

The background of the entire page is a light blue grid. On the left side, there is a vertical image of the Statue of Liberty. The statue is green and stands on a stone pedestal. To the left of the statue, there is a white line drawing of the statue's structure, resembling a blueprint or architectural drawing. The statue is holding a tablet in its left hand and a torch in its right hand.

# Blueprint for Immigrant New York

November 2017





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The New York Immigration Coalition expresses our deep gratitude to the JPB Foundation, Durst Family Foundation, Altman Foundation and the Fund for New Citizens for their critical support of this project. We are also especially indebted to Karthick Ramakrishnan and Allan Colbern for their extensive guidance in and support of the Blueprint; as well as to Suzette Brooks Masters for her wisdom and insights.

This work would not have been possible without the NYIC's Board of Directors: Angela Fernandez (Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights), Annetta Seecharran (Chhaya CDC), Bakary Tandia (African Services Committee), Carola Bracco (Neighbors Link), Carmen Maquilon (Catholic Charities Diocese of Rockville Centre), Elsie St. Louis (Haitian Americans United for Progress), Estela Vazquez (Local 1199 - SEIU), Gail Golden (Rockland Immigration Coalition), Gonzalo Mercado (La Colmena), Guillermo Chacon (Latino Commission on AIDS), Kevin Douglas (United Neighborhood Houses), Lewis Papenfuse (Worker Justice Center of New York), Luz Tavarez (Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New York), Mae Lee (Chinese Progressive Association), Manuel Castro (NICE), Margo Paz (UJA-Federation of New York), Megan Chambers (Laundry, Distribution and Food Service Union Joint Board, Workers United), Muzaffar Chishti (Migration Policy Institute at NYU School of Law), Mohammad Razvi (Council of Peoples Organizations), Patrick Young (CARECEN), and Suzette Brooks Masters; as well as the NYIC Immigrant Leaders Council: Afua Atta-Mensah (Community Voices Heard), Albert Fox Cahn (CAIR-NY), Aliya Nelson (The Black Institute), Amaha Kassa (African Communities Together), Andrea Callan (Worker Justice Center of New York), Aracelis Lucero (Masa), Mario Russell (Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New York), Carmen Maquilon (Catholic Charities, Diocese of Rockville Centre), Carola Bracco (Neighbors Link), Gamileh Jamil (Access of Western New York), Gonzalo Mercado (La Colmena), Herve Comeau (Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County), James Hong (Minkwon Center for Community Action), Jessica García (RWDSU), Judit Criado Fiuza (Mercy Center), Karen Andolina Scott (Journey's End Refugee Services), Mae Lee (Chinese Progressive Association), Manuel Castro (NICE), Maria Lizardo (NMIC), Mohammed Razvi (Council of Peoples Organizations), Ninaj Raoul (Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees), Nyasa Hickey (Brooklyn Defender Services), Pabitra Benjamin (Adhikaar), Patrick Young (CARECEN), Rama Issa-Ibrahim (Arab American Association of New York), Wayne Ho (Chinese-American Planning Council), Ye Myo Aung (Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo and Burmese Community Services).

And finally, a heartfelt thank you to our member organizations and partners, who helped us craft our vision and goals, including those who attended our regional roundtables across the state, and those who volunteered their time for valuable one on one or small group interviews: *Advocates for Children of New York, California Immigrant Policy Center, Chhaya CDC, Center for Children's Initiatives, Commission on the Public's Health System, Common Cause, Community Service Society of New York, Empire Justice Project, Finger Lakes Community Health, Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project, Immigrant Defense Project, IMPRINT, International Institute of Buffalo, Internationals Network for Public Schools, Journey's End Refugee Services, LaGuardia Community College, Latino Justice, Literacy Assistance Center, Memorial Sloan Kettering, Migration Policy Institute, National Immigration Law Center, Neighbors Link Community Law Practice, New York State Association for Bilingual Education, NYCLU, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, The Education Trust - New York, University Settlement Society of New York, Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Worker Justice Center of New York, and World Education Services.*



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# Blueprint for Immigrant New York

