

Needs of Immigrants and the Nonprofit Landscape in the Twin Cities Region

Prepared for Accola

Authors:

Jackie Aman

Naw-Amelia Kacher

Anne Li

Allison Liuzzi

AUGUST 2024

451 Lexington Parkway North | Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700 | www.wilderresearch.org

**Wilder
Research®**
Information. Insight. Impact.

Executive summary

Accola is a new nonprofit organization in Saint Paul, Minnesota, working to welcome neighbors, cultivate community, and foster justice by responding to the needs of the time. Evolving from the work and programming of the Sisters of St. Joseph Ministries (SSJM) the new organization anticipates building upon SSJM's work with East African and Latin American immigrant communities in the areas of education and housing. As a new organization distinct from SSJM, Accola is embarking on a process to refine, target, and improve programming and services to immigrant communities in the Twin Cities. To inform this process, Accola collaborated with Wilder Research in spring 2024 to learn about immigrant needs in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, specifically among the Latin American and East African communities.

Wilder conducted mixed-method research, including a landscape analysis and key informant interviews. The nonprofit landscape analysis reviewed existing administrative records and data sources on organizations in the region that serve immigrant communities. Wilder also conducted key informant interviews with community leaders and organizations working with Latin American and East African immigrant communities to understand the available resources and the needs in their community.

Key findings and recommendations are summarized below.

Key findings

Twin Cities immigrant and refugee communities are diverse.

Recommendation:

Invest time and resources into internal cultural competence and knowledge of the communities it serves.

- ✓ The Twin Cities region is home to nearly 384,000 foreign-born residents, or about 12% of the region's total population.
- ✓ One in 10 immigrants in the Twin Cities is originally from Mexico (10%, or 36,400 residents).
- ✓ One in six is originally from the East African countries of Somalia, Ethiopia, or Kenya (17% combined, or 64,900 residents).

Immigrant and refugee service needs are equally as diverse.

Recommendation:

Understand who is already providing services and where they have an established community presence to avoid duplicate efforts. Build authentic partnerships with trusted institutions and take time to learn the existing structures within immigrant communities. Position Accola to be nimble and flexible to meet emerging needs.

- ✓ We identified 53 organizations that primarily provide housing or education services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region.
- ✓ There are a range of housing and education services provided by Twin Cities nonprofits, but there are notable gaps in those that meet the specific needs of Latin American immigrants, women, and older adults.
- ✓ Most Twin Cities nonprofits providing education or housing services for immigrants are located in the central cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Immigrants seeking services feel more connected to spaces that are welcoming, safe, and supportive.

Recommendation:

Strengthen or enhance existing programs – both within the organization and in collaboration with other community organizations – rather than creating new programming.

- ✓ Interviewees highlighted the importance of approaching immigrant communities intentionally – with humility, and a willingness to listen and learn. They emphasized the importance of building deep relationships with individuals, families, and community leaders.
- ✓ Trusted organizations are often shared through word of mouth and recommendations from family and friends, or through established networks and partnerships with other trusted organizations and community leaders.
- ✓ Immigrant families rely on the experiences of other community members. Within the East African immigrant community, interviewees shared that they tend to rely on faith centers, such as mosques, both for direct services and for guidance on where to seek services from other organizations and institutions.

(cont.)

(continued)

East African and Latin interviewees are open to further conversation.

Recommendation:

Build strong relationships with other service providers and immigrant communities to gain, foster, and maintain trust.

- ✓ All 12 individuals interviewed were interested in learning more about Accola and its intended work serving refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seeking individuals.
 - ✓ Most of the other organizations would like to meet with Accola staff and board personally to build a relationship and have a deeper dialogue about the questions asked in the interview.
-

Contents

Needs of immigrants and the nonprofit landscape in the Twin Cities region.....	1
Introduction and project background	1
Immigrant residents in the Twin Cities region	2
Landscape analysis: Twin Cities nonprofits serving immigrant populations	5
Key informant interviews: Learning about immigrant needs in the Twin Cities	12
Recommendations	20
Appendix	25
Nonprofits providing services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region	25

Figures

1. Foreign-born population, Twin Cities 7-county region, 1970-2022.....	2
2. Foreign-born population by region of birth, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2018-2022	3
3. Ten largest immigrant populations by country of birth, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2018-2022	4
4. Nonprofit organizations providing housing services by detailed service types, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2024	6
5. Nonprofit organizations providing education services by detailed service types, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2024	6
6. Nonprofit organizations by populations served, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2024.	7
7. Nonprofit organizations by sub-populations served, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2024.....	7
8. Percentage of the population that is foreign-born and location of nonprofits providing education services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region	9
9. Percentage of the population that is foreign-born and location of nonprofits providing housing services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region	10
10. Percentage of the population that is foreign-born and location of nonprofits providing education and housing services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region	11

Needs of immigrants and the nonprofit landscape in the Twin Cities region

Introduction and project background

Accola is a new nonprofit organization in Saint Paul, Minnesota, working to welcome neighbors, cultivate community, and foster justice by responding to the needs of the time. Guided by the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (SSJC), the new organization anticipates building upon SSJM's work with East African and Latin American immigrant communities in the areas of education and housing. It should be noted that Accola is a distinct organization from SSJC: *faith-founded*, but not *faith-*, *Christian-*, or *Catholic-based*.

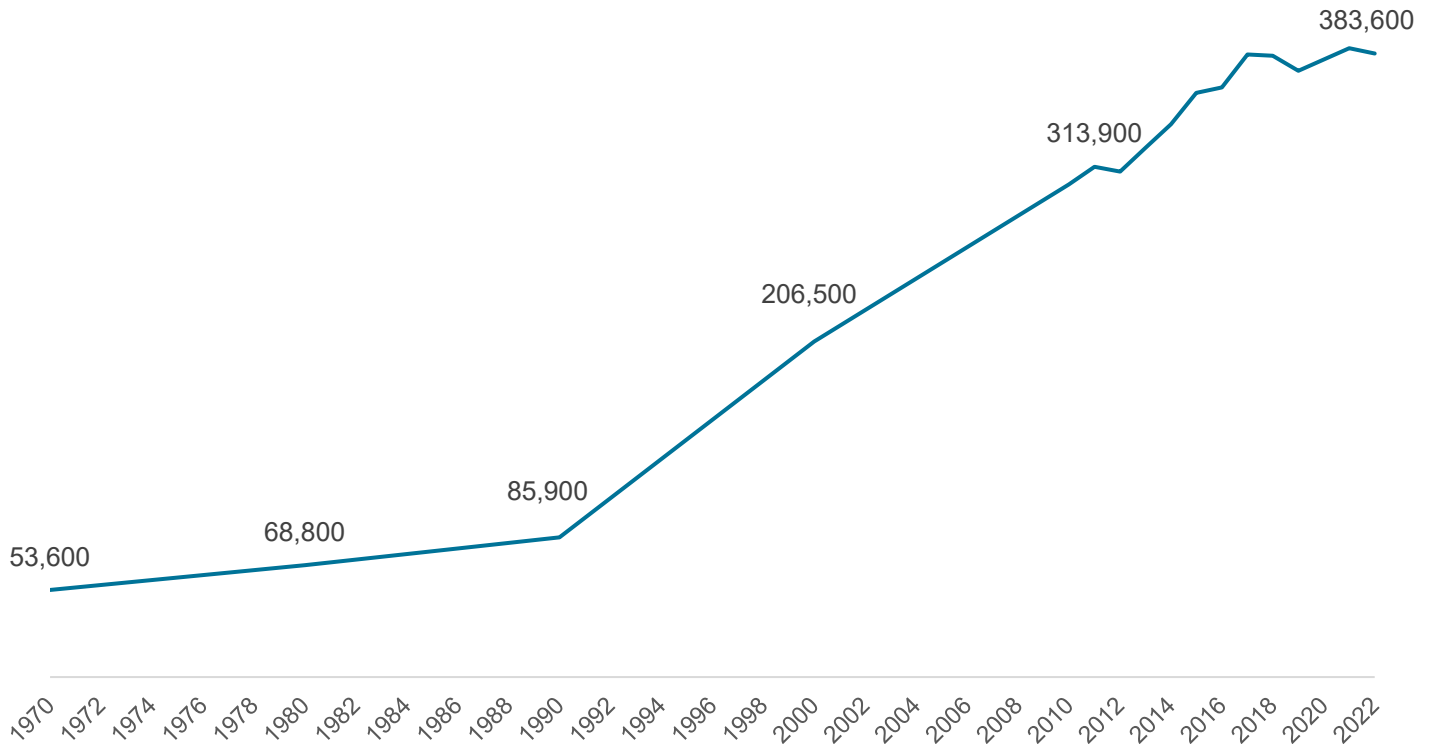
As a new organization, Accola is embarking on a process to refine, target, and improve programming and services to immigrant communities in the Twin Cities. As part of this process, Accola partnered with Wilder Research to learn more about immigrant needs in the Twin Cities, specifically among Latin American and East African communities. Our Wilder Research team conducted a nonprofit landscape analysis and interviewed community leaders and organizations working with Latin American and East African immigrant communities.

