



Breaking Bread and Building Bridges **Potluck and Town Hall Meeting**

We're inviting you to host an event that is both potluck and town hall meeting—an opportunity to invite your neighbors to share a meal and to speak about how current immigration policies affect their lives.

We hope that each Breaking Bread and Building Bridges event will bring together a broad range of the people that make up your community—people of different faiths and cultures, service-providers and faith advocates, recent immigrants and long-time residents—to break bread together, and to break barriers through the invisible walls that often build up between neighbors who don't know one another and the barriers to justice faced by immigrants who are caught within our broken immigration system. Breaking Bread and Building Bridges events will be taking place around the country from February 1 to April 1.

The Purpose of Breaking Bread /Town Hall Events

- Get to know your neighbors, build stronger relationships, and better understand how current immigration policies affect the entire community
- Build relationships with local immigration organizations or coalition and ask them to plan the event together
- Garner press attention and raise public awareness about the importance of this issue – the presence of elected officials may increase turnout and press coverage
- Opportunity to strategize amongst a coalition of organizations and make a plan of action

If you know how to host a good potluck we know you can host a successful Breaking Bread and Building Bridges event! Gather a group of leaders to plan with you, read through this toolkit for tips on organizing your event, and take this next step with us on the road to strengthening relationships and building community.

Ensuring a Successful Event

- Invite other local groups who are touched by immigration to plan with you such as: congregations or other faith groups, agencies that serve immigrants, immigrant associations, civil rights groups and labor organizations
- Research and identify the key local issues on immigration
- Think about who the key decision makers are for your campaign. Will you work on local or state issues, such as winning drivers' licenses for undocumented people or will your focus be the national push for compassionate immigration reform?
- Reach out to the broader community and spreading the word about the event
- Generate media coverage of the event in the local press
- Plan for next steps after your event so that you can engage participants in your event in continued relationship building and organizing for immigrants rights

Assembling a Coordinating Committee

To begin, we suggest that you set up a coordinating committee comprised of diverse representatives from interested churches and community organizations. Consider who you would like to have participate in your event, and invite people who are leaders within those groups to help you plan. Consult congregational leaders, clergy or lay, and **come up with a list of what congregations and community groups to invite.** Ideally, the potluck will be interfaith. It's also important that community groups that include and/or represent the people most affected by immigration laws, policies, and practices be invited.

If you are hosting an event for your faith community, it's still good to think in terms of diversity—invite members of the youth group and the women's society, the men's prayer circle and the social action committee, for example. Also think about those who have different areas of experience in the life of your faith community and invite them to help you plan—greeters, kitchen coordinators, education team members, property committee members, etc.

- **Roles and Responsibilities** within the coordinating committee for the following:
 - Issuing invitations and follow-up on invitations to other faith leaders, groups, and elected officials
 - Internal congregational publicity and promotion
 - Community publicity and promotion, including social media
 - Set-up and clean-up coordinators
 - Greeters, highly visible signs inside and out for the benefit of visitors
 - Media strategy: press releases and calls to newspaper, radio, TV, social media promotion
 - A person to do the official welcome
 - A moderator or master of ceremonies to introduce the host, speakers and special guests, move through the agenda, facilitate Q&A, etc.

Location, location, location

Examples of venue options include churches, synagogues, meeting houses, school auditoriums, or community centers. You'll need a place that can accommodate eating, informal conversation, and a more formal program of speakers and discussion.

Consider the following when you choose your location:

- Does it fit the tone and purpose of your event?
- Is it easily accessible?
- Does it have the proper sound equipment and electrical outlet access?
- Be realistic about your attendance, and choose a location that is appropriate to the size of your event—you don't want to be in a room for 80 if your attendance is 10
- Make sure you have all the appropriate permissions to be in the area where your event is planned

Identifying speakers

Consider identifying 2-3 speakers to give personal testimonies about the way our broken immigration system has affected their lives. Panelists could include recent or established immigrants, long-term residents, day laborers, members of a faith community that works closely with immigrants, teachers, local officials, or business owners from the community. (See the Program Template for more information on choosing speakers.)

Establishing a time frame in which to accomplish the event and the assigned tasks leading up to the event. It is generally helpful to work backwards from the date of the event and create a written plan for when tasks will be completed.

Identifying your target audience(s).

