This report represents Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition Inc. (MIRA Coalition)'s responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of BBB Wise Giving Alliance, GuideStar USA Inc, and Independent Sector. Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

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Mission:
The Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) protects and promotes the rights and opportunities of immigrants and refugees across the Commonwealth. MIRA advances this mission through education and training, leadership development, organizing, strategic communications, policy analysis and advocacy. Today, MIRA fights for the rights of nearly 1 million foreign born people in the state, who make up 15% of our population and 18% of MA's workforce.
The content of this Charting Impact Report is the sole product and responsibility of Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition Inc. (MIRA Coalition). This report does not in any way represent an endorsement from Independent Sector, BBB Wise Giving Alliance, or GuideStar, nor does it represent fulfillment of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance's Standards for Charity Accountability. For more information on Charting Impact, visit www.guidestar.org/chartingimpact
1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

The MIRA Coalition's mission is to promote and enhance the rights and integration of immigrants and refugees in Massachusetts. Together with our 130+ members, as well as hundreds of allies, we fight for the rights of the nearly 1 million foreign-born people who comprise 14.9% of Massachusetts' population and 17.9% of our workforce. MIRA combines member training, community education, policy advocacy, institutional organizing, academic and community-based research, and strategic communications, to drive policy change and on-the-ground initiatives toward our long-term goal of full integration of immigrants and refugees into the civic, social and economic fabric of their new communities, cities, and country. Our success, of course, will manifest itself in myriad ways, ranging from quantitative measures (number of naturalized immigrants, decreased high school drop-out rates, numbers of immigrants expanding or launching businesses), to more nuanced indicators (feeling welcome and able to contribute to larger communities, feeling safe on the streets). MIRA's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan stated as a top priority the creation of a new MIRA division to focus on helping newcomers achieve well-being and financial security, and to fully contribute to the economic, social and civic fabric of America. Thus was born the New Americans Integration Institute—officially kicked off in October 2011 at a Boston Foundation event hosted by Governor Patrick. The Governor simultaneously proclaimed October Immigrant Entrepreneurship Month. The two announcements—to an audience including community-based partners, academia, practitioners, and the press—were joined by a common theme: supporting the importance of immigrants to the economic, social and cultural richness of the Commonwealth and the nation. Since its inception, the Institute has conducted policy-oriented research, together with on-the-ground integration initiatives that have helped drive that research. We have employed communications and public events to enhance the image of immigrants in our public discourse and to drive home their contributions to the economic vitality, cultural richness, and human capital of our Commonwealth. As described below under Question 2, several initiatives underway have made significant inroads into forging the cross-sector partnerships necessary for sustainable progress. We have already served hundreds of immigrants via those initiatives. These initiatives support the development of policies, programs and partnerships that advance citizenship, immigrant entrepreneurship, career pathways for immigrant professionals, ESOL and civics instruction, access to early education and care, K-12 achievement and access to higher education, and local Welcoming Massachusetts efforts.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

The Institute represents MIRA's response to lack of adequate policies facilitating immigrant integration, and to anti-immigrant vitriol that poisons our public discourse. By galvanizing state, private, academic and non-profit partnerships, the Institute drives policy change while implementing on-the-ground initiatives that have helped drive that research. We have employed communications and public events to enhance the image of immigrants in our public discourse and to drive home their contributions to the economic vitality, cultural richness, and human capital of our Commonwealth. As described below under Question 2, several initiatives underway have made significant inroads into forging the cross-sector partnerships necessary for sustainable progress. We have already served hundreds of immigrants via those initiatives. These initiatives support the development of policies, programs and partnerships that advance citizenship, immigrant entrepreneurship, career pathways for immigrant professionals, ESOL and civics instruction, access to early education and care, K-12 achievement and access to higher education, and local Welcoming Massachusetts efforts.
3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?

Internal resources Director: Jeff Gross, PhD, MIRA’s New Americans Integration Institute Director, oversees implementation of all Institute initiatives, builds myriad cross-sector alliances to support those initiatives, and develops research instruments, training curricula and program evaluation tools. Jeff joined MIRA after many years in academia and high technology and extensive public policy research in workforce development, immigrant entrepreneurship, and educational issues impacting Massachusetts’ immigrant communities. Jeff works very closely with MIRA’s Organizing Director, our Federal and State Policy Directors (both of whom are attorneys), and our Communications Director. Fundraising: MIRA benefits from a few longtime funders who strategize with us to push the field of immigrant integration and to support us in implementing those strategies. The more project-oriented funders see MIRA as the go-to organization to accomplish their priorities, such as improving health care access for immigrants or supporting immigrant children and families in early education and care settings. National funders fund MIRA to develop initiatives that can serve as models for replication in other states. For example, the J.M. Kaplan fund chose MIRA as one of three state immigrant advocacy coalitions to receive a grant to improve the state infrastructure for high-skilled immigrant integration. External resources New Americans Agenda: In 2008, MIRA was designated by Governor Patrick to conduct community-based research that would serve as the basis for the Massachusetts New Americans Agenda. MIRA invited to the same table immigrants, MIRA members, elected and appointed officials, and faith leaders to identify and prioritize immigrant and refugee interests and needs. The capacity to bring these stakeholders together in an intimate setting demonstrates MIRA’s unique capacities as well as the respectful relationships built over many years. The New Americans Agenda has served as a model for similar state immigrant integration policy platforms in several other states. Strategic Communications: MIRA works with local, state and national allies to craft messages designed to impact specific target constituencies. Importantly, MIRA’s reputation as an organization that can tactfully and intelligently debate the merits of differing perspectives brings invitations to appear on right-leaning programs and other outlets “across the aisle” that enable us to speak to a broad audience. Access to Lawmakers: MIRA's balanced approach has also facilitated trusting relationships with legislators of all stripes, who rely on our staff’s policy analysis and our drafting of bills that are recognized as reflecting deep expertise and assessment of political realities. Our Federal Policy Director also has the ear of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials, enabling him to appeal on behalf of immigrants seeking citizenship or at risk of being unfairly detained or deported.

