



STATE OF INDIANA COMMISSION
ON HISPANIC/LATINO AFFAIRS
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2013-2014 Strategic Plan

***Better Understanding and Addressing Challenges facing Indiana's
Growing Latino Population***

Background

The Indiana Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs has, through the hard work and commitment of its appointed volunteer commissioners and State agency personnel, made significant progress in engaging organizations across the state in effort to confront and address some of the most pressing needs of our various Latino communities. Collaborations created and the resulting strategies that have been developed have been as varied as the perspectives of the commissioners themselves, partnerships spanning education and healthcare-related topics to business engagement and economic development ones. For each initiative, clear metrics have been set and tangible deliverables sought, and commissioners have actively contributed to furthering the important objectives laid out for our team through State code.

This roadmap, realized through an ongoing series of strategic plans dating back to early 2010, has nonetheless been largely formulated to meet the anecdotal needs of the community. Thanks to the vision of the leadership in Indiana's House of Representatives, Senate, and Governor's Office, ICHLA is fortunate to boast of a group of highly-engaged, highly-dedicated commissioners from across the state. These individuals share their understanding of their respective communities to the process of strategic development, and as a result the commission's initiatives have been extremely targeted and have helped construct some very impactful efforts. It was conceded, however, that a more thorough, research-based approach to understanding key challenges Latinos face in Indiana was needed to guide the commission forward in 2013 and beyond.

ICHLA and Indiana University Center for Evaluation and Education Policy: Partnering to Better Understand Indiana's Growing Latino Community

It was against this backdrop that internal and external conversations began to determine how best to accumulate the important community-level feedback that would serve as the foundation upon which a new, four-pronged approach to the implementation of ICHLA's mission would be built. It was decided that collaboration with a reputable, trusted community partner would be key to ensuring that participant families could be successfully recruited and that usable, pertinent, and reliable information could be garnered. The Center for Evaluation and Education Policy has for years conducted research on behalf of the State Department of Education and many other organizations and had the capacity to conduct focus groups across the state in Spanish, something deemed critical to soliciting perspectives from some of the most vulnerable and underserved Latino pockets in Indiana. In the end, a partnership between ICHLA and CEEP was formalized, and discussions were initiated to decide what areas of the state to target. Their full report of findings and procedures, entitled *Government Services Access and Critical Needs Study*, can be found [here](#).

The goal for the partnership was to conduct six Spanish-language focus groups in six different communities with somewhat different demographic make-ups within the broader category of "Hispanic." Indiana, like many other states, has seen a rapid ascension of its Latino population over a relatively short period of time, the community having nearly doubled here in just over ten years. Also like in other states, variances in the breakdown of those communities exist, with some having younger populations and others having more rooted ones. It would be important, then, for focus groups to target populations in areas boasting more social infrastructure and larger populations as well as those in

cities in which families tended to be newly emigrated. In the end, focus groups were scheduled in New Albany, Indianapolis, South Bend, Hammond, Lafayette, and Evansville. Trusted local conveners were identified, and participants for each session were recruited.

Finally, surveys were distributed to local school districts serving areas in which focus groups were held to gauge perspectives on the Latino community by administrators and superintendents. This information was used to make determinations as to what resources were available and needed locally, as well as to make comparisons between the attitudes and perspectives of families and those education professionals upon whom they rely for service.

Developing Strategies, Recommendations, and Action-Items

Specific region-by-region perspectives were synthesized by CEEP in their report to the commission. That report was the product of the focus group sessions, pulling together demographic information concerning the Latino population, both school-aged and at-large, of each locality and critical characteristics of corresponding school districts. It also outlined a set of recommendations specifically for the commission, indicating next steps that the CEEP team felt would be important follow-ups for solution implementation stemming from the report itself. These recommendations were:

1. That the commission convene stakeholders – commissioners at the state level and local leaders at the community level – to discuss findings and explore solutions.
2. That the commission identify school districts across Indiana with the highest Latino populations and meet with their leadership teams to share the feedback obtained in focus groups and best practices for addressing major obstacles.
3. That the commission work with the Indiana Department of Education and other key agencies to review materials provided to and made available for Latino constituents to determine their applicability, cultural relevance, and usefulness.
4. That the commission work with the Indiana Department of Education, the Commission on Higher Education, and other agencies to determine what materials are available in Spanish and, where necessary, identifying community partners that might be able to assist with translations.