It is important to identify the congregations, community organizations, and other groups that you hope to engage in your event and plan outreach and publicity accordingly. In order to create a powerful, rich event, we suggest that you pay special attention to reaching out to congregations and communities that are from differing theological, racial/ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Examples of different types of groups may include: faith communities and houses of worship in your area, local policy-makers, representatives of policy groups, direct service providers, local community and political leaders, college and university students, area youth groups, social and civic organizations, and at-large community members. Remember to reach out to as many friends and allies in your community as you can!

Developing Follow-Up Plans (See "Suggestions for Follow-Up" Section IX in below event template.)

It's all in the details! As you move through the seven steps above, your plans will begin to take shape—now it's time to take care of the DETAILS! We've listed several work areas below. You may want to appoint sub-committees for each area, or your coordinating committee might work as a whole to accomplish them.

Food

- To ensure you have enough food at your event, enlist the cooks in your community to bring a designated list of staples, then expect food from participants to fill out the menu.
- Consult with your host to make plans regarding how food will be served: Are there enough tables to set food on? Will there be a designated drink table? Who will make the coffee? Are plates and silverware available at your location, or does someone need to bring it? Will you use disposable items?
- Consider food-related needs of the various communities who will be present at your event—don't overlook the importance of labeling food vegetarian, vegan, kosher, or halal!
- Setting up your location to create a space where people will eat together in small groups, then perhaps move into a more formal presentation of panel speakers or a film might be tricky. Think about the best way to set up the room to accommodate each activity on your agenda.
- Recruit volunteers to help with food-related set-up and clean-up.

Program

- Plan and organize all logistics related to your event's program—small group conversation, panel discussion, keynote speaker, film, Q&A, etc. (See Program Template on page 4 for guidance.)
- Make sure that the program of the event allows opportunities for constituents plan how they will communicate support for comprehensive immigration reform to their elected officials. Remember, as members of a faith community, we have a distinct voice to contribute to conversation about immigration—make sure your program speaks with that voice!
- Produce any program bulletins.
- Work with venue host on music, audio, and video logistics concerns.

Speaker Preparation

- Send invitations to appropriate local speakers, clergy, etc.
- Send confirmation letters to invitees, and make sure they have all the details concerning their presentation at your event—the agenda and audience, how long they should plan to speak, if they should expect to answer questions, etc.
- Serve as main contact for speakers before, during, and after event
- If necessary, plan to give speakers an opportunity to practice telling their stories at the location and using any sound equipment that will be set up for your event.
- Consider designating a moderator for your event to introduce the host, speakers and special guests, move through the agenda of your event, facilitate Q&A, etc.

Press and Publicity

- See the *Communications Packet for inviting the media and earning press attention at LINK*
- Designate one or two people as the main local contact(s) for press for your event.
- Create a list of all the media outlets you want to invite to your event, including their contact information.
- Write and distribute all local program/event press releases
- Designate an individual or team who will manage the media presence at the town hall meeting—greet reporters, make sure they have your press release and any other relevant documents, arrange for them to speak with panel presenters or other speakers, etc.
- Develop and distribute flyers, bulletin inserts, and leaflets about the event
- Work with local congregations, local and regional faith-based organizations, colleges, seminaries, and other institutions to get the word out about the events in church bulletins, newsletters, list serves, community bulletin boards, etc.
- Register your event on the Interfaith Immigration Coalition at this [LINK](#), and let us know at least two weeks in advance if you'd like our assistance in reaching out to the press.

Breaking Bread Event Program Template

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition offers the following template as a guide to creating the program for your *Breaking Bread and Building Bridges* potluck. Your committee should feel free to alter the program as you see fit, taking into consideration the level of participation you have decided upon. As local organizers, your committee will have ideas and suggestions for crafting the program in a way that addresses the specific dynamics and interests of your community. Feel free to take the vision below and run with it!

- I. **Welcome and Introduction (5 Minutes)** – The *host, a local religious or community leader*, welcomes everyone and sets the stage for the evening. The host should emphasize the importance of getting to know one’s neighbors in a community, especially for people of faith who are called to love their neighbors as we love ourselves. The host should also share the agenda for the evening, and may wish to begin with an opening prayer.

- II. **Get food! (10-20 minutes)**- What’s a potluck if you don’t get to eat (and eat while it’s hot)? Remember that—especially if you have a large crowd—going through a food line can take a long time. If you are able, organize volunteers to label the food as people drop it off so that there are fewer questions over what is in the food, if it is vegetarian, vegan, halal, etc.