This report presents key opportunities for growth and strategies to better serve Accola's communities of focus. This is not a comprehensive report of all immigrant needs in the Twin Cities community. Rather, it is a focused community needs assessment to help understand the current landscape of organizations serving Latin American and East African immigrant communities in the seven-county metro area, with particular attention to the strengths, challenges, and gaps identified by organizations already serving these communities.

Immigrant residents in the Twin Cities region

Today, the Twin Cities region is home to nearly 384,000 foreign-born residents, or about 12% of the region's total population. Figure 1 shows that our foreign-born population has more than tripled since 1990 but has leveled off in recent years, due in large part to changes in federal immigration policy and enforcement.

1. Foreign-born population, Twin Cities 7-county region, 1970-2022



Source. Minnesota Compass analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and American Community Survey (ACS), 1970-2022.

Notes. The foreign-born population includes people who were not U.S. citizens at birth. It excludes people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or U.S. Island Areas, as well as those born in a foreign country who had at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen. The Twin Cities 7-county region includes residents of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties. These estimates do not include U.S.-born children of immigrants.

Immigrants by region and country of birth

Table 2 shows that more than one-third of Twin Cities immigrant residents are originally from Asia, the largest immigrant group by region of origin. But half of immigrant residents in the Twin Cities are from Africa and Latin America combined, two regions of particular interest to Accola.

2. Foreign-born population by region of birth, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2018-2022

Region of birth	Number	Percent
Asia	147,700	39%
Africa	108,900	29%
Latin America	77,800	21%
Europe	34,300	9%
Northern America	7,900	2%
Oceania	1,200	<1%
All immigrant residents	377,700	100%

Source. Minnesota Compass analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2018-2022.

Notes. Numbers and percentages may not sum to total due to rounding. The foreign-born population includes people who were not U.S. citizens at birth. It excludes people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or U.S. Island Areas, as well as those born in a foreign country who had at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen. The Twin Cities 7-county region includes residents of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties. These estimates do not include U.S.-born children of immigrants. ACS five-year estimates are based on data collected over five years, and, therefore, describe average characteristics for that five-year time period.

Focusing in on country of birth, several Latin American and East African countries rank among the 10 largest immigrant communities. Table 3 shows that 1 in 10 immigrants in the Twin Cities is originally from Mexico (10%, or 36,400 residents). One in six is originally from the East African countries of Somalia, Ethiopia, or Kenya (17% combined, or 64,900 residents).

3. Ten largest immigrant populations by country of birth, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2018-2022

Country of birth	Number	Percent
Mexico	36,400	10%
Somalia	29,100	8%
India	28,000	7%
Ethiopia	23,300	6%
Laos	22,500	6%
Thailand	16,200	4%
China	15,200	4%
Vietnam	13,400	4%
Kenya	12,500	3%
Liberia	12,200	3%

Source. Minnesota Compass analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2018-2022.

Notes. The foreign-born population includes people who were not U.S. citizens at birth. It excludes people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or U.S. Island Areas, as well as those born in a foreign country who had at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen. The Twin Cities 7-county region includes residents of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties. These estimates do not include U.S.-born children of immigrants. ACS five-year estimates are based on data collected over five years, and therefore describe average characteristics for that five-year time period.

Please note that most of the estimates, trends, and tables above are from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, an ongoing survey administered to a national sample of about 3.5 million addresses each year. Information from the survey is one of the most reliable and consistent sources of publicly-available data on immigrant populations across the United States. It does not include detailed information on immigration status, including legal or conditional residency status, petition types or status, asylee or refugee status, visa types, or undocumented status.

Landscape analysis: Twin Cities nonprofits serving immigrant populations

Wilder Research conducted a landscape analysis of nonprofit organizations in the Twin Cities, reviewing existing administrative records and data sources to assess the landscape of providers and organizations serving immigrant communities in the region. Following conversations with Accola leadership, the scope of our landscape analysis narrowed to organizations in the region (a) serving populations from Latin American and East African countries and (b) providing programming in the areas of education or housing. Databases for this scan included ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Community Based Organizations directory, and Minnesota Attorney General Charity Search. Data from these sources include location, mission, programs and results, financials, and governance and leadership. The search was conducted between May 10, 2024, and May 24, 2024.

Housing and education services provided by Twin Cities nonprofits

In total, we identified 53 organizations that primarily provide housing or education services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region. A full list of the nonprofits identified in this scan is available in Appendix A. This list may not include organizations that serve more broadly defined populations (i.e., beyond immigrants alone) or that provide a broader range of services beyond housing or education.

Of the 53 nonprofit organizations identified in our scan:

- 13 provide housing services
- 14 provide education services
- 26 provide both housing and education services to immigrant and refugee communities in the Twin Cities metro

The 39 nonprofits providing housing services engage in a wide range of detailed services, outlined in Table 4. The most common service provided by housing nonprofits is helping clients locate affordable and/or stable housing (44% of nonprofits). One-third provide referrals to or coordinate with other housing organizations, especially when their organization has limited capacity to provide the range or volume of housing services required by its clients.

4. Nonprofit organizations providing housing services by detailed service types, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2024 (N=39)

Detailed service type	Number	Percent
Locating affordable/stable housing	17	44%
Referrals to/Coordinating with other housing organizations	13	33%
Emergency shelter/Supportive housing	12	31%
Homeownership	9	23%
Mortgage, rent, and utility assistance	7	18%
Renter education	6	15%
Refugee resettlement	6	15%

Source. Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Note. In this table, nonprofits that provide more than one detailed service type are counted in each row that applies. For example, a nonprofit could help clients locate affordable/stable housing and provide renter education, and would be counted in both rows.

The 40 nonprofits providing education services also engage in a wide range of detailed services, outlined in Table 5. There is a clear emphasis on cultivating and nurturing youth, with large shares of nonprofits providing youth career coaching and leadership development services (55%), youth education (23%), and scholarships and school supplies (8%). Employment training and English classes are also each provided by more than a third of nonprofit organizations in the education space (43% and 35%, respectively).

