

# Social Justice Funders SPOTLIGHT:

The Endowment for Health • New Hampshire

## Collaborative Field-Building to Advance Immigrant Integration



Groups of people sit at circular tables in a spacious brick building. People converse over documents and snacks.  
Photo courtesy of Welcoming, NH.

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### Demographic and Community Changes in New Hampshire

Many of the towns, cities, industries and small businesses that characterize northern New England can trace their current prosperity to the labor and innovations that immigrants, from as close as Canada and as far as Bhutan, have brought to the region over two centuries. While New Hampshire has a rich history of immigration, the state's population remained predominantly white. In the early 2000s, though, the population began to change. From 2000 to 2010, racial and ethnic minorities accounted for more than half of the state's population growth. In 2018, 20 percent of Manchester and Nashua's residents

are people of color. The youth population is the most diverse; nearly one in three children living in Manchester today are from communities of color.

New Hampshire benefits from these racial and ethnic demographic changes. Immigrant families contribute more than \$2 billion to the state's economy, and immigrant-owned businesses generate more than \$250 million in revenue each year. Yet at the state and local level, educational, health, employment, and policy systems have struggled to adapt to the changing dynamics of an increasingly diverse community. For example, despite the state's diversifying population, organizational leaders and decision-makers remain predominantly white. As a result, immigrants and people of color move through predominantly white institutions and experience unequal outcomes such as

### The Endowment for Health

Located in Concord, New Hampshire, the Endowment for Health is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of underserved and marginalized communities in the state. Founded in 1999, the foundation has awarded over \$44 million to date through more than 1,100 grants. These grants have funded a wide variety of health-related programs and projects throughout the state. As the initial main funder and convener for the Immigrant Integration initiative, the Endowment funded research, technical assistance, Welcoming NH, and place-based coalitions in addition to spearheading statewide convenings and a community of practice bringing together 4 regions.

health disparities and higher levels of underemployment. In addition to these systemic inequalities, newcomers navigate inconsistent and sometimes challenging relations with longstanding New Hampshire residents, ranging from welcoming to ambivalence to overt hostility. In 2011, an immigrant family in Concord woke up one morning to find racist graffiti spray painted on their home, which read, “You are not welcome here.” This was not an isolated incident, and at that point, many observers felt the state was at a crossroads. Without strategic attention and investment, New Hampshire had the potential to become increasingly hostile to newcomers, and, as a result, sacrifice the myriad collective

benefits of immigration. Alternatively, with active intervention the state could become more welcoming and build more inclusive, prosperous communities.

### Philanthropy Steps Up

It was in this context that leaders and staff members at the Endowment for Health recognized an opportunity to expand upon their existing health equity strategic priority to foster more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable communities. They asked some key questions:

- How can we create communities that lift up the shared values and the contributions of both longstanding members and newcomers?
- What do policies, organizations, and relationships look like that benefit all members of a community?
- Who should be at the forefront of this change process?
- What role can funders play in this type of complex social change?

As they explored these questions, Endowment staff members spoke to ethnic community leaders and advocates to understand the various challenges and perspectives facing local NH communities, placing immigrant perspectives at the center of their approach, and practicing the concept of “do nothing about me without me.” They found that immigrant leaders had a wide range of solutions to the challenges facing their community, but not enough power to advance these solutions. Endowment staff members and leaders also met with business leaders,



*Several women stand in a group together, talk, and hold coffee cups. Photo courtesy of Welcoming, NH.*

service providers, and government partners and, from them, learned that New Hampshire policymakers were concerned about the aging population, the state’s inability to retain a young and skilled workforce, and an increasingly stagnant economy. These partners saw immigrants as vital to the state’s prosperity.

### Building a Field

In 2014, the Endowment launched a multi-year, multi-sector immigrant integration initiative to create more welcoming, prosperous communities in New Hampshire. They learned about concrete strategies from a seminal guide published by [Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees](#) (GCIR) in 2006 called *Investing in Our Communities: Strategies for Immigrant Integration*, and began to educate partners based on GCIR’s definition of immigrant integration:

*“Immigrant integration is a two-way, dynamic process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant, cohesive communities.”*

– Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees

### Contributions to the NH Immigrant Integration Initiative (2014-2018):

#### ■ Endowment for Health:

Total \$740,404

- Implementation: \$304,000
- Community of Practice: \$133,000
- Welcoming NH: \$115,000
- Research: \$20,004
- Communication TA & film: \$69,900
- Evaluation, sustainability and convening: \$98,500