- III. **Dinner and Dialogue (20-30 minutes)**- Throughout history, sharing food has been—and is—one of the most common ways to engage others in conversation and dialogue. Use the time when people are eating to get new communities to interact with one another. Some ideas are:
 - a. **Migration story circle**- Have people eat in groups of 4-8 persons. Encourage participants to sit with at least one person that they do not know. Then, as people eat, go around the circle and have each person share a story of when they migrated, whether it was from one city to another, from one part of the state or country to another, or from country to country. Ask them to share what that move felt like, why they did it, and whether it was hard or easy.
 - b. **Local history discussion**- Have people eat in small groups. Try and create intergenerational groups, as well as intermingle old and new residents in your town. Have some of the people who have lived in your area a long time talk about how the town used to be and how it has change. Who lived in the area in the past? Who lives there now? What factors led to those demographic changes? What influences have helped shape your town’s culture? Then ask some people who have moved there more recently to talk about their first perceptions of the town.
 - c. **Personal history story circle**- Have people eat in groups of 4-8 people. Encourage people to sit with others that they do not know or do not know well. As people eat, have them go around the circle talking about how their family arrived to the United States or to the part of the country where they now live. See if people know any of the individual stories of their family’s migration, or if they know the history of why they came.

- IV. **Overview of the Current State of Immigration Policy (10-15 minutes)**-A *religious or community leader* provides an overview of the current state of immigration policy and how it affects your community. (The IIC will help provide fact sheets, message points, and national statistics. Your local planning committee should compile local/statewide information about immigration issues that affect your community.)

- V. **Personal Testimonies (15 minutes)**- *Have 2-3 individuals from the community* share how the current broken immigration system has affected their lives.
 - Speakers should be diverse, not only representing the main constituencies who have much at stake in this debate. Reach out to parents of children who have married an immigrant and are not able to live in the United States, naturalized citizens, US citizen children, refugees, and asylum seekers.

- Remember that you may need to leave as much time for translation as for the testimony itself.
- Both your speakers and your translators should feel comfortable speaking to large crowds. It's not always easy sharing about personal experiences, so make sure that s/he is up to it.
- Speakers should be able to keep to the allotted time frame. It's important that you don't choose speakers who will go on and on and on.

VI. Keynote Speech by Faith Leader/Panel Discussion/Film Screening/Immigration Quiz Game (20 minutes for a speech/film length)- This portion of the program depends on how your community has decided to organize your potluck. See [...] portion of this handbook for more information.

Film suggestions:

- Short documentary on Postville, produced by Jewish Community Action (MN)
- Made in L.A.

VII. Question and Answer (15-20 minutes)- Following the key presentation of your potluck, have the host (or other moderator) open it up for questions. If you are hosting a speaker or panel, the questions should be directed directly at them. In particular, if you are hosting an elected official, your committee may wish to have questions directed only at them. If you are hosting a film or immigration game, it may be more fruitful to break into small groups for discussion.

VIII. Strategy Sessions (15 minutes in Small Groups)- Strategy should always have the following categories Goals, Organizational Considerations, Allies/ Opponents, Targets- Decision Makers, Tactics-Actions

- In small groups begin to think about the impact of broken immigration policy in your town, what can you do to change the system so that it is more equitable?
- What are current campaigns in your state? Are there local activities already happening for state-led DREAM Acts (equitable tuition), drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants, TRUST Act efforts?
- Do you have to defend and stop an anti-immigrant bill from passing?
- Is there a senator or representative that will have significant influence in passing comprehensive immigration reform? How can you influence that Decision Maker?

IX. Encourage people to follow-up on the potluck- (15 Min)

- Track the issue in the paper and respond to articles on immigration by submitting op-eds
- Plan a Vigil for Family Unity outside the office of a decision maker
- Write a letter to the editor
- Call US representatives and senators
- Email US representatives and senators
- Meet with US representatives and senators

X. Wrap up with a Closing Prayer (5 minutes)- A local religious or community leader closes the event with a brief prayer for humane comprehensive immigration reform that would restore integrity to the US tradition of welcoming immigrants and provide real solutions to a broken immigration system.

XI. Clean up! Cleaning up after a potluck can be a lot of work. Make sure your committee solicits volunteers to help out or at least divides the work among its members.