

Alameda County

Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Implementation Study Report

"Personal guidance, trust, and access to information can empower individuals to move from merely surviving to leading."

- Focus Group Participant

540,000+

immigrants & refugees
in Alameda County

1 in 3

county residents
are foreign-born

500%

increase in rapid
response hotline calls since the start of 2025

A Decade of Commitment: The Road to ACOIRA

Dec 2016



Ad Hoc Committee Established

Supervisors Richard Valle, Wilma Chan, and Scott Haggarty launch the Ad Hoc Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights - convening public forums across all five districts and examining ten county agencies.

Dec 2021



Landmark Report Published

[The State of Immigrant and Refugee Rights in Alameda County](#) - authored by Dr. Peter Mancina of Oxford - documents persistent gaps and makes 10 recommendations, including the explicit call to create a dedicated Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs.

Dec 2024



Readdressing the County's Efforts to Safeguard Immigrants & Refugee Rights

Following the 2024 election, the Public Protection Committee reignites the call to protect non-citizen residents in Alameda County in partnership with the Public Defender's Office.

Jan - Oct
2025



Renewed Urgency: ACT for All

The Board of Supervisors authorizes the creation of [ACT for ALL](#), an Ad Hoc Committee to coordinate a proactive countywide response. In 2025, the Board approves more than \$7M for immigrant and refugee legal defense, rapid response services, and community supports.

A Decade of Commitment: The Road to ACOIRA

Feb 2025 **County Invests over \$800K+ to Stabilize Refugee Provider Community**

Following federal pause on [refugee resettlement](#), BOS funds IRC, JFCS-East Bay & JFS-Silicon Valley for housing, transportation, employment & case management services.

Aug 2025 **OIRA Recommendation Reaffirmed at ACT Committee**

Oct 2025 **OIRA Authorization and Initial Investment**

ACT for All formally returns to the Board with the recommendation to create ACOIRA. [SSA allocates two positions and a pilot budget of \\$450K.](#)

Dec 2025 **Language Access Commitment Affirmed**

BOS directed CAO staff to compile and prepare a [language access](#) utilization report with recommendations on how to improve employee and community knowledge/awareness of language access services.

Jan 2026 **ICE Free Zones & County-Wide Immigration Enforcement Response Plan**

BOS unanimously passed two immigration proposals for a coordinated countywide strategy to protect immigrant communities by ensuring rapid response, safeguarding access to public services, and establishing ICE-free zones on county property.

Methodology: How This Study Was Conducted

Be the Change Consulting, in partnership with LikeWater Consulting and Immigrant Legal Defense, led a five-part research process grounded in community voice, comparative analysis, and county stakeholder expertise.

Peer Jurisdiction Scan

Comparative analysis of immigrant affairs offices examining staffing, budget, placement, and community accountability models.

County Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews with county agency leaders, department heads, elected officials' offices, and philanthropic partners to surface internal capacity, gaps, and political landscape.

Community Focus Groups

Focus groups with immigrant community members and service providers - nominated by each of the five Board Supervisors - to center lived experience in the findings.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee comprised of electeds, senior county staff, and philanthropic partners provided ongoing guidance and feasibility input throughout the process.

Community Advisory Body

A nine-member CAB - one rep per supervisorial district plus coalition partners - reviewed all research and developed the recommendations for the office.

Recommendation: Mission & Vision

VISION

A county where strong public infrastructure, partnerships, and data-informed policies, programs and strategies ensure immigrant and refugee communities are supported, protected from harm, and able to fully participate in the social, civic, and economic life of the region.

MISSION

To build and sustain the infrastructure that supports immigrant communities by convening partners, coordinating programs and services, analyzing data to identify gaps, and advancing policies and investments that strengthen outcomes for immigrant and refugee residents.

Recommendation: Eight Core Functions

These eight functions represent OIRA's permanent, standing responsibilities - the work the office holds in perpetuity, regardless of the political moment or phase of implementation.