5. Nonprofit organizations providing education services by detailed service types, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2024 (N=40)

Detailed service type	Number	Percent
Youth career coaching and leadership development	22	55%
Employment training and skill development	17	43%
English and English as a Second Language (ESL)	14	35%
Youth education (e.g., tutoring)	9	23%
Cultural orientation and systems navigation	8	20%
Entrepreneurship and business development/training	7	18%
Financial education and literacy	7	18%
Scholarships and school supplies	3	8%
Adult leadership development	2	5%

Source. Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Note. In this table, nonprofits that provide more than one detailed service type are counted in each row that applies. For example, a nonprofit could provide youth education and scholarships, and would be counted in both rows.

Gaps in Twin Cities nonprofits serving specific subpopulations

In our qualitative analysis of the populations served by these organizations, Table 6 shows that about one-third of the organizations use broad language to describe their service recipients and clientele, mentioning comprehensive populations (e.g., “all residents”) or slightly more targeted populations (e.g., “BIPOC and marginalized populations”). The remaining two-thirds mention services to immigrant and refugee communities specifically, with many providing services to immigrant communities from either Africa or Latin America. But a closer look shows that there are actually very few organizations providing housing or education services specifically to Latin American immigrants and refugees.

6. Nonprofit organizations by populations served, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2024 (N=53)

Populations served	Number
Any residents	7
Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) or other marginalized communities	11
Immigrants and refugees (any)	10
African immigrants and refugees	26
Latin American immigrants and refugees	4

Source. Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Note. In this table, nonprofits are counted only once according to the category that most closely aligns with their identified service recipients or clientele. Among the 24 nonprofits serving African immigrants and refugees, 12 noted that they either just serve or also serve immigrants and refugees from East Africa (specifically).

Table 7 shows that a majority of nonprofits provide services for adults and families, while fewer provide services explicitly for older adult populations and women.

7. Nonprofit organizations by sub-populations served, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2024 (N=53)

Sub-populations served	Number
Adults	43
Families	31
Youth	23
Older adults	10
Women	6

Source. Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from Candid, ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

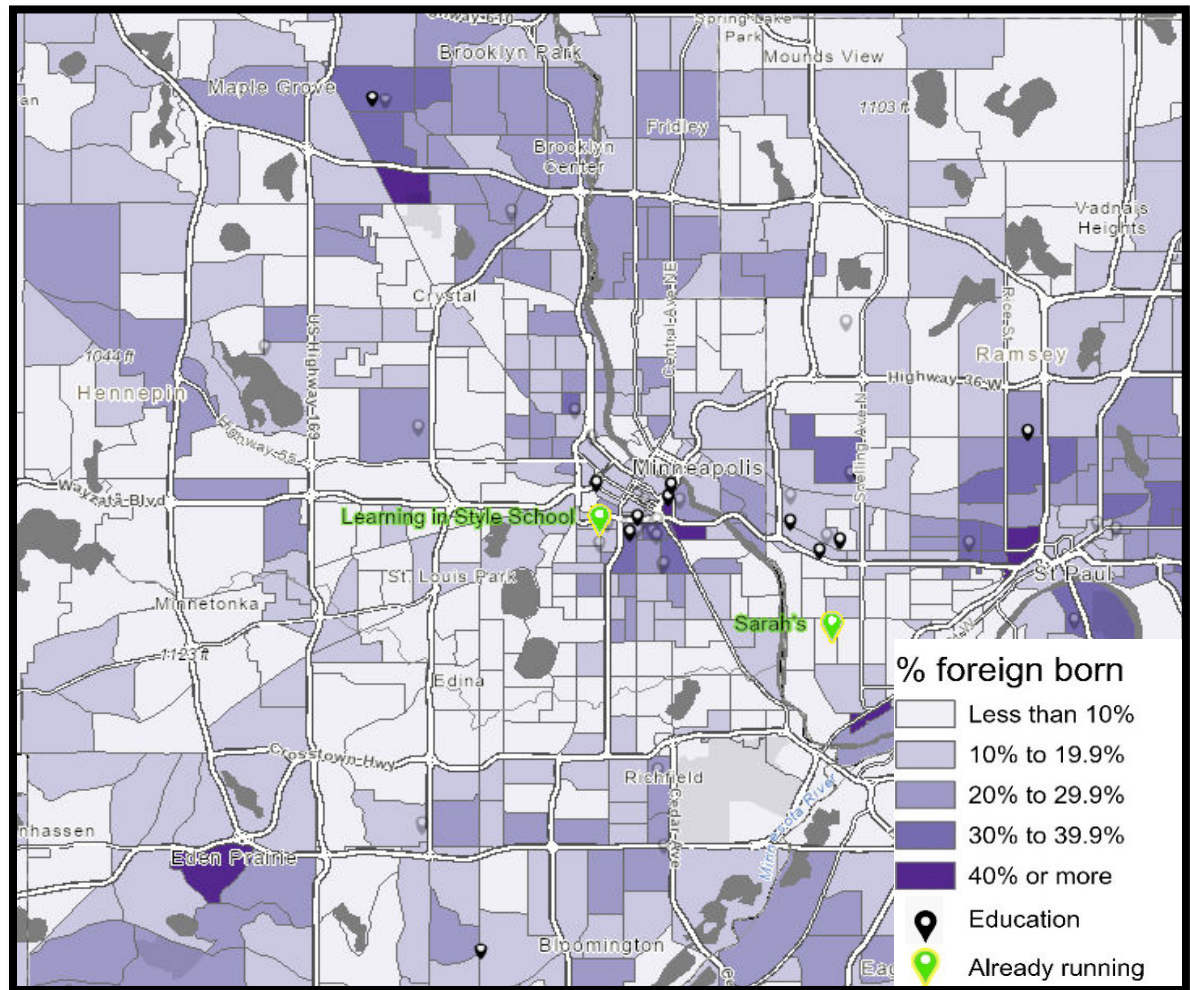
Note. In this table, nonprofits that serve more than one sub-population group are counted in each row that applies. For example, a nonprofit could provide services to both adults and families, and would be counted in both rows.

Education and housing services centrally located in Minneapolis and St. Paul

Maps of immigrant-serving organizations, displayed in Figures 8-10, show that many are located in Minneapolis, especially in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood, and along the I-94 corridor between Minneapolis and Saint Paul. These locations may be strategic in that they align with some areas with greater concentrations of immigrant populations or along public transit corridors, but there are also locations throughout the Twin Cities with greater concentrations of immigrant residents who may have to travel greater distances to receive services.

