Grossman, S., Agosto, D. E., Winston, M., Epstein, R. N. E., Cannuscio, C. C., Martinez-Donate, A., & Klassen, A. C. (2022). How public libraries help immigrants adjust to life in a new country: A review of the literature. *Health Promotion Practice*, 23(5), 804–816.
5. Murphy, P. J. (2023). Literacy Focus: Welcoming Places, Safe Spaces. *Publishers Weekly*. publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/91249-literacy-focus-welcoming-places-safe-spaces.html
6. Little, S. & Murray, R. (2022). The multilingual children's library as physical and metaphorical 'space' within the community: Practical and emotional considerations. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 09610006221133837.
7. Thomas, R. L., Chiarelli-Helminiak, C. M., Ferraj, B., & Barrette, K. (2016). Building relationships and facilitating immigrant community integration: An evaluation of a Cultural Navigator Program. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 55, 77–84.

These research-based recommendations for practice came from IMLS-funded forums with members of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Association of Children's Museums (ACM). By implementing these and engaging in reflective practice, libraries and museums can become more welcoming spaces for immigrant and refugee children and families.