#### ■ United Way of Nashua:

\$30,000 + in-kind support for Nashua’s place-based strategy

#### ■ NH Charitable Foundation:

\$240,000 in grants to the four place-based coalitions

\$25,000 over three years to Welcoming New Hampshire

## The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

Founded in 1962, the NH Charitable Foundation provides grants through more than 1,800 separate funds created by businesses, individuals, and families. Each year, the foundation awards almost \$40 million in grants and scholarships. The Foundation has a long history of working together with the Endowment and United Way, and had long supported a wide range of projects and activities related to immigrants and refugees. Where previously the Charitable Foundation had used grants to support individual integration projects such as Welcoming New Hampshire, the collaboration with the Endowment and United Way allowed them to focus on building a foundation within communities around the state to support ongoing integration work.

The foundation describes its approach as field building, which they pursue by creating “the conditions for change by shining a light on pressing issues; by bringing people together to address them; and by supporting collective work.” To catalyze and build a new immigrant integration field in New Hampshire, the Endowment issued a request for proposals (RFP) and invited communities across the state to propose place-based strategies to advance immigrant integration. The RFP required each community to identify a lead non-profit organization that could bring together and represent a broad coalition of newcomers and long-standing residents from a wide range of sectors including municipal government, business, faith organizations, educational institutions, health care organizations and other service agencies. The RFP was flexible, allowing

coalitions based in local communities to propose their own strategies. At the same time, though, the RFP stated clear shared goals for the broader initiative. The foundation also allocated additional money for research, convenings, communication strategies, and technical assistance to support work in local communities.

At the initiative’s earliest stage, two other foundations joined in and contributed additional support and resources – the NH Charitable Foundation and the United Way of Greater Nashua. Representatives from both foundations understood that by collaborating with the Endowment, they would achieve greater impact towards their own foundation’s goals. Investment by all three foundations was a public statement about the importance of immigrant integration as a priority policy area in the state.

The collaborative investments raised the initiative’s profile among a wide variety of public, private, and community partners, who might not have gotten involved otherwise.

## Communities Take Action

Leaders in four local communities created coalitions of immigrant and business leaders, non-profits, and advocates and responded to the Endowment’s RFP: Concord, Manchester, Nashua, and Laconia. In the first planning year of the initiative, community coalition members developed extensive, multi-sector plans to advance immigrant integration. Initial ideas and strategies ranged from expanding opportunity for cultural exchange and arts, increasing access to quality education and jobs, and creating local spaces for integrated

## The United Way of Greater Nashua

The Nashua United Way serves 10 communities in the Greater Nashua area, and supports the community by assessing potential needs and working with local non-profits whose programs most address those needs. The United Way had worked to create a community leader’s day, but had also noticed a disconnect between the individuals on boards and those promoting change within the community. The organization recognized that the city of Nashua held the most diverse population in the state, and viewed the Immigrant Integration initiative as a way to make the community more welcoming to immigrants, and to diversify the leadership of non-profits Boards in the region. The United Way of Nashua’s established presence with the community leaders in the Nashua area gave additional strength and community grounding to the Initiative.



*Group of people stand together for a picture. Some hold blue folders. Everyone smiles and wears business casual clothing. Photo courtesy of Welcoming, NH.*





A group of 13 adults poses for a photo. All are dressed in business casual attire and many have name tags on their shirts. Photo courtesy of Welcoming, NH

service delivery. Over time, each local coalition prioritized one or more strategy areas, examples of which are highlighted below.

### Nashua Navigators

Residents of Nashua, the state's most diverse city, built off of the pre-existing municipal Gate City Health and Wellness Immigrant Integration task force and created the One Greater Nashua coalition. With the United Way as a lead convener, partners included the public library, the adult learning center, the community college, WorkReady NH, and many others. Coalition members organized around the idea that Nashua would be stronger if immigrants could fully realize their potential and contribute their skills, talents, and perspectives to the community. They created a

Navigator program that connects longstanding community members with New Americans through mentorship, with the goal of helping newcomers navigate systems and institutions while simultaneously encouraging those institutions (schools, healthcare organizations, city offices, etc.) to become more welcoming and inclusive.