## New York's Story

For generations, immigrants have been a lifeline for New York State, helping it thrive. From building the Erie Canal, connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, to powering the booming industries of Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo and so many towns and cities in between, immigrants have been at the center of the state's economic growth. When industries changed and upstate populations declined, immigrant and refugee communities provided an essential buffer, helping to support and sustain New York's "heartland." In Utica, the significant refugee population (one out of every four residents is a refugee)<sup>1</sup> helped preserve areas facing economic decline and in Buffalo, middle-class immigrants strengthened housing and retail markets in aging suburban neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this rich history, New York is not capitalizing fully on what immigrants can contribute to their communities and the state. For example, many immigrants lack access to vocational and technical education necessary to help local and regional economies improve. With unpredictable threats to New York's economy from the Federal government, now is a particularly important time for the state to exercise leadership and pursue leading-edge policies on behalf of immigrant New Yorkers.

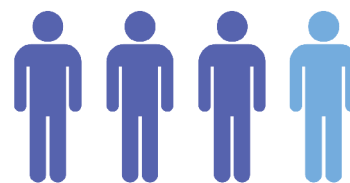
This *Blueprint for Immigrant New York* is a vision and plan to help immigrant New Yorkers, and ultimately the state at large, achieve its full potential.

## New York is Falling Behind on Immigrant Integration

Almost one in four New Yorkers is an immigrant: the state is home to more than 4.5 million immigrants<sup>3</sup>, a number that is only growing. New York's immigrant communities are unique in their diversity—nearly a third of New York's immigrants are Latino, one quarter are Asian American and more than one fifth are either Caribbean or African. Regions outside of New York City are home to the vast majority of New York's newly resettled refugees<sup>4</sup>, a population that is even more diverse, arriving from Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burma, to name a few of the origin countries<sup>5</sup>.

Immigrant New Yorkers are an integral part of their communities and of their local and our state's economy. Immigrants generate an estimated \$230 billion in economic output in New York<sup>6</sup>. Immigrants are nearly twice as likely as individuals born in the United States to start a business<sup>7</sup> and in New York, immigrant-owned businesses and firms alone generated more than \$6 billion in business income in 2014 and employed nearly half a million New Yorkers. Immigration has also been demonstrated to boost housing values across New York State<sup>8</sup>.

**Almost 1 in 4 New Yorkers is an immigrant\***

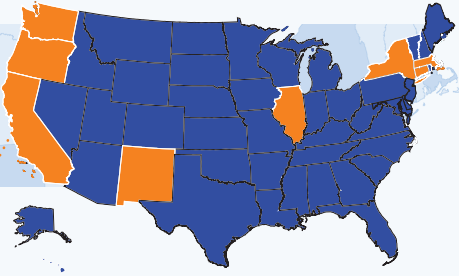


*The NYC interprets the word "immigrant" broadly to encompass immigrants, refugees, and asylees, and to welcome all newcomers to New York.*

Yet, despite the number of foreign born residents approaching 25% of the state's population and the significant contributions of these communities, New York lags behind other states in passing legislation to support immigrant success, thus inhibiting its own success as a state. Utah has extended driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants and Illinois has expanded financial aid to undocumented students and recently passed a TRUST Act. By contrast, New York has failed to pass driver's license legislation, expand financial aid to undocumented students, or pass the Liberty Act (similar to TRUST Acts, which are a comprehensive group of policies limiting the scope of local agencies' ability to engage in information collection and other activities that support immigration enforcement). The lack of policy wins is compounded by inadequate implementation of the policies and laws that New York does have on the books. For example, the State's Executive Order 26 on Language Access does not meet the needs of diverse populations, particularly refugees in upstate New York, despite the essential role language access and access to English language classes play in ensuring immigrant success.

To understand how New York compares to other states, the chart on the next page highlights several states' records on immigrant-friendly legislation.

