

# Innovate Michigan!

2024 Innovation Fellow

Global Flint Initiative

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U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

# Global Flint Initiative

A Regional Economic Development Strategy

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*Michigan State University*

*Center for Community and Economic Development*

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## ABSTRACT

The Global Flint Initiative (GFI) is an economic and community revitalization strategy that focuses on attracting and retaining international talent in the Greater Flint area by making Flint more welcoming. The International Center of Greater Flint (ICGF) works with a network of individuals and organizations to support and advocate for our neighbors.

In early 2024, ICGF began partnering with area academic researchers to conduct surveys and focus group sessions to identify gaps in services that are necessary to make the Flint area a Welcoming Community. Over the course of a year, ICGF convened meetings with ICGF consortium members who represent the various service providers, schools, health care, non-profit and faith-based organizations, and developed a community-driven strategic GFI implementation plan. This is a similar process used by Global Detroit, a non-profit which advocates for immigrant inclusion to drive economic development. This plan, informed by extensive community dialogue and outreach, is the foundation of Global Detroit's comprehensive immigrant inclusion strategy.

This needs assessment plan involved extensive immigrant groups' outreach to conduct focus groups, interviews and surveys throughout the Flint region over several months. The goal is to collect data to document the true assessment of who these populations are, where they are from, what their needs are and other vital demographics. In addition to reaching out to the immigrant population, a similar approach will be implemented with Flint's native population, to seek their input to the GFI in an equitable manner. Survey distribution began in July 2024 and is scheduled to be completed in December 2024. Thereafter, the UM-Flint Research Team (UMFRT) will use what they learn from community members to build future grassroots efforts and create a strategic vision and implementation plan for the GFI.

At the conclusion of the year-long needs assessment, which will include the outreach and planning process as well as the consultation of Global Detroit and the ICGF consortium, a Global Flint strategic plan that fits the Greater Flint context will be ready for implementation allowing the region the opportunity to welcome and support immigrants.

## INTRODUCTION

ICGF was established in 2016 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, connecting Flint locals to the region's diverse global communities. ICGF actively engages in the strategic transformation of the Flint region by driving an international economic development strategy; serving as a catalyst to re-brand the Flint region; promoting connection by facilitating educational meetings and events; creating an online and in-person resource hub; providing multi-cultural education and awareness; and convening community conversations for meaningful engagement between diverse populations.

The ICGF Mission Statement captures the spirit of the organization and its purpose: To Celebrate and Promote diversity because it strengthens our community. To make Flint and the surrounding areas a VIBRANT and WELCOMING global community and to increase the prosperity of the region by encouraging, building and sustaining strong multi-cultural relationships.

ICGF has been actively engaging various organizations and stakeholders at many events and in conversations, to spotlight the talents, strengths and cultural diversity that immigrants bring to the region. Key partners include both public and private entities, and civic and business leaders. Early in 2023, ICGF convened a consortium of non-profit, education, faith-based and immigrant-serving organizations to strengthen the case for becoming a regional welcoming community. Funding for this Co-Learning Plan has partially supported our effort to develop a detailed strategic vision and implementation plan aligned with the unique needs of the Greater Flint region.

## GROWING MICHIGAN'S POPULATION

According to the recent 2020 Census data, the State of Michigan is confronting a declining and aging population. Governor Whitmer has declared this a top priority to be addressed at the 2023 Michigan Mackinac Policy Conference (Executive Office of the Governor, 2023). Similarly, the findings of a recent report by Citizens Research Council of Michigan (Dennis, et al. 2023), concluded that Michigan's five decades of population loss threatens to further reduce its competitiveness and limit economic opportunities. According to Neal Hegarty, Vice President of Programs for the Flint-based C.S. Mott Foundation, the report is intended to start a broad conversation to reverse the State's slide in population and build prosperity (Gardner, 2023).

To address this priority, recently, Governor Whitmer convened a commission to address the State's sluggish population growth (State of Michigan, 2023), and numerous ideas have been put forth to reverse this alarming trend. Being a welcoming community for immigrants and refugees is a demonstrably successful strategy. This approach has been proven to increase the population, jump-starting regional economic growth and stabilizing neighborhoods. An analysis of Census and ACS data shows that no major U.S. metropolitan area that has lost population since the 1960s, has stabilized or reversed course, without embracing immigration (Immigration Research Initiative, 2012). In Michigan, immigrants account for all the population growth in the last 30 years. Through our existing partnerships with Genesee County, City of Flint, Shiawassee County and UM-Flint Center for Community & Economic Development, we are unified in our efforts to welcome immigrant populations as a strategy to spark economic growth, revitalize the local economy and sustain prosperity throughout the region.