Community Partnership & Engagement

Population Needs Assessment, Planning & Evaluation

Clearinghouse & Navigation Hub

Public-Private Partnership

County Coordination, Compliance & Capacity Building

Policy Development & Advocacy

Communications & Intergovernmental Affairs

Learning & Innovation

Recommendation: Office Placement & Staffing

Vision

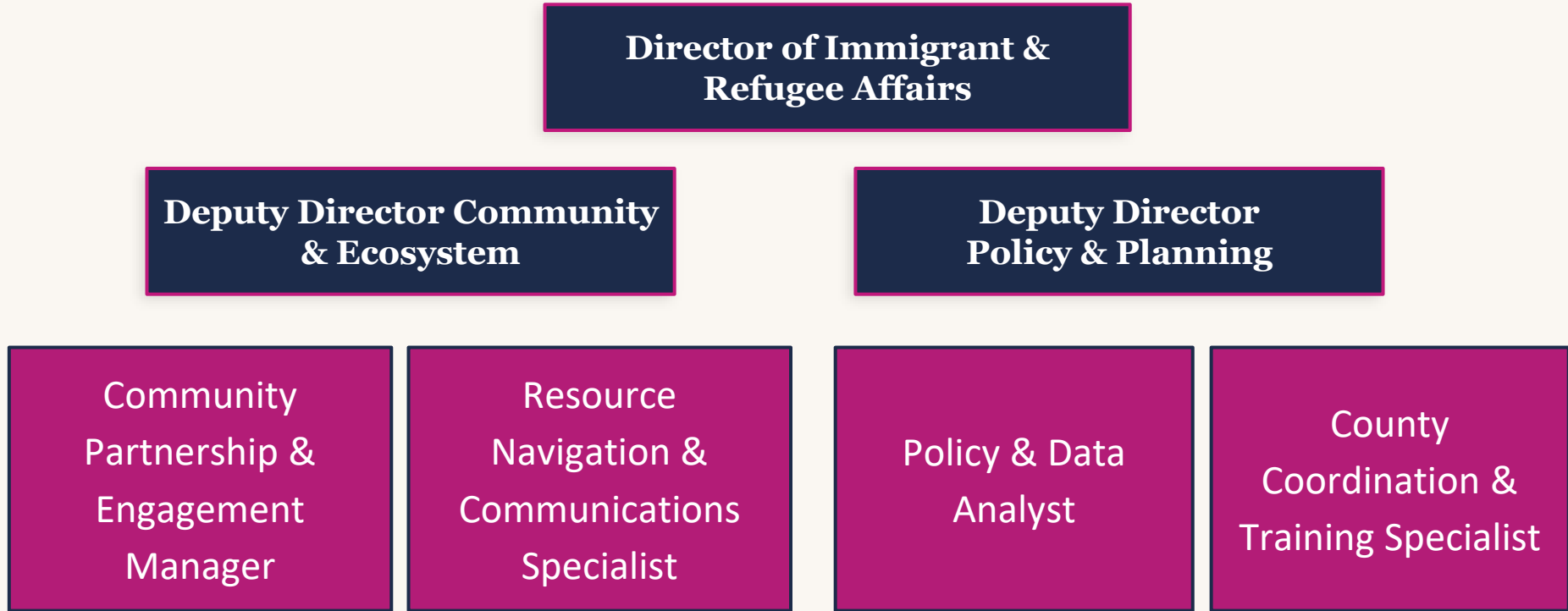
The CAB envisions this office as an independent entity within the County, with a two-year incubation period, where it is supported by the CAO (ideally, the CAB's preference) or another department (if necessary) during the 2-year pilot to establish itself. Through conversations with the steering committee and county staff the technical constraints and context of Alameda County came to light, illuminating that the CAB won't have the level of intra-county administrative and operational insight to make useful recommendations.