*“The value of the Initiative has been two-sided between newcomers and the community, with both benefitting from integration.”*

– Liz Fitzgerald, Director of Community Impact, United Way of Greater Nashua

### Workforce Development in Manchester

In Manchester, the state's largest city, a large group of immigrant leaders, non-profit service providers, and local government representatives created Welcoming Manchester. Housed at the Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success, Welcoming Manchester prioritized workforce development as a key strategy for immigrant integration. Coalition members knew that immigrants and refugees brought significant skills and assets with them. However, they also knew that local and regional employers had yet to create pathways for meaningful employment and advancement for newcomers. Helping newcomers advance and realize their full potential in the workplace, of course, would benefit

not only immigrants and their families but also, the state's employers who need to fill jobs. Together with the Chamber of Commerce, workforce development leaders, and local employers, Welcoming Manchester developed a flagship workforce training initiative that began in October 2016 through a partnership with Easter Seals. In its first year, the initiative recruited, trained and employed 10 immigrant and refugee community members as Residential Instructors (an entry-level social service position supporting individuals with disabilities). The paid, seven-week training program provided not only job-specific skills training, but also English language instruction and cultural competency training for managers. As of 2017, nearly two dozen people have been hired by Easter Seals using this program. Welcoming Manchester plans to expand the training with additional English language instruction so that graduates can continue to advance in their fields.

### Concord Civics Academy

Concord is the state capital and the administrative home for most statewide government programs, many non-profit organizations, and policymakers. With support from this initiative, a longstanding provider of English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) classes, Second Start, partnered with other non-profits and immigrant advocates to create the Welcoming Concord Initiative. One of its strategies was to create a multicultural and multigenerational civics academy in partnership with the Mayor's office. The Academy

engaged immigrants, refugees, and long-term residents of all ages to provide education on local government and public systems. Participants learned about and from each other, with newcomers learning to navigate local politics and long-term residents learning about their city's newest residents. The six week program produced 22 graduates who became motivated to identify and address community needs. For example, several academy members organized to present a proposal to Concord's city government leaders for better lighting in one of the city's public parks. Although the measure ultimately did not pass, the process allowed newcomers to build relationships with city council members and fellow residents and now have the skills to advocate to improve the community.



*Several kids and adults walk on the sidewalk together holding signs, one of which says "National Welcoming Week."*

*Photo courtesy of Welcoming, NH.*

### Laconia's Welcome Center

In contrast to these larger cities, Laconia is a small, rural community that is home to a small immigrant population that had few places for immigrants to get access to services. Without a space to provide key

services, leaders understood that integration efforts would be more difficult than in the larger, more established immigrant communities in the southern areas of the state. The Lakes Region Partnership for Public Health along with several service provider organizations and volunteer residents focused their immigrant integration initiative on consolidating a pre-existing volunteer-based network of service providers into a more formal, centralized Welcome Center. Immigrants now have a place where they can go to ask questions and access resources, and service providers and volunteers can more easily support newcomers by coordinating their work through the Welcome Center.

### Growing the Statewide Immigrant Integration Field

Through these place-based initiatives, New Hampshire joined a growing number of states across the country working to welcome and attract immigrants in order to revitalize neighborhoods, business districts, and local economies. Investments in field-building seem to have increased the public's awareness of the contributions of immigrants and too, the public's support for immigrants. Examples include:

- Engaging a nationally-recognized framing consultant through Davey Strategies, to help partners craft messages appropriate for each participating community and the state as a whole regarding the benefits of immigrants to New Hampshire.



- Linking to the work of the New Hampshire Equity Collective, which defined workforce diversity as one of its priorities in 2010.
- Statewide conferences featuring nationally recognized experts and speakers including leaders from WE Global, Welcoming America, the former Mayor of Nashville TN Karl Dean, and more.
- A statewide community of practice comprised of members from each place-based initiative, with facilitation and technical assistance provided by experts from the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA).
- Engaging sustainability consultant Talmira Hill, who worked with each of the four communities in their third year on a sustainability assessment. Hill explained that this assessment “helps people to think about other aspects of the initiative that will give them long-term viability: partnerships, environmental support, organizational support, organizational capacity, strategic planning, effective communication, effective evaluation, and adaptability.”
- Supporting and growing the statewide Welcoming New Hampshire network, a local affiliate of the national Welcoming America movement.