Advancing Welcoming through Community Foundations, a project funded by C.S. Mott Foundation, explores the potential for greater coordination, collaboration and investment from community foundations in advancing the vital work of welcoming newcomers into US communities. The final report, authored by Larry McGill, Ph.D., Founder and Principal of Ambit 360 Consulting, was published in 2023 by Welcoming America. As recommended in the report, one proposed strategy is to create communities that welcome immigrants, to spur population growth and economic prosperity. Currently, Flint and the

surrounding area lack a cohesive strategy to support welcoming efforts. ICGF is poised to execute the Global Flint Initiative as one of the recommended strategies presented in the research report (McGill, 2023).

**REGIONAL POPULATION LANDSCAPE AND IMMIGRATION: PAST AND RECENT DATA (2016 AND 2021)**

The population of Flint is 55% African American and 39% White, with a median age of 36 years. 35.5% of the population live below the poverty line, which is higher than the national average of 12.6%. The city continues to experience a declining population, sluggish economy and dwindling resources. According to the 2023 ALICE in the Crosscurrents Michigan Report, Genesee County had 167,895 households in 2021, of which 42% fell in the ALICE + Poverty category (ALICE: Asset-Limited/Income Constrained Employed). Additionally, the report notes that between 2019 and 2021, while the number of households decreased by 1%, the ALICE + Poverty segment increased by 5%.

The City of Flint and neighboring communities include, within their geographical boundaries, many Opportunity Zone tracts and three Redevelopment Ready Communities: Grand Blanc, Swartz Creek and Laingsburg (bordering Shiawassee County). Genesee County also has 16 designated Opportunity Zones. In total, these Opportunity Zones have a population of approximately 41,000, which represents 10% of the county’s total population of 410,000.

Immigrants contribute significantly to the Greater Flint’s economy and community. In recent years, more and more immigrants have been arriving in Flint, seeking better economic and social conditions for their families. The low economic bar for entry (housing cost, low traffic, good colleges and universities, etc.) is a great attraction. Not only is there an increase in the immigrant population, but there is also a significant increase in the 25–44-year age group (Table 1), showing the growth of Flint’s working population. Immigrants in Greater Flint are key to the area’s economic revival.

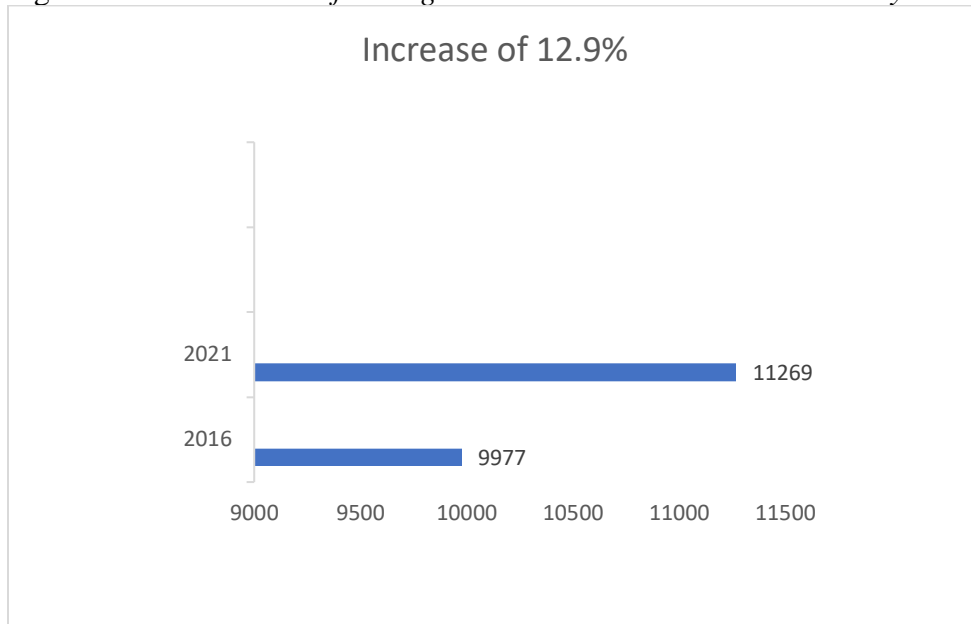
According to the 5-year ACS estimates for 2012-2016 and 2017-2021, the total population of Genesee County decreased from 413,090 to 406,400 (-1.6%) between these two periods; whereas the immigrant population went up from 9,977 (2.4% share) in 2016 to 11,269 (2.8% share) in 2021, an increase of 12.9% in the raw numbers in the foreign-born residents and an increase of 16.7% in the percent share of the County population (Figure 1 & 2). See figures and charts below that illustrate recent trends, underscoring the potential for welcoming immigrants to be a key Flint growth strategy.