Eight nonprofits from our scan have main locations outside of the central cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Among these, four nonprofits provide housing services, three provide education services, and one provides both housing and education services. While a majority of these nonprofits have one primary location outside of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, two nonprofits have multiple locations. These two provide housing services that have additional service locations in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

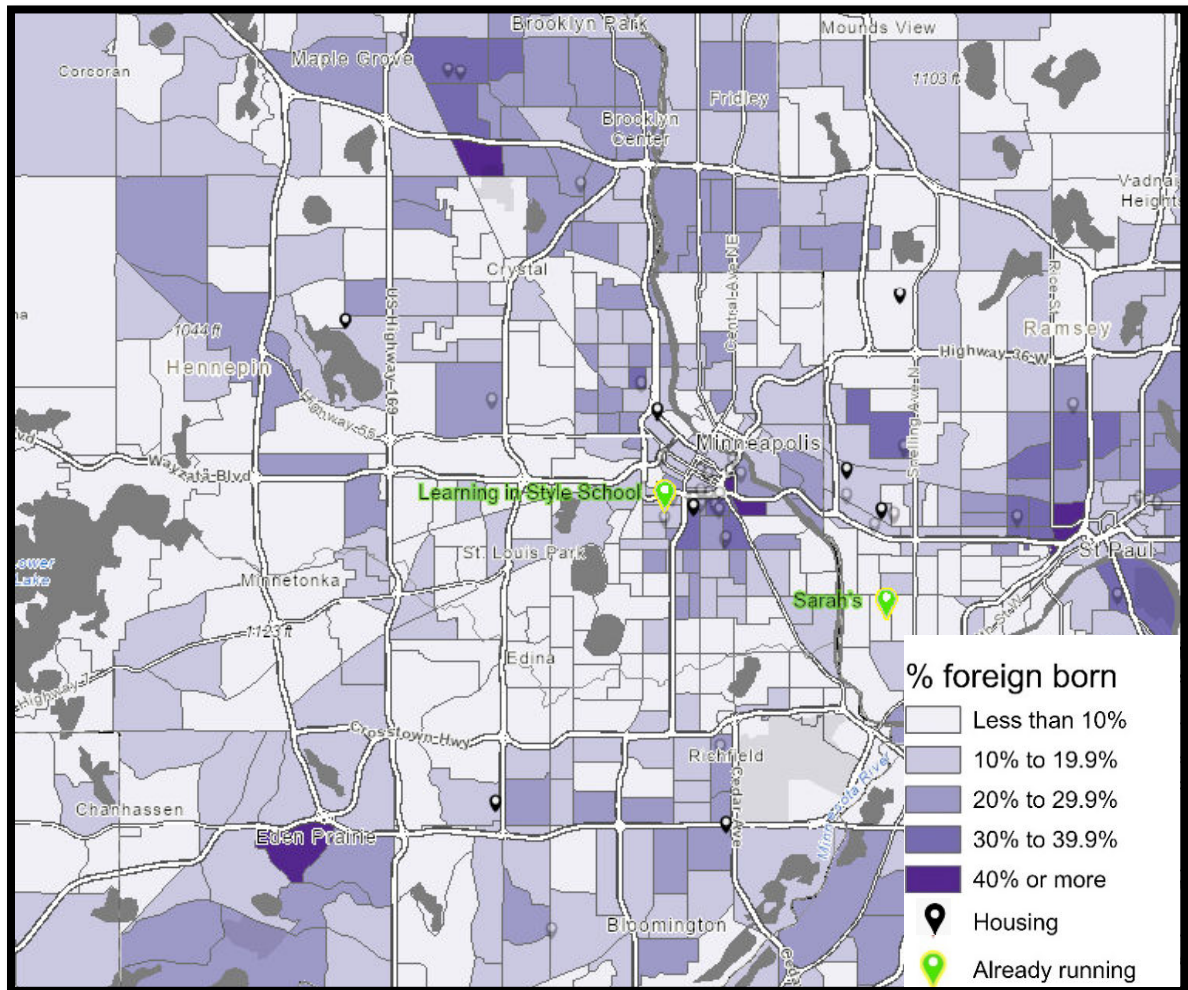
8. Percentage of the population that is foreign-born and location of nonprofits providing education services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region



Sources. Minnesota Compass analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2018-2022; Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Note. Organizations' locations on the map may indicate their service-providing location, but may also indicate their administrative offices (especially in the case of nonprofits providing outreach services direct to communities). Learning in Style School and Sarah's are programs of Accola that are currently running.

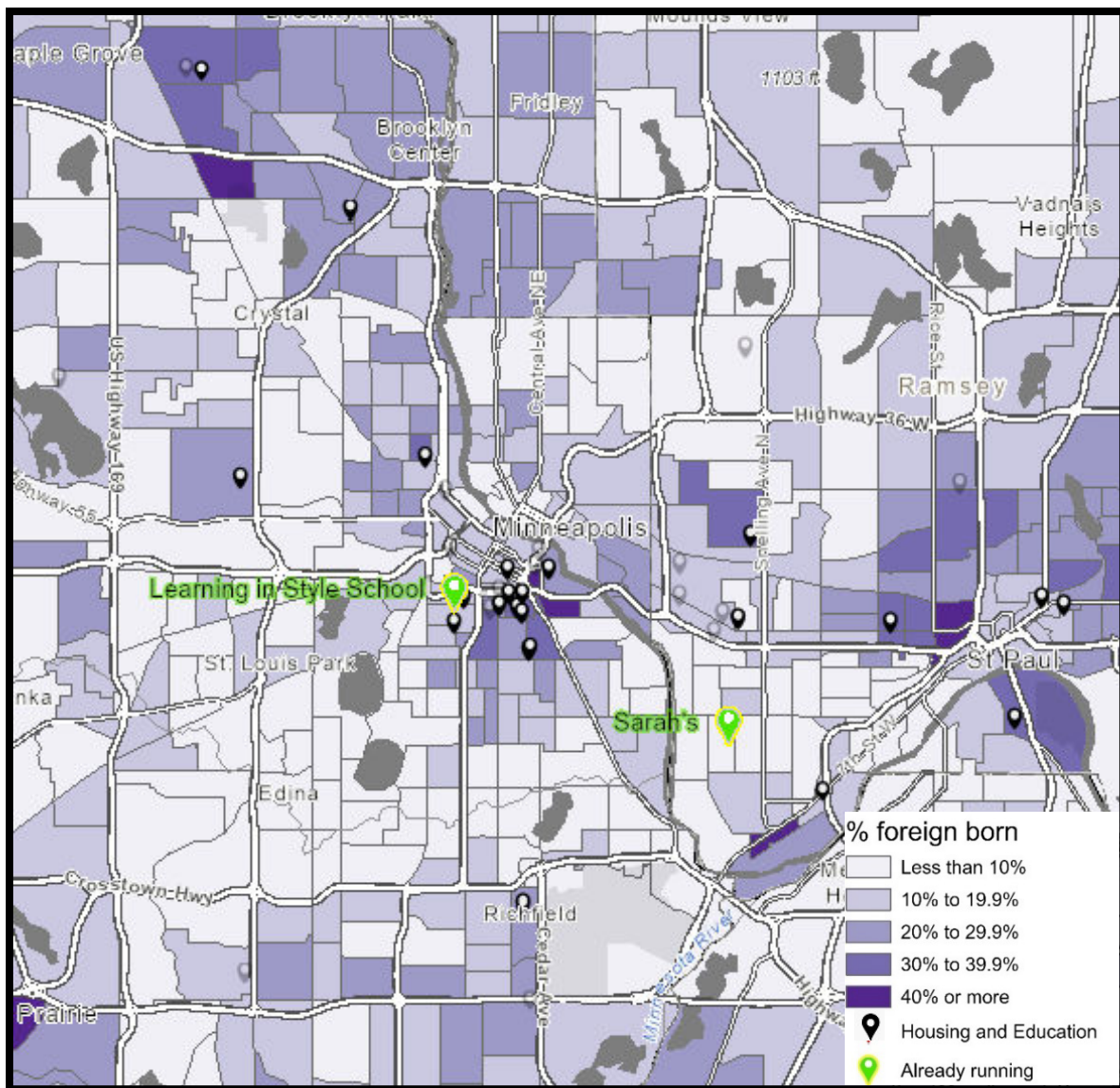
9. Percentage of the population that is foreign-born and location of nonprofits providing housing services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region



Sources. Minnesota Compass analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2018-2022; Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Note. Organizations' locations on the map may indicate their service-providing location, but may also indicate their administrative offices (especially in the case of nonprofits providing outreach services direct to communities). Learning in Style School and Sarah's are programs of Accola that are currently running.