ICHLA commissioners then met to discuss the report in detail, looking at perspectives gathered across regions, and to extract commonalities across the state that would be used to construct action-items for implementation at the State, local, and school levels. In some cases, commissioners found significant overlap on issues. Access to and quality of transportation options, for example, is generally a local issue that impacts the ability of Latino families to get to work and school, and while solutions to mass transit issues tend to be handled locally, there is sometimes opportunity for state-level involvement or advocacy. Obstacles were broken down into three categories: those best solved through State policy or legislation, those best addressed locally at the municipal or community levels, and those best addressed by individual school districts. As noted above, the continual overlap of these three levels made clear to commissioners that for solutions to be adequately implemented, collaboration between these various governmental levels would need to take shape. All agreed that ICHLA, serving in its capacity

as a State agency committed to furthering solutions to Latino challenges statewide, could effectively serve as the facilitator working toward this collaboration.

Key Themes ICHLA Will Address in 2013-2014

The following are common themes and obstacles that surfaced across focus groups and around which ICHLA commissioners will strive to develop collaborations, marketing and advertising, and gap-filling:

Local

- Linguistic isolation and the local of local solutions to the provision of English-language development for adults
- The state of the community's relationship with and trust of local public safety officers, as well as the insistence that general public safety is a concern in most Latino neighborhoods
- Public transportation and access to quality transportation options
- Issues related to overall interaction and integration between Latino and non-Latino communities at the local level

State

- Access to quality healthcare and a lack understanding of healthcare options that exist for all Latino families
- The need for greater early education options
- The availability and accessibility of English-language classes and programs through WorkOne Centers and other State agencies

Schools

- Communication gaps between parents and their school teachers and administrators
- Bullying, gangs, and overall school safety issues
- Accessibility of school transportation

Implementation

This exhaustive process undertaken by commissioners ultimately yielded a four-pronged approach to confronting as many of these major challenges facing Latinos statewide, with ICHLA serving as the facilitator bridging the community and State, local, and school resources that already exist and advocating for policy and legislative changes, as needed. These consist of:

1. **State agency Policy** – the implementation, marketing, and communication of existing State programs and services is a critical element to ensuring that Latinos across Indiana are accessing the resources they need to become self-sufficient and successful Hoosiers. Often, even the most dedicated State agency personnel lack the cultural understanding or capacity to effectively communicate those important services they manage, and ICHLA has continually served as a go-between for these agencies trying to connect with the Latino

community. A thorough analysis of programs and communication materials would give ICHLA a better understanding of the gaps that exist and find budget-neutral ways to fill those gaps through partnership.

2. **Legislative Focus** – one of the important roles that ICHLA can play at the State level is to advise legislators upon the need for common-sense legislative fixes to some of the community’s most pressing challenges. While commissioners discussed and generally agreed upon broad legislative themes, the advocacy of specific pieces of legislation will be decided upon on a bill by bill basis by commissioners. Still, common themes, such as anti-bullying or workforce training, provide a framework through which ICHLA commissioners and staff will continue to educate and inform legislators on the specific legislative actions that can have profound effects on the community.
3. **ICHLA as a Clearinghouse and Communications Strategies** – ICHLA has long been seen as a potential resource center through which important information across communities can be disseminated. Working with local partners and refining ICHLA’s website and electronic materials, the commission can house information on local and State programs and services that can be broken down by region in a usable, searchable format. Additionally, the commission will commit to collaborating with outlets in the Hispanic and at-large media market to promote activities and services being provided by those State agencies most utilized. Additionally, ICHLA will enhance its visibility in the community so that it can effectively provide educational, workforce training, healthcare, and other information to communities.
4. **Local Convening** – Often times, significant overlap occurs at the local level between service providers that impacts the provision of much-needed information and support to that community. Acting as a facilitator to bridge gaps between State and local education, healthcare, and business-related entities is an important piece of ICHLA’s charge to create understanding at various governmental levels and can help commissioners craft effective policy and legislative recommendations in future years.