Pilot Phase Placement Criteria

This incubation period choice for OIRA placement should consider the following criteria:

- Agency/Department Head Champions the Work
- County Collaboration Track Record
- Trusted by BOS & CAO
- Incubation that supports transition
- Strong Community Connections
- Access to operational infrastructure
- Formal accountability mechanisms

Recommendation: Pilot Phase Staffing Model



We proposed positions with specific functions, but leave identifying levels and titles to County staff.

Community Service Providers

Three key coalitions supporting this moment:

ACUDIR

Alameda County United for Immigrant
Rights

**Organizes and prepares
communities before
enforcement happens**

ACILEP

Alameda County Immigrant Legal
Education Partnership

**Responds in the moment
(hotline, raids, Know Your
Rights)**

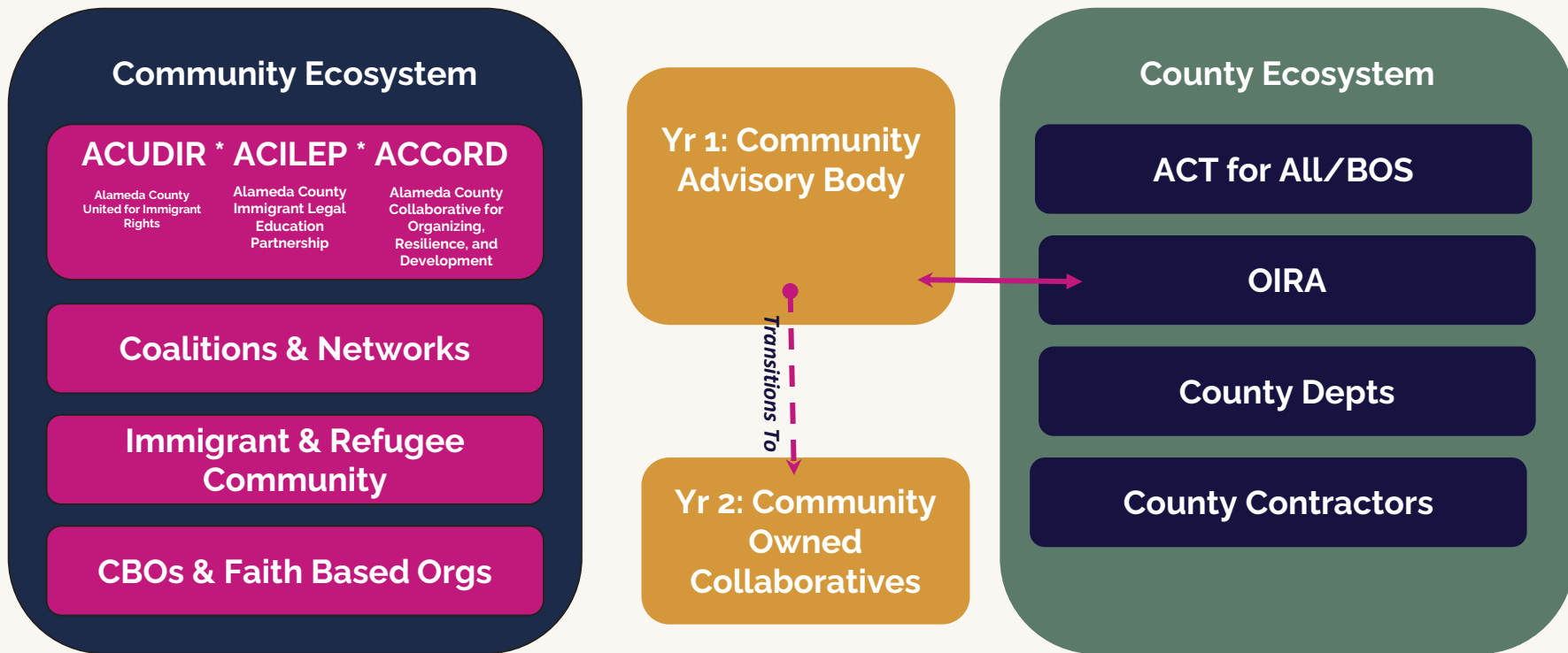
ACCoRD

Alameda County
Collaborative for Organizing,
Resilience, and Development

**Represents people in
immigration court after
they've been detained or
placed in removal
proceedings.**

*Alongside these three, the Board also funded the Public Defender's
Immigration Unit (\$1.3M) and Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach (\$50K)*