10. Percentage of the population that is foreign-born and location of nonprofits providing education and housing services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region



Sources. Minnesota Compass analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2018-2022; Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Note. Organizations' locations on the map may indicate their service-providing location, but may also indicate their administrative offices (especially in the case of nonprofits providing outreach services direct to communities). Learning in Style School and Sarah's are programs of Accola that are currently running.

Key informant interviews: Learning about immigrant needs in the Twin Cities

Wilder Research staff conducted 12 interviews to learn more about the needs of Latin American and East African immigrants in the Twin Cities. Prior to the interviews, Wilder worked with Accola to identify a) leaders within each community that could speak to the needs of their community, and b) organizations that represent and/or serve Latin American or East African communities, or that serve a broader population of refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seeking individuals.

During our interviews, we asked interviewees to discuss: the strengths of their communities; current challenges and unmet needs; the availability of existing programs and opportunities to assist the needs of immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seeking individuals, specifically in housing and education; ways to better support immigrant communities; and their vision for the future. To honor the time and wisdom of each interviewee, Wilder provided a stipend or an organizational donation per their preference. The following presents main themes from key information interviews.

Strengths of immigrant communities

To begin each conversation, interviewees were asked to reflect on the strengths of the immigrant community(ies) they represented or engaged through their work. Responses included themes related to the communities themselves, as well as their programs or organizations. The following presents common themes across this discussion question.

Strong community networks and a communal orientation. When asked about the strengths of their communities and programs, interviewees were most likely to mention the strong networks within immigrant communities (5 interviewees). These community connections link people to information, resources, jobs, and guidance as they navigate a new country. Relatedly, the community/family-focused orientation and generosity of Latin American and East African immigrants was also mentioned as a strength (3 interviewees and 2 interviewees, respectively).

Educational/professional backgrounds, resiliency, and religious faith. Interviewees highlighted the education and professional experience that many immigrants bring to Minnesota (3 interviewees), as well as their resiliency to endure hardship and adapt (3 interviewees). Some also affirmed a strong religious faith as a strength of their communities, despite East African immigrants experiencing bias and stigma related to their Muslim faith.

The more communal sense of community, cohesion. You see extended families supporting one another with child care, services, looking for someone from their clan. Will offer housing.

Resilience. Might come from the nomadic background. Helps people to adapt and change. Getting to know new communities. Comes through hardship. The new hardships with the new culture, environment, weather. A test of your willingness to adapt and change.

Their faith [is a strength]. No question. And it comes with a complication because health care workers, others, see the Islamic faith as an impediment to be overcome... Faith is a tool that can be used to bridge into the community.

Current challenges and unmet needs

Over a series of questions, interviewees were asked to name the biggest challenges facing Latin American and East African immigrant communities, as well as unmet areas of need. The following provide the most common themes related to key challenges and needs of their communities.

Cultural differences. Interviewees most commonly highlighted cultural differences as a challenge for Latin American and East African communities (10 interviewees). These included challenges related to differences between their countries of origin and the American/Minnesotan culture (6 interviewees) and struggling to practice their religious faith (2 interviewees). One interviewee each also mentioned: exploitation, facing misconceptions or racism, general systematic barriers, and gender-related barriers.

Lack of needed services. Many interviewees cited a lack of services as a main challenge for their community (7 interviewees), especially mental health and substance use services (5 interviewees), services to help people find jobs and build job skills (3 interviewees), or being unsure where to go for help (2 interviewees). The lack of transportation, translation, and nutrition or food programs were also noted as challenges (1 interviewee each).

Housing and financial hurdles. Five interviewees each shared that immigrant communities face housing and financial challenges. Many lack access to safe and stable housing, and need more financial resources to get their families the services they need.

Education and legal documentation. Three interviewees mentioned challenges related to education, including college readiness, and the need for English classes for older language learners, and support for general schooling. In addition, two interviewees highlighted challenges with legal documentation in general, and noted specific challenges around obtaining a work permit.

Housing is what you need. It's something you cannot go without. And can bring people to food shelf or money for food, but housing is the main problem.

I do think mental health has to be highlighted. [There are] very few resources – we hired a psychologist to come to [the organization] part time who worked with five clients; it was not enough. They needed to work with 40 clients, but therapists prioritized long-term relationships as well. There aren't enough therapists that are available for low cost. Something we hope to see people from those communities that go into those jobs.

Outside of not being able to afford food for family. We serve the Latin American community, who tend to have big families. Money is tight, cannot find work. And we usually see them asking for other services like rent services, and trying to afford Pampers and formula for babies.

Most people don't know what to do or don't have access to an attorney. If they know what to do, they don't have money for the next steps. For example – applying for asylum-seeking status is free, but the lawyer costs money, and work authorization costs money. It's just hard to resolve problems.

I think that each person needs something different. I think that some of the support is actually building power and reframing. Instead of thinking about language as a defect – kids that come from Spanish speaking houses don't speak English. But shifting that mindset that these kids are multilingual and how do we use that as meaningful. How do we make that being an asset and not a problem.

Challenges specific to distinct immigrant communities. While interviewees shared common challenges across both immigrant communities, each community also faces its own specific challenges.

Five interviewees mentioned that Latin American immigrant communities are likely to struggle with legal documentation problems. There tend to be long wait times associated with the asylum application process.¹ There are risks associated with taking employment without legal documentation and, for those seeking authorized employment documentation, long wait times and delays associated with obtaining a work permit² and finding work among a limited set of low-paying jobs. Interviewees suggested that there may be a need for additional time and funding to address the immediate needs of this population.

Latin Americans have a huge challenge with documentation. They only get specific jobs that don't need documentation – and that caps the ability of what jobs they can get and advance at some point. Example – if they wanted to go into certificate programs – they require immigration status information, and if they don't have that, they can't get into the program. [They] work jobs that most people don't want to work because they are the only jobs available for them.

[Latin Americans] are not eligible for work permit right away, or any refugee cash assistance. They have nothing – not the ability to work too.

¹ Asylees are a subset of the foreign-born population, composed of people who are physically present in the United States and who seek legal residence because they have experienced persecution (or have a legitimate fear of persecution) in their home country due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. (See U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/asylum>)

² It takes a minimum of 180 days for an asylee applicant to receive employment authorization in the United States, also referred to as “180-Day Asylum EAD Clock.” (<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/notices/Applicant-Caused-Delays-in-Adjudications-of-Asylum-Applications-and-Impact-on-Employment-Authorization.pdf>)

In both East African and Latin American communities, individuals discussed the systemic challenges affecting their experiences, especially regarding their faith, personal beliefs, and gender differences.

There are big challenges for our students, especially in the Latin American community who have never lived in a country or state like ours in Minnesota. Underprepared. I used to do coat drives because so many students would only have a hoodie in zero-degree weather. It's such a small thing, but makes a big difference.

Systems aren't set up for people who pray five times a day. It's hard to find time and a place of worship. Conflict with companies, people being fired. Being aware of this new group of people. Other Muslims might have hidden that identity. Though some find that Minnesota Somalis have spread awareness of hijabs, prayer, practices, so that it is a little easier here in Minnesota. Maybe the last three years or so, more school districts recognize Eid as a holiday.

Trusted organizations

Interviewees were asked about trusted organizations within Latin American and/or East African immigrant communities. In addition to sharing the names of organizations (see Figure 11), interviewees talked about characteristics of the organizations they partner with and how an organization comes to be considered trustworthy within immigrant communities.