## IMMIGRANT-FRIENDLY LEGISLATION IN SEVERAL STATES



KEY STATE FACTORS	CA	CT	IL	MA	NM	NY	OR	WA
<b>IMMIGRANT POPULATION<sup>9</sup></b>								
Number (in thousands)	10,688	520	1,827	1,096	197	4,530	397	980
Percent	27.3	14.5	14.2	16.1	9.4	22.9	9.9	13.7
<b>STATE GOVERNMENT</b>								
Governor	D	D	R	R	R	D	D	D
Legislature	D	D	D	D	R	D/R	D	D/R
<b>LEGISLATION</b> LEGISLATION PASSED: ✓ (UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS), *(LAWFULLY PRESENT IMMIGRANTS ONLY) LEGISLATION PROPOSED: P (PROPOSED, BUT NOT PASSED)								
<b>NON-COOPERATION LAWS</b>								
State "Sanctuary" Law	✓ <sup>10</sup> 10/05/2017							
TRUST Act	✓ 2013	✓ 2013	E0 <sup>11</sup> 2015 ✓ 08/28/2017	p <sup>12</sup>				
Anti-E-Verify Laws	✓		✓					
<b>DRIVER'S LICENSES</b>	✓	✓	✓	DACA <sup>13</sup>	✓	DACA	DACA	✓
<b>POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION</b>								
In-State Tuition	✓	✓	✓ <sup>14</sup>		✓	✓	✓	✓
State Financial Aid	✓				✓		✓	✓
Privately Funded Scholarships	✓		✓					
<b>HEALTH CARE</b>								
Full-Scope Medicaid for Children	✓							
<b>PROFESSIONAL LICENSES</b>								
License to Practice Law	✓		DACA			✓		
Other Professional Licenses	✓							

While the chart above covers legislation, it is important to note that New York has been able to enact immigrant-friendly policies through agency rulemaking, the most significant example being healthcare coverage for undocumented young immigrants.



## Why has New York Fallen Behind?

A combination of reasons has contributed to New York's inability to pass legislation to promote immigrant integration. The first factor is political challenges in Albany: while New York is considered a progressive state, in reality the state's politics are far more complex. Progressive policy campaigns are stymied by the challenging dynamic among the State's Democratic Governor, Democrat controlled Assembly, and Republican controlled Senate, which includes a group of breakaway Democrats who caucus with Republicans.

A second key factor is the lack of a significant statewide base of support for integration policies. While some counties in New York State have local champions for the immigrant community, this is not the norm throughout the state. The absence of such a wide base of support in communities across the state has allowed certain legislators to avoid supporting and voting for immigrant integration policies.

This became clear during the 2005-2007 campaign to make driver's licenses accessible to undocumented immigrants. Following an active campaign that the NYIC helped lead, in September 2007 then-Governor Spitzer issued an Executive Order requiring driver's licenses to be provided to undocumented immigrants. What followed was public condemnation from state electeds and county clerks outside of New York City. These included both Republicans and Democrats, such as current Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, in areas where local support for the immigrant community was absent. The inadequate statewide base of local leaders and other supporters allowed for hysteria in these communities to go unchecked and eventually caused Governor Spitzer to rescind his Executive Order. The immediate and overwhelming backlash against the Executive Order continues to have ripple effects, hampering bold advocacy efforts in the state to this day.

A third factor has been the bottleneck caused by the New York State DREAM Act, which would expand financial aid awards, including the New York State Tuition Assistance Program, to undocumented students. Legislators have singularly focused on DREAM, while concomitantly refusing to move forward any other piece of immigrant integration legislation. The result is that New York's DREAM Act has now failed to pass for five consecutive years and no other significant pieces of legislation have gained needed traction during that time frame. Advocates realized that the DREAM Act campaign had not been able to adequately engage local partners and communities in upstate regions, in part because there was no local infrastructure that could adequately ensure such engagement. The dearth of sufficient statewide support was also felt most recently when Governor Cuomo introduced the Excelsior Scholarship program. Excelsior explicitly excludes undocumented immigrants, despite the advocacy efforts of groups throughout the state, including the NYIC, to expand these scholarships.