Community Accountability Structures



CAB serves as bridge during pilot phase; Community Collaboratives with expanded capacity to hold accountability post-pilot

Recommendation: Community Accountability Structure

"Through trust, personalized guidance, and a constant presence, community organizations break down barriers such as fear, language differences, and misinformation." - Community Advisory Body Member

1

Extend and Expand the CAB

Continue the pilot-phase Community Advisory Body through Year 2.

2

Map Before Building

Conduct a systematic mapping of existing coalitions, convenings, and coordination spaces across the county before building any new structures.

3

Convene County Contractors Regularly

Establish regular convenings for all organizations under county contract.

4

County-Wide Ecosystem Convenings

Separately establish regular county-wide convenings open to all immigrant and refugee-serving organizations, designed in partnership with community.

5

Fund Collaboration Through Contracts

Revise contract language to explicitly fund cross-sector collaboration among grantees, and support private fundraising efforts that build community capacity independent of county funding.

6

Invest in Community Collaboratives as Post-Pilot Anchors

During the pilot, invest in building existing community collaboratives' capacity to serve as the ongoing accountability bodies for a permanent OIRA.

Recommendation: \$10M+ Budget

1

Contract Renewals & Assessments

3 contracts · min. through June 2028
Most urgent action

\$4.63M

Maintain continuity of services while initiating reassessment and expansion. Support structured coordination across providers.

2

Staffing

Inclusive of the \$450k 2-year allocation already secured

\$1.92M

Assumes 7 staff at an average of \$275K salary/benefits.

3

Implementation Operating Budget

Needs assessment · clearinghouse · referral platform · convenings

\$450K

Minimum needed to operationalize core functions.

4

Public-Private Partnership Fund

Deportation defense · healing services · community organizing · coalitions

\$3M

Dedicated fund to support power building, mutual aid, innovation, and crisis response.

These are the recommendations of the Community Advisory Body. We understand that as the implementation shifts to internal county, the availability of resources will determine the pilot budget. We hope this framework establishes a model that we can grow towards.

Recommendation: 2-Year Pilot Phase Priorities

P1 Build the Foundation for Long-Term County Integration

P2 Assess Needs, Identify Vulnerabilities & Stabilize the CBO Ecosystem

P3 Build a County-Wide Hub for Resource Navigation & Warm Referrals

P4 Coordinate Implementation of Existing County-Wide Policies

P5 Build Community Accountability, Partnership & Transparency

These CAB Recommendations will inform SSA's scope development

1

Maintain continuity of existing rapid response, legal and community engagement services through at least June 2028.

2

Establish Office Placement That Enables Real Authority.

3

Launch the Director search immediately.

4

Fund a Full 7-Person Staff Team to include a Director, two Deputy Directors, and four specialist positions.

5

Grant OIRA Explicit Cross-Departmental Authority.

6

Allocate Programmatic Operating Budget (min. \$450K/year)

Critical Enabling Conditions

These recommendations are achievable only if certain structural conditions are in place:

1 Authority

The office must have real authority, not advisory status.

2 Hiring Sequence

The Director must be hired before the office is operational. The staffing sequence matters.

3 Contract Continuity

Contract action cannot wait. Service continuity must be preserved while the office is being stood up.

4 Community Safety

Law enforcement engagement requires an explicit, community-developed protocol.

5 Shared Accountability

All county departments must understand that supporting immigrant and refugee residents is their shared responsibility.

6 Authentic Partnership

Community engagement must be genuine, not performative.

**The County Has the Will.
The Community Has the Knowledge.
What Comes Next Is the Hard, Essential
Work of Building.**

Not a ceiling.

Not a symbol.

Not optional.