Build and leverage personal connections. Seven interviewees emphasized the importance of personal connections with individuals within immigrant communities to gain trust. Organizations become trusted through word of mouth and through recommendations from family and friends (3 interviewees), or through networking and partnering with other trusted organizations and community leaders (2 interviewees). Relatedly, at least two interviewees mentioned that some immigrant community members will stop receiving services from an organization if a trusted worker leaves. This demonstrates that personal relationships matter a great deal, and building relationships with immigrant communities is the first step to becoming a trusted organization.

Approach with intention. Six interviewees highlighted the importance of approaching immigrant communities intentionally – with humility, and a willingness to listen and learn. They emphasized the importance of building deep relationships with individuals, families, and community leaders (3 interviewees). In addition, two interviewees advised organizations take the time to learn about the internal structures, assets, and capacity within each community, and to strengthen and integrate those community elements in their work (2 interviewees).

Create a welcoming environment. Four interviewees underscored the ways that trusted organizations create welcoming environments for immigrant communities. This includes having staff members that speak the same language and understand (and respect) different cultures, and hiring staff members from the immigrant community of focus (3 interviewees).

Some also highlighted the need for a trauma-informed approach to working with immigrant communities (2 interviewees).

Acknowledge the reputation of Christian institutions within Twin Cities immigrant groups. Three interviewees raised concerns about previous work with specific service providers, especially those rooted in Christian faith communities. These interviewees recognized that Christian churches and organizations have been integral in sponsoring immigrants to come to Minnesota and have provided vital services to new arrivals. However, some Christian institutions have developed a reputation for approaching people in need with a “missionary” mindset and attempting to convert individuals to their faith. In these comments, none of the interviewees mentioned the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (SSJC) or Accola, specifically or by name, but referenced Christian institutions in general or specific Catholic organizations.

I think trust is [a] repetition of behavior. Lots of our work is referred to through word of mouth. We rely on that more than posting it at like a library, or at a public space. So, us being able to be consistent and transparent and helpful as possible is really important and word of mouth is very important for our program to continue.

[We trust organizations] with a two-way street of communication. We want to be a part of the conversation to set the priorities of an organization that wants to serve us.

I want you to treat me like I would treat you. If I am in need and I come to you, treat me as a whole human being. Recognize my culture and faith. I see you as my brother or my sister in a different faith.

The biggest thing is agency and being able to speak for themselves. See as empowerment. Many immigrants and refugees who come to the United States feel like they have been disenfranchised – inability to be part of the community around them. Giving them communication skills and an understanding of the new community they are in helps them participate--to be back in the level of being able to talk to their child's teacher, or being able to participate in civics– citizenship, being able to vote. Primary support we provide within education through empowerment.

It's important that organizations are trauma-informed. Have staff who are trained and do not burn out. Can build those relationship. And can understand that clients may take time to warm up and express their needs. Cultural differences and trauma- informed...Being patient on creating that relationship.

Find the community structures that are important and support them, versus finding things outside of the community that are nonprofit-built. If an outside nonprofit is not of the community, it cannot build the capacity of the community without reflecting and being a part of the internal community structures.

Organizations also need to shift the way that they think about it. Particularly like the missionary type of helping, there is usually a white-centeredness in that approach. They think people in those multicultural backgrounds are helped by learning the “white” ways, but we are in a multicultural community where we grow over time, and it will overpower others.

That said, three interviewees hoped that Accola will make intentional efforts to respect the religious identities of all people and create inclusive programming welcoming to all demographics and religious backgrounds.

11. Organizations trusted by Latin American and/or East African communities in the Twin Cities, as identified by interviewees

General services	African Economic Development Solutions Brian Coyle Center and other community centers Bridging Catholic Charities Center for Victims of Torture Charter schools specific to their immigrant community (e.g., Venture Academy) CLUES Consortium of English Language East African Development Center East African Magnet School Dar-Al Hijrah Mosque Faith centers (general, e.g., their neighborhood mosque) Hennepin County Libraries Hmong American Partnership Hmong Cultural Center Karen Organization of Minnesota International Institute Literacy Minnesota Minnesota Council of Churches Minnesota Interfaith Coalition on Immigration (ICOM) Movimiento Comunitario Neighborhood House Oromo Community of Minnesota (OCM) Open Path Resources (OPR) Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood for Empowerment St. Vincent de Paul
English as a Second Language (ESL)	East Side Learning Center ESL programs through schools Learning In Style (Accola) International Institute of Minnesota Literacy Minnesota
Health care	Niyyah Recovery Initiative People's Center St. Mary's
Housing	Avivo Faith communities (general, for immigrants who do not qualify for subsidized housing) Simpson Housing Services Sisters Need a Place (SNAP)
Post-secondary education or career programs	Hennepin Technical College Saint Paul College

Note. These organizations were identified by interviewees when asked, "Where do family, friends, or other people you know go for help or support with housing, English language skills, or other services areas," or "What are trusted organizations that you, your family/friends, and others from your community depend on?" This table does not provide an exhaustive list of all organizations trusted by Latin American and East African communities.

Ways to better support immigrant communities

Interviewees were asked how community leaders, organizations, and government agencies could better support the quality of life among immigrant communities. Responses were wide-ranging, and included common themes described below.

“It starts with the workers themselves.” Nearly all interviewees underscored how the cultural competency of staff members and the way they approach their work with community members is key to helping immigrant communities thrive. Staff members should center relationship-building with the communities they serve and approach those relationships in an inclusive and collaborative way (3 interviewees). In addition, transparent communication – sharing the impetus for approaching the community and the capacity of your organization to provide services – is imperative to building authentic relationships and programs that meet community needs (2 interviewees).

Include families in the conversation. Five interviewees suggested the direct involvement of families in shaping programs and strategies in order to help communities thrive. This approach includes listening to families to understand what they see in their community, learning how they interpret data or research, and gathering the ways they believe organizations should respond. In addition, organizations and leaders should provide opportunities to “take the temperature” of current programs or initiatives with families, learn about potential improvements, and celebrate successes (2 interviewees).

Provide more funding. Two interviewees expressed the need for more funding in general for immigrant services. Organizations who are providing vital services to immigrant communities need more consistent funding to hire and train staff, and continue their work in housing, education, and other needed areas.

Provide more transparency – why are you coming to me? Share how your system works. Tell us what you can do or not do – tell us your capacity as an organization. Build relationships with us, slow down. Don't just come to us to check a box, and say that you connected with the Somali community. Be honest.

Being more intentional on hearing what their needs are. Not sure how often we are asking them what needs aren't met, but more asking them how they can help them or what services work for them. Rephrasing – what are the needs that are harder for you to access. Taking temperature of how we are doing and what the community needs.

Number one is money – funding. It does exist, but [there's] not enough or it doesn't exist at all. If you have money to serve and hire, the community you serve will be better. That's number one.

Future needs and vision

While recognizing the constant change within immigrant communities in the Twin Cities and the difficulty of predicting future needs – especially given the potential for new waves of immigration and the impending election, which could impact funding for immigrant-related services and general sentiments around immigrants – interviewees reflected on the future of Latin American and East African communities in the Twin Cities.