Table 1. *Immigrant Population by Age*

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2021</b>
0-17 yrs	6%	5.1%
18-24 yrs	8.9%	7.8%
<b>25-44 yrs</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>
45-64 yrs	32.8%	31.6%
> 65 yrs	27.1%	25.1%

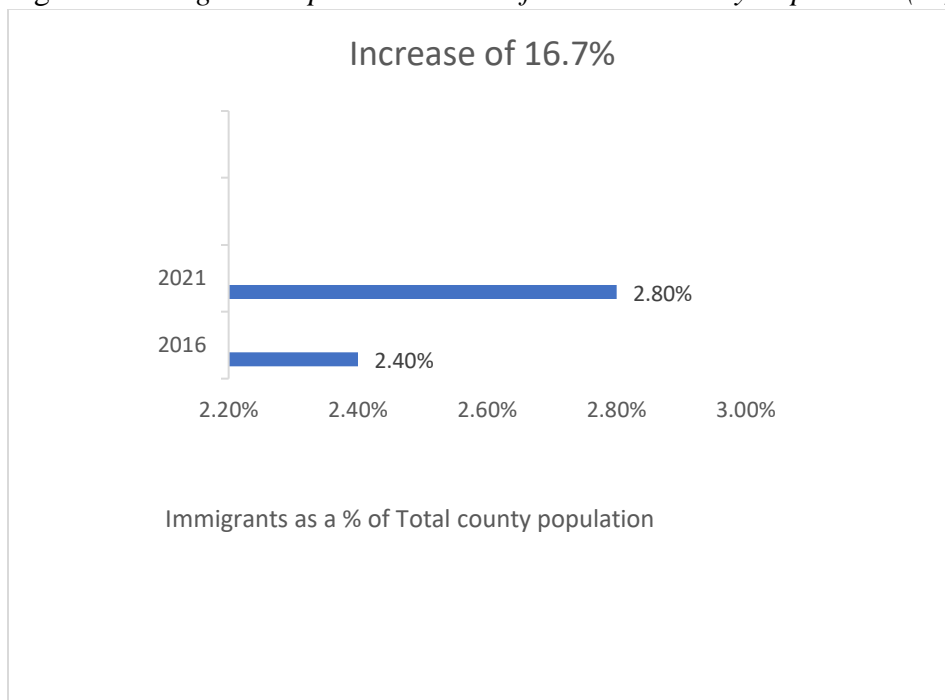
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2016, 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Figure 1. *Total Number of Foreign-born Residents in Genesee County*



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2016, 2021ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Figure 2. *Immigrant Population Share of Genesee County Population (%)*



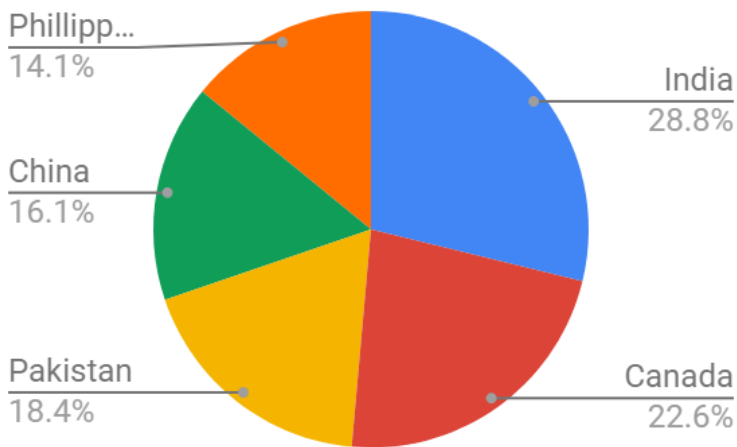
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2016, 2021ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Figures 3 and 4 give a snapshot of where recent immigrants are coming from. The immigrants represent a diverse cross-section of international communities and provide an opportunity to establish cross-cultural ties and relationships for economic trade. The figures provide information about existing centers of multicultural and multinational diversity and assists in understanding the spectrum of needs and services that these populations will be looking for; in addition to assisting the region to prepare for the future composition of services.