4. How will we know if we're making progress?

MIRA measures progress toward our goals along multiple dimensions appropriate to each program and to our larger aim—promoting equity and opportunity for immigrants in Massachusetts. Qualitative measures can include productive relationships with natural allies and with potentially contentious ones (e.g., law enforcement), number of op-eds by senior policy staff, number of television debates with anti-immigrant spokespersons, and the dissemination of research and policy papers. Some of these measures are continuous, e.g., media placements and their impact on the public. Others, such as key events or convenings, represent milestones that drive and coordinate other efforts (such as research reports or workshops) and become the context for featuring those successes. For example, quarterly Institute reports track progress against the Institute’s agenda for integration of high-skilled immigrants. Acknowledging our accomplishments, a March 2013 award from the J.M. Kaplan Fund is driving research, outreach, training and convenings this year to advance our advocacy blueprint, support ongoing policy analysis, and build service provider networks. Studies on the immigrant workforce, barriers to naturalization, and opportunities for immigrant professional integration in our state have been completed, reviewed by
outside experts, and posted online. The Institute also received a grant from the Migration Policy Institute to support regional field research into immigrant parent engagement in EEC settings. The Institute tracks quantitative outcomes such as numbers of individuals served in direct service contexts, and participant evaluations of trainings. As noted above, citizenship clinics yielded: 1407 completed applications, 811 fee waivers arranged, and $1,950,000 in fee and attorney savings for participants. Eight Early Education and Care workshops reached 400+ participants from 250 organizations. Evaluations rated the workshops at 4.37 out of 5. Key quantitative milestones in this context would include monthly citizenship clinics, five yearly EEC trainings, and quarterly reviews of AmeriCorps service outcomes. All tracking is ongoing (in the case of citizenship and AmeriCorps, using online data logging tools) and reviewed by interdepartmental teams quarterly. Outcomes inform both continuous improvement efforts and ongoing review of project goals. For example, noting some clients’ slow rates of follow up and completion of naturalization applications, we instituted a more intensive program of client tracking and case management that has almost doubled our rate of application submissions over the past six months. In another example, seeing relatively low representation of home-based EEC providers in our earlier trainings, we will hold a Saturday workshop to accommodate this important audience, and will review training materials to ensure program needs relevant to this audience are highlighted.

5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?

The Institute’s progress towards near-term objectives demonstrates to us at once the needs and the potential challenges related to our long terms goals: to improve the program and policy infrastructure than can advance opportunity and inclusion for the million foreign born residents of Massachusetts. For example, outcomes of our citizenship clinics and research into barriers to naturalization have both strengthened our approach and led us to new partnerships—e.g., working with a MIRA member in Western Massachusetts to extend our group processing model to underserved rural areas, supported by a $250,000 grant from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This work has also driven MIRA’s national advocacy, through our leadership in the National Partnership for New Americans, for USCIS to reduce and streamline fee requirements—efforts that have succeeded in prompting the agency to review its fee structures in the coming year. Other projects, such as our immigrant entrepreneurship initiative, began with ambitious expectations of primary research into best practice models as well as trainings for MIRA members in small business development. While we were able to achieve our initial goals here, we learned in the process that, given the scope and complexity of the issues, we needed to find ways to extend our capacity and expertise. As a result, the Institute has strengthened partnerships (some existing, some new) with research institutions, government agencies, and community-based organizations that are already active in this arena. Collaboration has included sharing of resources and expertise while partnering on research projects, joint program initiatives, and stakeholder convenings (including a conference of gateway city economic development institutions planned for Fall 2014). The Institute’s combination of strong community partnerships and long-standing connections with state government uniquely positions MIRA and the Institute to “connect the dots,” both with respect to entrepreneurs and community groups navigating the web of technical assistance providers, and in helping providers themselves (nonprofit, private and public) collaborate to maximize program and policy impact. Perhaps most fundamentally, the Institute continues to learn the importance of integrating our initiatives closely with those of MIRA’s other divisions, always taking into account how the Institute’s ends, means and long-term mission support and are supported by those of other parts of the organization. A good example is the Institute’s messaging in support of the organizing team’s Welcoming Massachusetts initiative, which focuses on breaking down barriers between immigrant and native-born populations through direct community engagement and neighborhood outreach. The Institute looks forward to increased direct program collaborations in the future that will support these mutual efforts.