TURNING RESEARCH *into Action:*
A Planning Tool for Better Decision Making



Why This Resource Matters

The Gateways for Growth research provides a data-informed snapshot of Arlington's immigrant communities. It is intended to help County staff, community organizations, and partners make more informed, resident-centered decisions.

This is a planning tool—not a rulebook. Use it alongside community engagement, operational experience, and departmental/organizational expertise.

Five Principles for Turning Research into Action

1. Start with Data, Not Assumptions

Use local data to understand who lives in Arlington and how different communities may experience County services. Avoid relying on stereotypes or personal assumptions.

2. Recognize Diversity

Immigrants are not a monolith. Experiences differ by language, race, disability, age, income, immigration pathway, culture, religion, and family structure.

3. Ask Better Questions

In line with Arlington County's Racial Equity Framework, instead of asking *"What do immigrants need?"* ask:

- Who could be unintentionally left out?
- What barriers might exist?
- Does our outreach reflect the people we serve?
- Have we validated our assumptions with the community?

4. Combine Multiple Perspectives

The strongest decisions are informed by:

Research & Data + Departmental/Organizational Experience + Community Voices

Each provides a different perspective that should inform decision making.

5. Celebrate Progress While Continuing to Improve

Arlington County has made meaningful investments in language access, community outreach, equitable planning, and policies that strengthen trust with immigrant communities. Through initiatives such as multilingual services, immigrant-inclusive outreach programs, and the County's Trust Policy, Arlington continues to advance equity while using community feedback to identify opportunities for improvement.

Note: This resource is based on research conducted in 2026 for **Arlington County Government** by the **American Immigration Council** through the **Gateways for Growth** initiative. It is intended as an evolving planning tool to support continuous learning, stronger partnerships, and more resident-centered decision making.

TURNING RESEARCH *into Action:*
A Planning Tool for Better Decision Making



1 WHO WE SERVE



22%
of Arlington residents are immigrants

WHY IT MATTERS
Immigrants are part of Arlington's community, not a special audience.

ASK YOURSELF
Who benefits from this service today—and who may be unintentionally excluded?

TRY THIS
- Include immigrant communities in planning
- Test with community partners
- Invite diverse voices

2 COMMUNITY



1 in 3
households include an immigrant

WHY IT MATTERS
Most County services already serve immigrant families.

ASK YOURSELF
Would an immigrant family easily find and understand this service?

TRY THIS
- Simplify instructions
- Reduce jargon
- Improve navigation

3 LANGUAGE ACCESS



10,300
residents have Limited English Proficiency

WHY IT MATTERS
Language shouldn't determine access to a county service.

ASK YOURSELF
Where in the customer journey does language become a barrier?

TRY THIS
- Translate key materials in plain language
- Offer timely interpretation
- Train frontline staff (including cultural competency)

4 LANGUAGE



Top Languages
- Spanish
- Amharic
- Hindi
- Arabic
- Chinese

WHY IT MATTERS
Translation priorities should reflect Arlington, not asssumptions.

ASK YOURSELF
Are our language priorities based on Arlington's data?

TRY THIS
- Simplify instructions
- Reduce jargon
- Improve navigation

5 LONG-TERM RESIDENTS



50%
are U.S. citizens

WHY IT MATTERS
Many are long-term residents, homeowners, voters, and leaders.

ASK YOURSELF
Are we treating all immigrants as newcomers?

TRY THIS
- Invite residents into leadership
- Expand bilingual civic opportunities
- Build long-term relationships

6 COMMUNITY TRUST



78%
have lived in the U.S. for more than 5 years

WHY IT MATTERS
Trust is earned over time, not in one outreach event.

ASK YOURSELF
Are we building long-term relationships—or transactional interactions?

TRY THIS
- Invest in partnership
- Return to communities regularly
- Close the feedback loop

7 ECONOMIC IMPACT



$8.3 BILLION
contributed to Arlington's GDP

WHY IT MATTERS
How are we talking about immigrants?

ASK YOURSELF
How are County policies supporting immigrant economic mobility and entrepreneurship?

TRY THIS
- Share contribution data
- Include business partners
- Highlight strengths, not needs

8 BUSINESSES



29%
of entrepreneurs are immigrants

WHY IT MATTERS
Small businesses help Arlington thrive.

ASK YOURSELF
Is it easy to start or grow a business here?

TRY THIS
- Simplify permits & licensing
- Offer multilingual workshops
- Create inclusive networks

9 HOUSING



29.1%
own their homes

WHY IT MATTERS
Lower homeownership rates affect stability, wealth-building, and opportunity.

ASK YOURSELF
Do housing policies and outreach reflect the realities of renter households?

TRY THIS
- Design for renters
- Partner with multifamily communities

10 DIGITAL ACCESS



Broadband access is lower among immigrant households

WHY IT MATTERS
Not everyone can access information online.

ASK YOURSELF
Could someone without reliable internet access this information?

TRY THIS
- Use printed materials
- Provide in-person and phone support

11 HEALTH ACCESS



14%
are uninsured

WHY IT MATTERS
Healthcare access starts with trusted information.

ASK YOURSELF
What barriers prevent residents from seeking care before they need emergency services?

TRY THIS
- Increase culturally responsive outreach

Based on 2026 research for Arlington County Government by the American Immigration Council's Gateways for Growth initiative, this evolving resource supports ongoing learning, partnership-building, and resident-centered decision making.

ARLINGTON VIRGINIA