## The Increased Cost of Falling Behind

New York's inability to champion immigrant integration policies has real economic and social costs, particularly right now, with anti-immigrant rhetoric, hate crimes, and draconian federal policies creating a tremendously hostile climate for immigrant and refugee communities. Problems that immigrant communities have faced for years are more pressing: the reality of commuting to work or driving to a doctor's appointment without a driver's license today is far more chilling than it was only a few months ago. Simultaneously, New York is losing out on an estimated \$57 million in annual government revenues, plus \$26 million in one-time revenues by not expanding driver's licenses to undocumented individuals.<sup>15</sup> Driver's licenses are one of countless missed opportunities for the state to help immigrants succeed and strengthen its economy through cutting-edge immigrant integration policies. Another example is "brain waste": a recent analysis by the Migration Policy Institute found that 27 percent of immigrants in the state are underemployed, which results in \$5 billion in lost earnings and nearly \$600 million in lost state and local tax revenue.<sup>16</sup>

In the context of a federal administration committed to anti-immigrant policies and cutting state funds for a variety of social services, New York can no longer afford such missed opportunities. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is a significant example of impending social and economic costs facing New York: DACA recipients are valuable members of their community and contribute \$140 million to state and local taxes. The termination of this program would place approximately 50,000 New Yorkers in a state of fear and cost the state \$55 million.<sup>17</sup> The





Affordable Care Act is another similar example, the dismantling of which would have severe social and economic consequences for countless New Yorkers and would cost the state billions of dollars in federal funding.

While the need for comprehensive policy solutions at the federal level remains acute, any legislative solution would likely come with significant and perhaps unacceptable compromises. New York does not have the luxury of waiting: the state not only has the ability, but the responsibility to protect and ensure the wellbeing of its immigrant communities right now. With these new social and economic threats to the state also come new opportunities to pursue bold, positive solutions to help immigrant New Yorkers succeed, and put the state on the map as a leader.

From Frederick Douglass publishing his abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star*, in Rochester, to the Seneca Falls Convention, New York has historically played an integral role in social justice movements in the United States. These movements began with robust grassroots activism and, albeit slowly, effected positive changes in policy. New York was not always the first to act, yet its actions have historically set the pace for countless vital issues. Lagging behind states like Wyoming for instance, New York was surely not the first state to grant suffrage to women. However, after New York passed universal women's suffrage, the momentum of the movement grew significantly. Although we are trailing with regard to immigrant integration, this is the moment for the home of the nation's second largest immigrant population to not only catch up to states like Utah, Illinois or California, but to exceed them.

## **An Opportunity for Progress: Blueprint for Immigrant New York**

We are in a pivotal moment for New York State—one year after the presidential election and one year before our state's gubernatorial race. We have the opportunity to lay out a proactive, actionable policy agenda, to envision what our state has the potential to achieve for its immigrant communities, and to collectively commit to realizing that vision. As a statewide coalition, the NYIC is uniquely positioned to align our member organizations and partners around a long-term strategy, a **Blueprint for Immigrant New York**. Taking lessons from states like California, Washington, and Connecticut, and even from the failed campaigns in our own state, we can ensure that over the next decade, New York becomes a place where its immigrants can truly thrive and contribute to the economic and cultural vitality of the state.

### **Blueprint: Phase I**

To capitalize on this opportunity, we need not only an ambitious vision but also a clear set of achievable short and long term goals. Phase I of the Blueprint process has been exactly this: an opportunity to think big and bold, clarifying for ourselves and external partners why we are partaking in this effort and developing exactly what our vision and goals are for New York. We have engaged in an extensive process over the past few months to ensure that what we have drafted is truly representative of the varied needs of diverse immigrant communities. We have solicited and received feedback on the Blueprint from almost 200 individuals and organizations, including members, partners, academics, and government officials. We did so through a multitude of ways: hosted multiple small group meetings on specific issue areas, such as health and education; engaged our membership in different regions of the state through 9 roundtables; and held 1:1 phone calls with countless individuals.

This process has also helped us refine our thinking on what integration means for different communities. We believe that immigrant integration is inevitably a spectrum, ranging from basic survival needs such as driver's licenses to meaningful opportunities that enable immigrants to thrive, like workforce development programs. Integration begins with equitable access to basic rights and services that allow communities to safely live in New York. But integration is not complete and cannot be fully realized until there is success in that access and immigrant communities are able to thrive rather than solely survive. Accordingly, our goals and vision in the Blueprint are organized across this spectrum, from Access & Equity to Success. Assignment to one category or the other is not fixed: while all of the policies outlined are essential to integration, a workforce development program may be just as vital to one's ability to survive as a driver's license. Our aim is simply to visualize the different kinds of issues that affect immigrants' ability to integrate.