| STATE AGENCY POLICY | AREAS OF LEGISLATIVE FOCUS | CLEARINGHOUSE & MEDIA | LOCAL CONVENING |
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| <p>Review of critical documents, informational materials, and advertisements by State agencies – specifically the Department of Education, the Family and Social Services Administration, the Department of Health, the Commission on Higher Education, and the Department of Workforce Development</p> | <p>Support anti-bullying legislation – in five of the six areas in which focus groups were conducted, bullying and school-violence was one of the main challenges noted by Latino parents. This, of course, is not unique to Latino students, but a number of parents said their children felt they were being targeted</p> | <p>Local community centers and youth activity programs State and local English development classes for adults Micro-lending or grant programs for Hispanic-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs Information on State education initiatives available through the</p> | <p>Meet with the mayors and other elected officials from each of the focus group sites, as well as those of the ten cities with the largest Latino populations, to discuss trends and strategies for meeting the community’s needs Meet with the school superintendents of the school districts serving</p> |

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| <p>– that are the primary points of service for high numbers of Latino families to determine relevance and linguistic usability.</p> <p>Determine what informational resources provided by State agencies should be available in Spanish to augment the number of Latino users</p> <p>Determine what programs exist for workforce training and adult English-language development, what State agencies administer them, how widely they are available across communities, what obstacles might exist to inhibit greater usage by Latino clients, and what solutions and strategies might be implemented by State agencies and local organizations to ensure that Latinos are taking advantage of them.</p> <p>Identify community partners that might have the capacity to assist with</p> | <p>because of language or culture.</p> <p>Support early education initiatives – while the developmental benefits of early education are exponential for all cohorts of students, immigrant children sometimes face additional culture or linguistic challenges that can result in them falling further behind their peers from an early age. Parents across regions stated in focus group sessions that they would be interested in sending their children to school as early as possible in an effort to reinforce more thoroughly what is being taught at home and give their children the fastest educational start possible, particularly given the new requirements under I-READ III testing.</p> <p>Support initiatives that encourage increased rates of both matriculation and completion rates for college and certification programs amongst Latino</p> | <p>Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana Commission on Higher Education</p> <p>Links to the websites of various State agencies, such as the Department of Revenue, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health</p> <p>Links to federal resources that can be beneficial to Latino families</p> <p>State and local public safety information</p> <p>Information concerning protections from housing, education, and employment discrimination available under State and federal laws</p> <p>Information on available scholarship programs available in Indiana that can be used as a resource for students, counselors, and parents themselves</p> <p>Print Advertising – print media remains one of the most effective tools for reaching high numbers of Latinos in a way that</p> | <p>the focus group cities as well as those servicing the ten largest Latino school-aged populations to share best practices and gather further insights into perspectives about the Latino community. These meetings would also serve as an opportunity to pull in partners in academia and other sectors to share strategies for cultural responsiveness in schools and the classroom</p> <p>Convene community leaders, service providers, and activists in each of Indiana’s nine congressional districts at least once in a period of one calendar year to discuss trends, strategies, and programs and services already available at the State and local levels</p> <p>Convene local small business groups in areas represented by ICHLA commissioners to discuss access to capital and other significant</p> |
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| <p>translation of key documents in an effort to absorb any additional costs, and bridge connections between these State agencies and local points of contact. Identify community partners that can be recruited to help provide information concerning the availability of this important information at the State level.</p> | <p>students – while matriculation rates have gradually and steadily increased for Latino students, completion rates for both college and certification programs continue to lag. Legislative efforts aimed at increasing the number of Latino students who enroll in and complete these programs should be backed by the commission. Support creative, community-based solutions to transportation challenges faced by Latino Hoosiers throughout the state.</p> | <p>efficiently uses public funds. Currently, there are four or five major print outlets that have considerable penetration, albeit for different segments of the community. Utilizing these outlets, the commission will tailor messaging to steer constituents to the website or encourage them to contact the commission directly. Direct Mail – In targeted communities, direct mail can prove the best way to penetrate individual households and encourage action on the part of constituents. With a focus on educational attainment and parental engagement, Spanish-language and bilingual mail pieces will steer users toward the commission’s website for assistance in connecting with available educational resources at the State level. Billboards – Again, the</p> | <p>challenges facing Latino entrepreneurs and small businesses with the intention of using the information to develop policy and legislative recommendations at the State and local levels</p> |
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| | | focus for broad visual media might be on the one topic that was consistently discussed across the six regions during the focus group sessions – education. | |
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Additional Strategic Objectives