Figure 3. *Originating Countries of Immigrants in Genesee County*

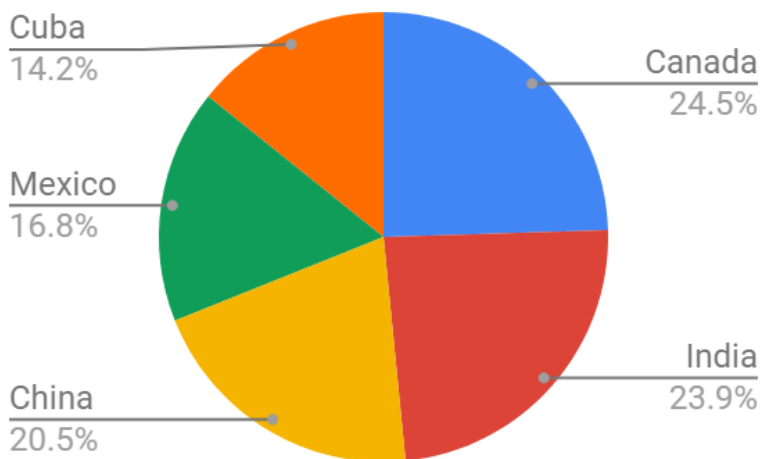
### 2016 Top 5 countries



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2016, 2021ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Figure 4. *Originating Regions of Immigrants in Genesee County*

### 2021 Top 5 countries



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2016, 2021ACS 5-Year Estimates)

## BRINGING FLINT TOGETHER TO WELCOME INTERNATIONALS

The concept of Greater Flint being a welcoming and supportive community is not new. The International Institute was once a long-standing organization that served as a hub for immigrants and refugees seeking to build a better life in Greater Flint. Established in 1922, the Institute assisted new Americans from diverse nations, to navigate resources and services available to help them transition and thrive. It was also the meeting ground where Flint natives and new residents engaged, providing the opportunity to foster cultural education, awareness and inclusiveness through various events, activities and services. Unfortunately, due to the lack of funds needed to support the building's costly overhead, the Institute closed in 2007.

More recently, the newer immigrants include a steady influx of Cubans, Venezuelans, and individuals from the Caribbean. These immigrants hear about Flint from their relatives and friends, and despite the cold weather, are attracted to come to Flint because of its low cost of living. There are also new immigrants coming to the Flint area from West Africa, Hmong community (South Asia region), China, India, and the Middle East. Additionally, a recent announcement by the federal government to accept international newcomers from specific countries including Cuba, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Haiti, Venezuela, and Guatemala, added to the anticipated influx to the mid-Michigan region.

Immigrants that we spoke with recently stated that they are drawn to Flint's low-cost of living and the opportunity to jump-start a new life, raise a family, and operate a business in relative safety and prosperity compared to their home countries. Greater Flint is thus, a land of opportunity for immigrants.

Today, Flint lacks a robust portfolio of successful globally engaged firms and anchor employers to nurture economic growth. Years of depopulation and erosion of the tax base have left the community's infrastructure and support services degraded. The Flint Water crisis has also diminished Flint's reputation as an attractive place to live, work and operate a business.

Supporting immigrants is a sound economic development strategy and one which is particularly important for Flint, as it is perhaps one of the few powerful growth strategies available given Flint's context. There is an array of ways communities have purposefully organized to support new immigrants including, formal welcoming resolutions from city councils and county governments, creating new municipal offices and non-profit immigrant support organizations, building programs to aid immigrant entrepreneurs, as well as international student attraction and retention.