# Blueprint for Immigrant New York

## IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION SPECTRUM

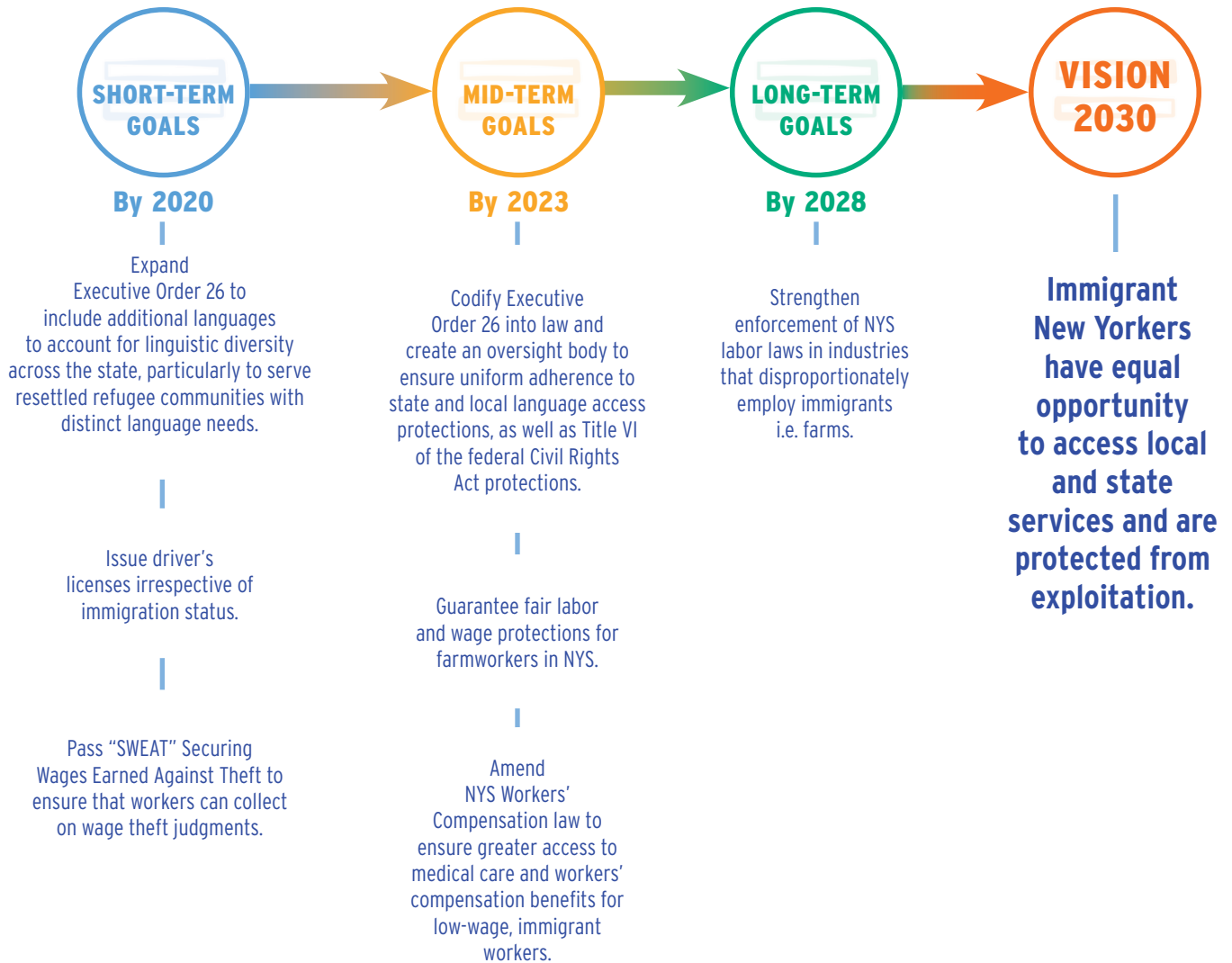


**ACCESS & EQUITY:** Immigrant New