In addition to these strategic efforts of the Commission, commissioners will engage community partners throughout the state on a series of other initiatives aimed at further addressing some of the challenges and obstacles outlined above and highlighted in countless conversations with community leadership in Indiana.

These include, but aren't limited to:

Statewide Latino Page Day at the Statehouse

- This program has grown significantly through the efforts of Commissioner Candelaria-Reardon, and the goal for the future continues to be program expansion and the inclusion of more students from across the state. This past year, more than 130 students from all over Indiana participated, meeting their legislators and statewide elected officials, learning about the importance of civic engagement, and gaining a fuller understanding of State government and the legislative process. This is an area of need for so many Latino students, and the opportunity to increase numbers of participants is one upon which the Commission will be focused.

2013-2014 Statewide Virtual Strategy Summit

- In 2010, the Commission engaged more than 350 community stakeholders in 5 remote locations around Indiana for a one-day exchange of ideas and information. The Virtual Strategy Summit model allows for maximum participation at minimal cost through efficient partnership with Ivy Tech campuses, and the Commission will look to replicate these efforts in tackling new topics moving forward.

Better Understanding Business Challenges: Latino Small Business Engagement

- The IU Center for Evaluation and Education Policy has been a strong partner for the commission in developing grassroots-level focus groups to better understand the needs of the Latino community in Indiana. Applying that same formula toward businesses, the Commission will engage CEEP to develop focus groups for Latino small businesses in six regions of the state.

These discussions will be the cornerstone for legislative and policy recommendations and will allow the Commission to develop strategic initiatives for the coming year.

Education Bootcamp Series

- Starting with one parent group in Evansville and expanding to a minimum of 5 additional cities statewide, the Commission will recruit other State agencies, local organizations and schools, and other stakeholders to conduct one-day education-related bootcamps for parents and families to inform them on educational resources and options available to them. This could include a breakdown of rights and responsibilities related to education, a recap of the 21st Century Scholars program, school engagement strategies, perspectives from counselors, school choice initiatives, and presentations and discussions by other education groups with whom the Commission can partner. Local leaders will be engaged to ensure that workshops are conducted at a time and location most conducive to community participation.

Conclusion

This strategic plan is intended to guide the efforts of the Commission and provide commissioners with a set of strategic initiatives through which to address some of the major obstacles confronting Indiana's growing Latino communities over the course of the coming fiscal year. Apart from those partnerships and objectives outlined here, the Commission continues to work to inform local stakeholders and local and state leaders, and Commissioners continue to give selflessly as volunteers in an effort to ensure that the micro and macro needs of our different populations are being met at the State government level.

We appreciate those members of the general public and leaders from cities and towns all across Indiana who have offered insights and direction, and we are most grateful to the families who agreed to give of their time to provide the feedback and perspectives that were so instrumental to shaping to CEEP report and, by consequence, this strategic plan.