## LEARNING FROM SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL WORK TO WELCOME IMMIGRANTS

One doesn't have to go far from Flint to see the power that welcoming immigrants can have on community economic growth and revitalization, as well as global engagement. For example:

- Hamtramck, Michigan: a recently hollowed out industrial community, is now repopulated and thriving anew as a magnet for diverse immigrant communities.
- Detroit, Michigan: immigrants have been central to the repopulation and revitalization of the once blighted Southwest Detroit; and now through the decade's long work of Global Detroit, immigrants are the main source of new population and main-street business growth.
- Dayton, Ohio: another nearby community fighting back from the ravages of industrial decline, has had the largest percentage increase in its foreign-born population since 2000.
- Other Midwest cities have initiated similar efforts: Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, Chicago and Pittsburgh.

## ALIGNING GFI WITH COMMUNITY STRATEGIC VISION

Global Detroit and other similar organizations in the State have been advocating for similar statewide efforts to attract internationals to Michigan. While this is a laudable population growth strategy, we need to make sure that the local communities and neighborhoods are on board with welcoming efforts as being proposed by GFI.

In this/the current economic dynamic, the native Flint population may harbor many suspicions, presumptions and misunderstandings regarding immigrant populations. To foster a welcoming and inclusive community, these concerns must be heard, acknowledged and addressed. A full commitment and buy-in from the local population are necessary for any economic revitalization strategy to be successful. Communities that have built out successful immigrant welcoming efforts found that successful immigrant integration initiatives are dependent on two critical foundations:

1. The initiative must be community driven; and
2. The initiative must be as focused on benefiting incumbent residents as much as attracting, retaining or benefiting newcomers.

ICGF Executive Director Phyllis Skyes, who leads local populations' engagement, is conducting one-on-one and small group conversations with the local community stakeholders and neighborhood associations. The process is more art than science; the process is slow, but the goal is to capture the candid feelings of the locals in the most accurate, and culturally sensitive manner.

ICGF, before embarking on the current GFI work, reviewed prior efforts undertaken and knowledge gained within the community to strengthen our neighborhoods. Flint, like many other communities across the nation, adopted a vision for Flint that reflects the community's hopes, desires, goals and expectations. These were enshrined in the "Imagine Flint" City Master Plan, which was adopted in 2013. If Flint is serious about rebranding itself, then it must purposefully build and take advantage of immigration-inclusive population growth, which in turn helps expand the city revenue base for services.

There are several initiatives across the region that will serve to increase State of Michigan funding for welcoming new Americans through collaborative efforts for providing immigrant services. Some are in a very early stage, and many regional non-profits collaborated to submit a unified request seeking funding in the legislative budget. It is anticipated that some funding will be available in the next state fiscal funding cycle. A locally driven strategic plan is instrumental in developing the infrastructure needed for Flint to take advantage of these funding opportunities. As John Austin, Executive Director, Michigan Economic Center, said at an event discussing the Global Flint Initiative in March 2023: *"I do think that this is a real path for Flint to repopulate, and reinvigorate its economy, because it has worked elsewhere. And it's a very powerful strategy."*

The Global Flint Initiative led by ICGF is designed to develop a detailed strategic vision and implementation plan customized to meet the needs of the City of Flint and Genesee County and the broader mid-Michigan region.

## INITIATIVE GOAL

The purpose of becoming a Welcoming Community is to attract and retain new international talent to ultimately help revitalize Flint's economy by leveraging and mobilizing the immigrant entrepreneur talent, as well as bringing a regional and global vision for job creation, business growth and community development. GFI will conduct a needs assessment of the new international populations to develop strategies to make the Flint region a more welcoming community to international talent. An equally important conversation must be fostered with the local population to fully understand and capture their feelings and concerns.

## METHODOLOGY

ICGF took steps in advance to develop partnership opportunities with community organizations including neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, block clubs, schools, community development corporations, social service and support agencies, higher learning institutions, local hospitals and other employers. It is also necessary to connect and communicate with the City of Flint Mayor, City Council, Genesee County Commissioners and Township Supervisors on welcoming policies, practices, messages and organizational structures to support diverse residents. In our discussions with stakeholders over the past few years, everyone agrees that there is a need to formally collect and document the gaps in services to support immigrant communities.