Hopes and future needs:

- General optimism and hope for their communities (3 interviewees)
- Good paying, steady jobs for immigrant populations and better pathways to employment (2 interviewees)
- Clear pathways and less complicated processes for people with an undocumented status to obtain legal immigrant status (2 interviewees)
- Immigrant communities become more integrated in the Twin Cities community, and are allowed to be contributing members of the community (2 interviewees)
- Immigrant youth embrace their roots, tradition, and faith, while carving out a new identity for themselves as contributing members of their Twin Cities communities (2 interviewees)
- Economic vitality and financial stability within their communities (2 interviewees)
- More immigrant community members holding formal leadership positions and elected positions (2 interviewees), including more representation of immigrant groups in institutions of higher education and in different professions
- Better provision for basic needs and more development opportunities, including those related to education, mental/physical health, home ownership, and business ownership (2 interviewees)
- Immigration policy reform (1 interviewee)
- Better awareness of available resources and services for immigrant communities (1 interviewee)
- Nonprofits like theirs will not have a reason to exist anymore, because people's needs are met (1 interviewee)
- Immigrant communities maintain connections with their countries and communities of origin (1 interviewee)
- More culturally relevant services and organizations that hire people from their communities (1 interviewee)

Recommendations

From looking at the landscape of nonprofits and our interviews with key communities, we have identified three sets of recommendations outlined below. Each recommendation includes three ways that Accola can carry out these recommendations.

Invest time and resources into internal staff knowledge of the communities it serves

Many interviewees recommended that, as a first step, Accola reflect internally. The organization should understand the communities they serve, but first have a solid grasp on cultural sensitivity and competence, intercultural communication, and how to engage in bold, hard conversations internally and externally.

How Accola can do this:

1. ***Engage trainers and tools to understand and build cultural competence within the organization:*** Given the immigrant communities it intends to serve may “look different” from the internal staff and leadership of Accola, we strongly encourage the organization to start by reflecting internally to get a sense of its own cultural competence and directions for growth.

There are dozens of tools and local trainers available to gauge and develop greater cultural competence. Our own organization, for example, has adopted the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to identify, track, and engage in activities to develop cultural competence individually and as an organization over time.³ Our Minnesota Compass project maintains a searchable directory of racial equity programs and training providers that can help organizations combat racism and increase cultural competence (<https://www.mncompass.org/resources/racial-equity-directory?the-directory>).

2. ***Identify and build relationships with cultural brokers:*** A cultural broker is an individual who helps bridge gaps between two cultures in an organization by supporting the individual and organization. These individuals can help pave the pathway for Accola staff and board to do their best work to support the communities they are serving. In Latin American immigrant communities, cultural brokers may be particularly helpful to help understand programming that would address challenges

³ The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a tool to assess intercultural competence, the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural difference and commonalities. It measures individuals’ and groups’ placement along a continuum, ranging from monocultural mindsets through transitional orientation to intercultural mindsets (<https://www.idiinventory.com/>).

faced by undocumented immigrants. In East African immigrant communities, cultural brokers can help with reducing systemic barriers through inclusivity of faith and cultural beliefs.

3. ***Understand the reputation and influence of Christian faith-based organizations:***

Although Accola is not affiliated with the Catholic Church or Christian faith, we understand it to be a faith-founded organization with values guided by the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (SSJC). This distinction from SSJC, the Catholic Church, and the Christian faith may not (yet) be apparent to external organizations, potential partners, or existing or new clients or service recipients, especially as Accola carries on programs created by its preceding Catholic organization.

Therefore, it is important to understand and acknowledge the range of experiences immigrant communities have had with Christian organizations, broadly, and Catholic organizations, specifically. While immigrant communities remain appreciative of the many services provided by Catholic organizations, both Latin American and East African interviewees mentioned negative experiences with specific Catholic institutions that negatively influenced their perceptions of these organizations, broadly. None of these perceptions were directed at Accola specifically or by name, but it is important to understand and address these mixed experiences as the organization deepens its relationships and work with immigrant communities.

An immediate step:

As a first step, Accola's staff and board could review and identify a racial equity program and training provider to work with the organization in an ongoing capacity. Cultural competence is critical to an organization positioning itself to work and serve across cultures, and nurturing the organization's cultural competence will require ongoing reflection, development, and practice across staff and leadership.

Build strong relationships with communities to gain, foster, and maintain trust

To understand the needs and wants of immigrant communities, Accola should take time to build relationships and partner intentionally with immigrant communities. Authentically engaging with immigrant communities, listening to their needs and hopes directly, and incorporating community voices into planned programming will be critical to improving outcomes in immigrant communities and fulfilling the mission of Accola. This engagement with immigrant communities must be meaningful, collaborative, and ongoing.

How Accola can do this:

1. ***One-on-one conversations with the organizations interviewed:*** All 12 individuals interviewed were interested in learning more about Accola and its intended work serving refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seeking individuals. Several interviewees mentioned that they already have a relationship with Accola. Most of the other organizations would like to meet with its staff and board personally to build a relationship and have a deeper dialogue about the questions asked in the interview.
2. ***Work with people on the ground:*** Following the one-on-one conversations above, Accola will be in a better position to build relationships and partner intentionally with immigrant communities. Identifying and working with cultural brokers may be one strategy, but Accola may also consider ways to incorporate immigrant and/or client voices in their staffing and board membership. Some ways that can be done include having a community advisory group or collaborating with different organizations in programming (such as Meals on Wheels, ESL classes, and general presentations). Interviewees highly recommended that Accola support immigrant communities by recognizing their humanity and lifting up their needs and hopes through empowerment and collaboration.
3. ***Strengthen current programs in the organization and other community organizations rather than creating new programming:*** Many services and resources are already available in the community, but lack capacity and funding. Rather than creating more programming, Accola could support, supplement, and expand existing programming in the community. This would begin with developing solid relationships and then working together to design and provide the additional support that community members are seeking.

That said, if Accola is interested in creating new programming, it is important that the organization understand who is already providing services and where they have an established community presence to avoid duplicate efforts. This needs assessment is a first step in understanding the landscape of service providers in this space, but falls short of outlining the full ecosystem of organizations, places of worship, advocacy groups, and informal resources supporting and lifting up immigrant communities in the Twin Cities.

An immediate step:

While all interviewees were interested in meeting with Accola's board and leadership, we recommend starting with two to three conversations with select interviewees. For example, Accola might consider inviting interviewee(s) to a board meeting, hosting a short meet-

and-greet between Accola and a few external organizations, or finding a time and comfortable space to share food, which often tends to bring community together. Wilder can provide further guidance on selecting interviewees to engage first, if helpful.

Consider additional research and consultation

While we recommend taking the time to make intentional investments in the first two sets of recommendations, there could also be opportunities for more research to better understand the needs of immigrant communities in the Twin Cities. This report only starts to describe the needs, strengths, and challenges of immigrant communities in the Twin Cities area and the organizations meeting these needs. Below are several recommendations for additional research that could supplement the findings in this report.

How Accola can do this:

1. ***Network map:*** A network map outlines the types and strength of connections between organizations and could aid in Accola’s identification of gaps and organizations with which to partner. Using the list of organizations identified in the landscape analysis, this type of research would involve collecting information on the strength and nature of ties between these organizations to identify where specific services and programming are complementary, duplicated, or do not exist. A network map can also help Accola identify which organizations serve as “hubs” for particular services or a range of services in immigrant communities.
2. ***Ongoing strategic planning and implementation:*** This report is one component in supporting Accola’s strategic planning process. We encourage the organization to continue having conversations to build the organization’s vision, mission, and goals. The organization may also consider contracting with an external consultant to finalize, implement, and track components of the plan.
3. ***Build evaluation into programming:*** Research takes more than one step, and it is important to implement evaluation into Accola’s programming. Evaluation will help the organization identify strengths in programming and opportunities for improvement and growth.

An immediate step:

Given that Accola is in its nascent stages, implementation of its strategic plan (option #2 above) and tools to track progress on strategic priorities (option #3 above) are the most logical places to start. The organization’s leadership and board have a strong grasp on its

mission, vision, and values, from which will follow its strategic priorities and accountabilities.