*Dozens of people seated together listening to a speaker. Photo courtesy of the authors.*

### Moving Forward: Welcoming Communities and Organizations

From 2014-2018, led by the Endowment for Health, collaborative philanthropic investments and the creativity and dedication of community leaders across New Hampshire laid the groundwork for a broad-based “field” of immigrant integration. One of the most visible and important benefits of this initiative was the creation of a statewide network that solidified and expanded upon the fledgling Welcoming New Hampshire organization. In 2012, the NH Alliance for Immigrants and Refugees and the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition established Welcoming New Hampshire as a chapter of Welcoming America. Welcoming America and its many affiliates aim to build awareness of the myriad contributions of immigrants and the important role that welcoming plays in creating stronger and more inclusive communities. Leaders of what is referred to as the “welcoming movement” often speak about how bringing immigrants and receiving community members

together to promote understanding, integration and trust to build a shared future can lead to shared prosperity. As a result of the Endowment’s collaborative grant making model, all four sites involved in the immigrant integration initiative are now members of the state and national welcoming movement. They share the Welcoming NH website, posting information about events and providing resources to immigrants and refugees across the state.

Funders and community leaders credit the initiative with changing public discourse about immigration from one that was primarily hostile and uninformed, to one that is respectful, constructive and informed. Anti-immigrant voices and sentiments continue to pervade the public dialogue in New Hampshire at times, and sadly, newcomers are still often met with indifference and even hostility. Now, however, there is also a much stronger, louder, and more coordinated welcoming voice that counters negative messages and

#### Welcoming Nashua Resolution

“Nashua is committed to continue building a welcoming and neighborly atmosphere in our community, where all people including immigrant newcomers are welcome, accepted and integrated; and to encourage all residents of Nashua to do their part in reaching out and welcoming all who live, work and visit Nashua.”

— Welcoming Nashua Resolution

isolated acts of hate. As of December 2017, three of the four communities (Manchester, Nashua, and Concord) have passed public resolutions categorizing themselves as “Welcoming Cities.”

The Endowment leadership and its partners hope that, over time, and with additional investments, these public resolutions and local community programs will catalyze policy changes. The work already seems to be generating effects. Politicians and policymakers are more informed about the positive economic impact of immigrants in New Hampshire. Businesses that experienced difficulty in filling jobs due to an aging population and outward migration are beginning to see immigration in their community as a benefit. Notably, leaders from the NH community college system, the state workforce development system, the Business and Industry Association, and Chambers of Commerce in each of the four local communities are developing strategies designed to make workforce and economic development programs and policies more inclusive. Service providers and volunteers are moving beyond a “charity” mindset and working together with new arrivals as equals who come with enormous assets. A growing number of organizations across the state are deliberately working to become more welcoming and culturally effective as a result of their involvement in the Endowment-led initiative.

*“This project has lifted up the importance of being welcoming and bringing equity to everyone. The initiative has helped change the attitude of ‘this is not our issue’, and that integration has a collective impact on the whole community.”*

– Anne Phillips, Director of Grantmaking, NH Charitable Foundation explained

## Lessons Learned for Funders

1. Field building is a collaborative effort. Establish roles and responsibilities early on, especially if organizations do not have a strong history of partnering on collaborative, multi-stakeholder initiatives. Questions to consider:
  - How central will each foundation be in driving the direction of activities?
  - How can group processes center the experiences and perspectives of small ethnic community-based organizations and immigrant residents?
  - How can larger mainstream non-profits contribute to the initiative without taking up space that could be filled by immigrant leaders and experts?
2. Place-based initiatives must respond to the fact that every

community moves at their own pace, so funders should be as flexible as possible in the design, requirements, and timelines in grantmaking. In this case, the Endowment allowed each of the four grantee communities to operate on slightly different project timelines, depending on the progress they made as they implemented their local immigrant integration initiatives.

3. Despite different local approaches, the NH immigrant integration initiative benefitted from statewide coordination in the form of a community of practice, large public conferences, research, shared communication strategies, and Welcoming NH. Funders should consider investing in these types of broader strategies to maximize the impact of place-based, local projects.
4. Provide grantees and partners with clear, transparent information about investment priorities and plans. The Endowment structured its three-year investment in immigrant integration in three stages: planning, implementation, and sustainability. When grantees applied for planning grants, they knew ahead of time how much the Endowment would contribute in future stages. Transparency helps other funders invest strategically and helps grantees plan and establish relationships to sustain their work into the future.



**The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy's Immigrant Integration in Northern New England** project brings together funders, practitioners, and community leaders to learn about the opportunities and implications of immigration and demographic change and to explore grant making opportunities in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. We publish educational materials about immigration integration practice in a variety of sectors including health, the workforce, education, and economic well-being. We sponsor, design, and organize free learning opportunities and briefings in partnership and consultation with local and regional funders, community-based leaders, and national organizations.