At the launch of the initiative at a public community meeting in March 2024, ICGF built a multi-sector/stakeholder leadership group to guide the initiative. A review of the partners and stakeholders list below will show the breadth and depth of the outreach we were able to achieve in support of this initiative. ICGF convened a consortium of public, private, non-profit, educational, faith based, and other ethnic and immigrant focused organizations, including:

University of Michigan-Flint Faculty	UM-Flint EDA-Outreach Center
Office of Senator Debbie Stabenow	Office of Senator Gary Peters
Congressman Dan Kildee	Genesee County Commissioners Offices
City of Flint Mayor's Office	Latin X Flint
Arab American Heritage Council	Chinese Association of Greater Flint
The Ferris Wheel & 100k Ideas	MSU-College of Human Medicine, Flint
Mott Community College	Kettering University
Pierce Elementary School	Flint Farmers' Market
Flint and Genesee Chamber of Commerce	Mass Transportation Authority
Michigan Works	Flint International Friends Association
India Club of Genesee County	Flint Jewish Federation
Flint Islamic Center members	Flint Public Library
American Muslim Community Services	Legal Services of Eastern Michigan
Genesee Intermediate School District	

ICGF has been meeting with the different immigrant and ethnic groups to communicate the survey methodology and the GFI. The message is delivered in a consistent manner and through multiple channels: online, social media, print media, interviews, blogs, etc.

The Survey Team and ICGF will conduct focus group listening sessions with immigrant communities, and incumbent residents. As appropriate, provide language translation and/or interpretation resources to accurately and fully capture the data being collected. Due to the multicultural and multi-ethnic nature of the target populations, make necessary arrangements to meet any special dietary needs of the survey participants (halal, kosher, vegan, etc). Assess the capacity of existing immigrant support organizations, and identify needs and gaps

## INITIATIVE LAUNCH

On March 5th, 2024, ICGF officially launched the Global Flint Initiative with a gathering of multi-sector stakeholders and community partners. The group was welcomed and hosted at the Flint Public Library by ICGF Executive Director Phyllis Sykes. The event was extremely well attended, and there was great local and regional interest in this effort. The media was also on hand to provide follow-up press coverage in print and online media (Simon, 2024; Ford, 2024).

## KEY PARTNER, UM-FLINT RESEARCH TEAM

The discussion at the launch event was led by a team of UM-Flint academicians and researchers, who developed the process of conducting the surveys. The data collection occurred through a series of focus group meetings and dialogues with community members at their community centers or places of worship. The research group is conducting this process with the oversight of an IRB to ensure compliance with appropriate academic research standards.

The team is composed of leading investigators Dr Emily Feuerherm (Program Director, Department of English and Associate Professor of Linguistics), Dr Jennifer Alvey (Associate Professor of Anthropology and Women's and Gender Studies) and Dr Sasha Drummond-Lewis (Associate Professor of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice).

During the gathering, the participants were informed about the structure and framework of the research study, and the data collection process. The attendees were grouped into smaller units, and each unit was led by a research team member. They participated in a discussion to identify the most important concerns with respect to immigrant welcoming and integration of the same into the community. These smaller group dialogues facilitated a deeper conversation that will inform and assist in developing the set of leading questions and follow up strategies necessary to make for a robust data collection process. The series of surveys and focus group sessions will be held later in 2024.

The smaller group dialogues at the launch event helped design the survey. The team is continuing to use that information to assist in developing the set of leading questions and follow up strategies necessary to make for a robust data collection process. They further met with the Latin X, Arab American Heritage Council (AAHC) and Uloma House leadership, and received additional feedback to add to the survey questions.

The team finalized the survey methodology under the oversight of an IRB to ensure compliance with appropriate academic research standards. The Analytics team at UM-Flint created an online survey on the Qualtrics platform. This online tool will become the basis for collecting data for the research team's use. The series of surveys and focus group sessions will be held in summer/fall 2024. Feedback from CCED REI Coordinator Jenan Jondy to the survey questions was provided to the team and incorporated in an update. The IRB took longer than anticipated. The team has also worked to get the surveys translated into Spanish, Arabic and French.

