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San Diego Developing Strategic Plan for Refugee and Immigrant Integration

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN WILL FOCUS ON A VARIETY OF COMMUNITY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

SAN DIEGO – The City of San Diego will develop a new strategic plan that will help welcome and integrate immigrants and refugees into the community. The project will be made possible thanks in part to \$25,000 in grant funding and in partnership with the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. (EDC), San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and other non-governmental institutions and advocacy groups.

“Immigrants and refugees contribute to San Diego’s culture and economy, and our region has taken in more refugees than any other in California,” said Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer. “This new program ensures we continue supporting those who come to our city to pursue a better life for themselves and their families.”

San Diego has been selected to receive a \$12,500 Research, Technical Assistance and Matching Grant Award as part of the 2017 Gateways for Growth Challenge. The California Endowment generously matched the award, for a total of \$25,000. Launched in 2015, the Gateways for Growth challenge is a competitive opportunity for local communities to receive direct technical, research and monetary assistance from New American Economy and Welcoming America to develop multisector plans for welcoming and integrating immigrants. The 2017 grants were awarded to 25 cities throughout the United States after a rigorous application process.

A steering committee will be formed to identify goals, timeline and process. The steering committee will include representatives from RISE San Diego, the San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium, Alliance San Diego and the San Diego Refugee Forum, alongside business networks such as EDC and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as the City’s Human Relations Commission and International Affairs Board.

“Key to attracting foreign investment and entrepreneurs is creating an immigrant friendly and welcoming community,” said Paola Avila, Vice President of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce. “This initiative will bring together stakeholders to fully understand the needs of our communities and put together a strategy that better integrates immigrants into our innovation economy.”

The steering committee will also convene working groups with community members and dozens of stakeholders and advocacy groups, and conduct a community engagement tour on specific dimensions of immigrant integration. The process will be overseen by Dr. Joel Day of the City's Neighborhood Services Branch.

“We are very excited to move forward with this project to help immigrants and refugees acclimate to their new home,” Day said. “Along with our partners, we will be focusing on jobs, education, health and safety, and community involvement, as well as other areas of importance for new arrivals.”

The strategic planning, community outreach and research process will culminate in a multi-year blueprint to institutionalize efforts of immigrant integration in local government and develop concrete strategies and recommendations to maximize the contributions of the immigrant and refugee community in San Diego. The steering committee will begin planning this month, followed by four to six months of community engagement and research. The final report and recommendations will be delivered to the Mayor and City Council later next year.

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