Concluding thought

Findings from this landscape analysis suggest that there is no shortage of need in the landscape of organizations serving East African and Latin American immigrants in the Twin Cities metro area. Rather, there is ample opportunity for Accola to weave itself into the social fabric of these organizations, providing services that align with and complement the existing slate of services. As a brand new organization, Accola is perhaps in a more advantageous position than established organizations to be nimble, flexible, and respond to the needs of immigrant communities as they arise. In particular, as the board and leadership consider directions for future work, there are opportunities to be an agile, critical organization in complementing existing services and filling gaps as they emerge.

Appendix

Nonprofits providing services to immigrants in the Twin Cities region

A1. Education services (alone)

Organization	Website	Specific programs
Caring Friends Network	http://caringfriendsnetwork.org/	Homework tutoring, English practice, driving training
Cedar Riverside Adult Education Collaborative	https://adulteducation.riversideplazata.net/	ESL classes
Centro Tyrone Guzman	https://www.centromn.org/	Early childhood program, Intergenerational learning community
East African Integration Center	https://www.eafricic.org/	Youth empowerment and skills development
International Education Center	https://iecmnnesota.org/index.html	English education
Ka Joog	https://www.kajoog.org/	Education, mentoring
Keystone Community Services	https://keystoneservices.org/about/	Youth activities and after school tutoring, youth job readiness, teen tech center
Literacy Minnesota	https://www.literacymn.org/	Adult literacy classes, adult literacy hotline, preschool for children of adult learners, parenting program, digital literacy workshops
Minnesota Somali Community Center	https://mnsomalicommunitycenter.org/	Community-based tutoring, workforce development, senior services, domestic violence advocacy
Minnesota Africans United	https://www.mnafricansunited.org	Education programs
MORE	https://www.more-empowerment.org	English classes, work preparedness
MTA Center - Mothers Tutoring Academy	https://mtacenter.org/	Advancement and test preparation, academic coaching, tutoring
Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota	https://slcmn.org/about-us/	Scholarships, STEM programming for youth, school supply distribution
Somali American Parent Association (SAPA)	https://www.facebook.com/mnsapa/	Parent engagement, educational system navigation

Source. Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Note. Nonprofits that provide education and housing services are outlined in Table A3.

A2. Housing services (alone)

Organization	Website	Specific programs
Aeon	https://www.aeon.org/homepage/everyone-deserves-a-home/	Affordable housing provider
Bridging	https://bridging.org/	Housing furnishings
Casa Guadalupana	https://www.casaguadalupana.org	Shelter
East African Housing Services	https://eastafricanhousingervices.com/	Housing transition services, sustaining services, consultation services
Esperanza United	https://esperanzaunited.org/en/	Domestic violence emergency shelter
Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation	http://www.gmhchousing.org/	Single family homeownership program
IAFR Jonathan House	https://jonathanhouse.org/	Shelter and supportive housing provider
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota - Refugee Services	https://www.lssmn.org/services/refugees	Housing services and support
Missions Inc. Programs	www.missionsinc.org	Housing services, mission nursing homes
Sakan	https://sakanresources.org/ABOUT_US	Homeownership education
Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity	https://www.tchabitat.org	Housing builder and rehabilitator, homeownership program, home repair for low-income families/veterans/seniors, foreclosure prevention
Volunteers of America Minnesota and Wisconsin	https://www.voamnwi.org/	Affordable housing provider
ZACAH	https://www.zacah.org	Transitional home, rental assistance for refugees, emergency financial assistance, hotel to housing program

Source. Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Note. Nonprofits that provide education and housing services are outlined in Table A3.

A3. Education and housing services

Organization	Website	Specific programs
African Career, Education, and Resources Inc. (ACER)	https://www.acerinc.org/about	Housing resources, renter protection community
African Community Services	https://africanscs.org/	Finding housing, achieving stability
African Development Center of Minnesota	https://www.adcminnesota.org/	First-time home buyer workshop, Individual counseling
African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS)	https://www.aeds-mn.org/about	Home buying
AFDN	https://afdnminnesota.org/	Homeless prevention, after-school tutoring, financial education and credit counseling
African Immigrants Community Services (AICS)	https://aicsmn.org/	Housing search, ELL enrollment
Al-Maa'uun	https://www.almaauun.org/	Supportive affordable housing, emergency rental and utilities assistance
Arrive Ministries	https://arriveministries.org/	Resettlement support, employment counseling, citizenship support, immigration legal services, education classes
Catholic Charities Twin Cities	https://cctwincities.org/	Education and enrichment, rapid-rehousing, senior support, shelter and transitional housing, youth services
CommonBond Communities	https://commonbond.org/	Youth and teen programming, affordable housing
Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES)	https://clues.org/	Homebuyer workshops, renter counseling, homeowner training
Darul Uloom Center	http://www.darululoomcenter.org/	After school programs and college prep courses, immigration and interpretation services, citizenship and voter education classes, connecting to and support with housing resources
Igbo Women League of Minnesota	http://www.sussmike.com/Home.aspx	Homeless shelter program, bi-cultural youth mentoring
International Institute of Minnesota	https://iimn.org/	Driver's education, English, work readiness
Isuroon	https://isuroon.org/	Housing navigation, eviction prevention, HUD counseling, ESL, cultural orientation
Minnesota African Women's Association	http://mawanet.org/index.php?submenu=home&src=	Assistance with housing applications, electricity, phone or water shut offs, African Girls' Initiative for Leadership and Empowerment

Organization	Website	Specific programs
Minnesota Council of Churches - Refugee Services	https://www.mnchurches.org/what-we-do/refugee-services	Employment counseling, orientation classes, immigration assistance and legal services, community navigators
Neighborhood House	https://neighborhoodhousemn.org/	Adult education, crisis financial assistance, housing stability, youth literacy
New American Development Center	https://www.nadcmn.org/	Assistance with rentals, utilities, mortgages
OCM – Oromo Community Of Minnesota	https://oromomn.org/	Increase home and community-based services, support capacity
Our Saviour's Community Services	https://oscs-mn.org/	English language education, emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing
PRISM	https://prismmpls.org/	Housing assistance, providing school supplies
Project for Pride in Living	https://www.ppl-inc.org/	Career training, alternative high school, high school completion, LEAP initiative, affordable housing provider, rental subsidies and supportive services
Somali Community Resettlement Services	https://www.somalcrs.org/	New arrival support, housing, transportation, skills training, adult basic education
Somali Success	https://www.somalisuccess.org/	Adult education, affordable housing, education support for youth
YMCA of the North - Immigrant and Refugee Support	https://www.ymcanorth.org/impact/immigrant_refugee_support	Academic and career guidance/coaching, education for new arrivals, legal services, resettlement network services

Source. Wilder Research scan and analysis of data from ProPublica, Guidestar/Candid, MDH Community Based Organizations directory, and MN Attorney General Charity Search, [5/10/24-5/24/24].

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank all of the nonprofits and community members interviewed for our study.

In addition, we'd like to thank the following Wilder Research staff that have contributed to this report:

Marilyn Conrad

Rachel Fields

Choua Her

Justin Hollis

Heather Loch

Jenna Tomlinson

Jacqueline Zhang

Kerry Walsh

Wilder Research, a division of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is a nationally respected nonprofit research and evaluation group. For more than 100 years, Wilder Research has gathered and interpreted facts and trends to help families and communities thrive, get at the core of community concerns, and uncover issues that are overlooked or poorly understood.

451 Lexington Parkway North

Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104

651-280-2700 | www.wilderresearch.org

Wilder Research®

Information. Insight. Impact.