## KEY PARTNER, KETTERING UNIVERSITY RESEARCH TEAM

In addition, a team of four international graduate students, under the guidance of Kettering University School of Management Professor Ken Williams, conducted baseline research to understand the status of various categories of internationals that reside in the US. This includes immigrants, international students, refugees and asylum seekers. Although all these groups get lumped into one category (“immigrants”), each demographic is dealing with a different set of legal requirements, and each group experiences a different set of gaps in needed programs and services. It is critical to understand these important differences to develop a successful welcoming strategy to attract and retain these new populations into the area. These four data researchers will report their findings to help us understand the current landscape and trends at the national, regional and local levels. Their report will support our Global Flint Initiative by helping us understand the global trends in political and economic migration, which will be important to keep in mind as we develop a welcoming strategy specific to our community and region.

ICGF is building on our existing relationship with the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, to engage the local long-term residents of Flint through their Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation

Initiative/Platform. As previously discussed, while ICGF works with the international communities to understand their needs, it is also imperative to seek the residents' input in shaping any programs and services to make for a welcoming community.

# CONCLUSION

## CURRENT AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Global Flint Initiative effort intends to:

- Establish a continuum of services including healthcare, education, legal, housing, workforce development, etc;
- Develop, coordinate and manage a tracking system to capture the needs of the emerging international populations;
- Promote and market Flint as a diverse, vibrant and welcoming community;
- Initiate talent retention programs in partnership with the State of Michigan's Global Talent Attraction Initiative (Global Detroit); and
- Coordinate/establish systems to spur immigrant entrepreneurship and economic development between state, county, city, and local businesses.

Expected outcomes:

This research effort is ongoing, and early assessment reveals some interesting observations:

- The Yemeni community is thriving and has successfully established many small businesses catering to all demographics, not just the Yemeni diaspora;
- The healthcare sector in the area is providing many employment opportunities to workers in the science and technology fields. COVID has driven some of this need, and these opportunities have attracted more immigrants with the needed skillsets to the area;
- There is an influx of refugees to the area due to the securing of funds by the resettlement agency, which is driving the need for a more comprehensive offering of social services;
- The need for affordable housing continues to rise, leading to more private and public funding of housing developments and renovations;
- ICGF is seeing an increase in the number of referrals for translation services, work opportunities, legal services and other social services for the wide array of internationals coming to the area.

## ONGOING EFFORTS

A. Efforts to establish a regional talent attraction and retention strategy:

In April 2024, ICGF partnered with the UM-Flint Center for Global Engagement to hold a Workshop with local employers and businesses on Immigration Regulations impacting the hiring of international students. The event was held on the UM-Flint campus under the direction of Zachariah Matthew, Director of CGE. The event brought together local businesses and employers to familiarize them with the immigration regulations landscape impacting the hiring of international students. Subject matter experts from the business and legal fields made presentations.

ICGF is talking with Global Detroit to bring another similar mixer event to the Flint area, to make this information accessible and available to our partners at other education institutions like Kettering and Mott

Community College. Similar events were successfully held in the Detroit area by Global Detroit, and ICGF is leveraging our relationships across the region to impact the Flint and Genesee County region.

#### B. Certified Welcoming Process:

ICGF initiated discussions with the Office of the Genesee County Commissioners, to partner with them and to secure an official certification as a Welcoming Community. This process is administered by the Welcoming America organization, who has been involved in similar efforts nationwide since 2009. ICGF will be a facilitator and a partner in the effort, which will be led locally by the County Commissioners Office. Our discussions are at a very early stage, but we are excited to get the support of this very important public institution. More details on the process are available at their website: <https://certifiedwelcoming.org/>

#### LEARNING FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION

Our team from ICGF attended the Welcoming Interactive conference in Dallas, TX, from April 10-12<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The Welcoming Interactive is an annual conference highlighting successful practices and inspiring stories about immigrant inclusion, programs, policies and partnerships on economic development, civic engagement, government leadership and more. Attendees learn about local innovations from peer communities and come away with new ideas and energy to foster welcoming places for all. The ICGF team returned with valuable insights and lessons from other communities across the nation and hope to replicate some of the more successful and relevant programs and services in our region as well. One of the projects we plan to initiate includes using the Switchboard Virtual Reality platform to highlight the sights and sounds of the Flint area in a positive and welcoming light, with the intention to counteract some of the negative stereotypes that exist with respect to our community. The next Welcoming Interactive in 2025 will be held in Detroit. ICGF is in conversation with the organizing committee and the Global Detroit team to leverage that opportunity in our region to highlight the work of the Global Flint Initiative.



## ADDENDUM

The needs assessment surveys are ongoing, with an anticipated conclusion date of December 2024. Below is the schedule of the expected survey groups.

	<b><u>Timeline of Communities &amp; Groups surveyed</u></b>					
<b><u>Lead organizer</u></b>	<b><u>July 2024</u></b>	<b><u>Aug 2024</u></b>	<b><u>Sep 2024</u></b>	<b><u>Oct 2024</u></b>	<b><u>Nov 2024</u></b>	<b><u>Dec 2024</u></b>
<u>UM-Flint Research Team</u>	<b>AAHC</b>					
<u>UM-Flint Research Team</u>	<b>Latin X</b>					
<u>UM-Flint Research Team</u>		<b>Uloma House</b>				
<u>UM-Flint Research Team</u>		<b>Omar Mosque</b>				
<u>ICGF</u>					<b>Flint Islamic Ctr</b>	
<u>ICGF</u>			<b>Noor Unity Ctr</b>			
<u>ICGF</u>				<b>Nigerian Church</b>		
<u>ICGF</u>				<b>African Church</b>		
<u>ICGF</u>				<b>Korean Church</b>		
<u>ICGF</u>				<b>Ukrainian Church</b>		
<u>ICGF</u>					<b>India Club</b>	
<u>ICGF</u>					<b>First Presbyterian</b>	
<u>ICGF</u>				<b>Yemeni Businesses</b>		
<u>ICGF</u>					<b>Shiawassee County</b>	
<u>ICGF</u>			<b>Michigan Works</b>			
<u>ICGF</u>			<b>UM-Flint Int'l students</b>			
<u>ICGF</u>					<b>Kettering U Int'l students</b>	
<u>ICGF</u>				<b>Mott CC Int'l students</b>		

Research Surveys and Focus group sessions are also ongoing. Anticipated date of Survey Report release: By Spring 2025.

### PROJECT LEADERSHIP

**Phyllis Sykes** is a proud native of Flint, and a resident of the world. At a young age she traveled abroad, and the experience transformed and shaped how she views the world and how to exist in it. Today, Ms. Sykes is committed to promoting the benefits of an expanded global view, as Co-Founder and Executive Director of the International Center of Greater Flint. ICGF is an initiative created to make Flint and Genesee County a vibrant and welcoming global community by encouraging, building and sustaining strong multi-cultural relationships. She views the current challenges before the community as an opportunity to transform and reinvent itself as an energetic, culturally rich community that embraces diversity. Ms. Sykes has a unique and distinguished professional background, having been a radio and TV

journalist, communications director for a non-profit, U of M Flint lecturer and Administrator, and a consultant, specializing in program design and management. She has a Master of Science Administration, and Bachelor of Arts degree, both from Central Michigan University, Mt Pleasant. She has served on numerous boards, and as an advocate for the Arts she has served on the Flint Institute of Arts board and currently is the board Secretary for Tapology. Ms. Sykes is also known to dabble in the acting arena, having performed in various community theater productions. In addition to being a passionate world traveler, she is an avid reader, writer, yoga practitioner and physical fitness enthusiast.

**Adil Mohammed** is currently the Program Director at the International Center of Greater Flint (ICGFlint.org). ICGF, a 501c3 organization was co-founded by Adil and Phyllis Sykes, who saw a need for a resource hub catering to the immigrant and international population in the Flint area. Adil is also a founding Board member at American Muslim Community Services (AMCSUSA.org), a social services non-profit organization based in Flint. He served as the Executive Director of AMCS from 2019-2023. From 1990 to 2009, Adil worked as a project manager at Delphi, leaving in 2009 after the Great Recession. In 2010, he attended a 12-week SBDC-MI program called "FastTrack for New Venture" that helps new startups complete their market studies and establish good business processes. As a late entrepreneur, he started an IT services company catering to healthcare professionals, but after a few years, pivoted to real-estate development and non-profit management. Adil was a member of the *2016 Leadership Now* cohort, a one-year leadership development and mentoring program run by the Flint and Genesee Chamber of Commerce. Currently, Adil spends his time developing real estate, serving the community through AMCS coordinating the Flint Muslim Food Pantry service and leading this effort with Phyllis Sykes to create a welcoming environment for all international people. Adil received his Engineering degree in India (1983), and a Master of Science degree from Wayne State University (1986). He has been a resident of Genesee County since he moved to the area in 1988.

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