Yorkers, like all others, are able to safely live in New York.

**SUCCESS:** Meaningful avenues exist for immigrants to succeed, which benefits not only them, but New York as a whole.

# ACCESS & EQUITY

## Equal Opportunity

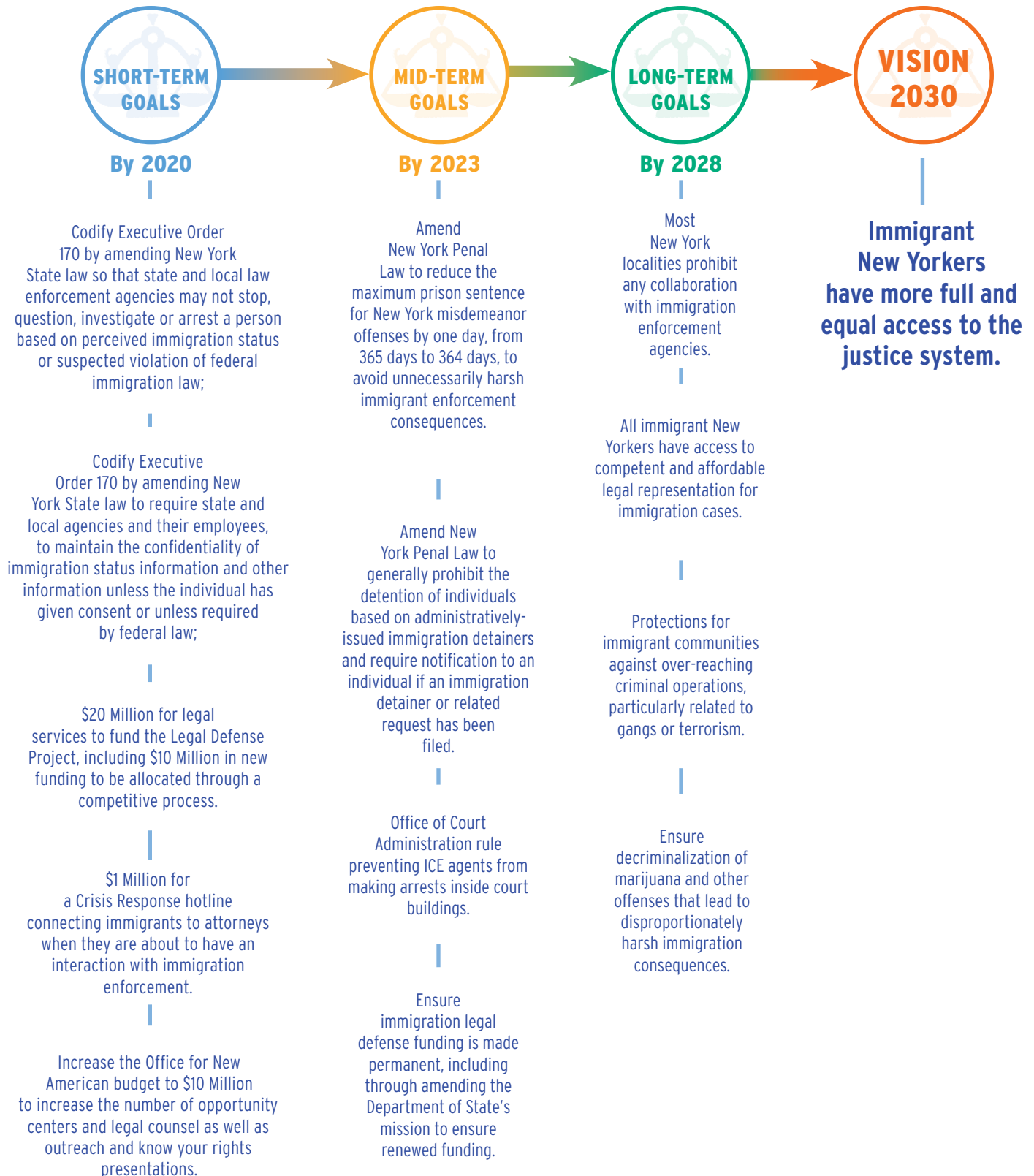




# ACCESS & EQUITY



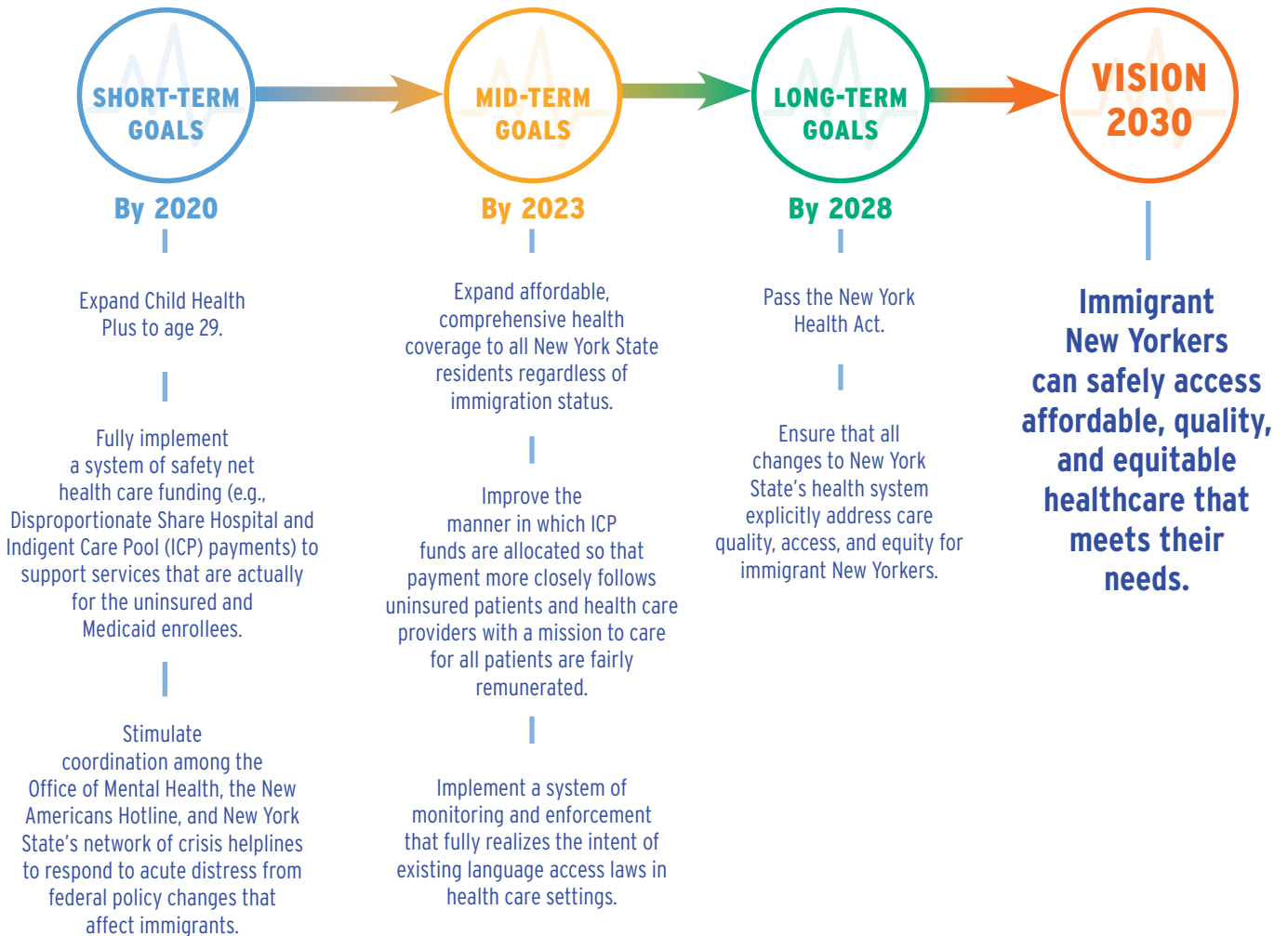
## Fairness in the Justice System



# SUCCESS



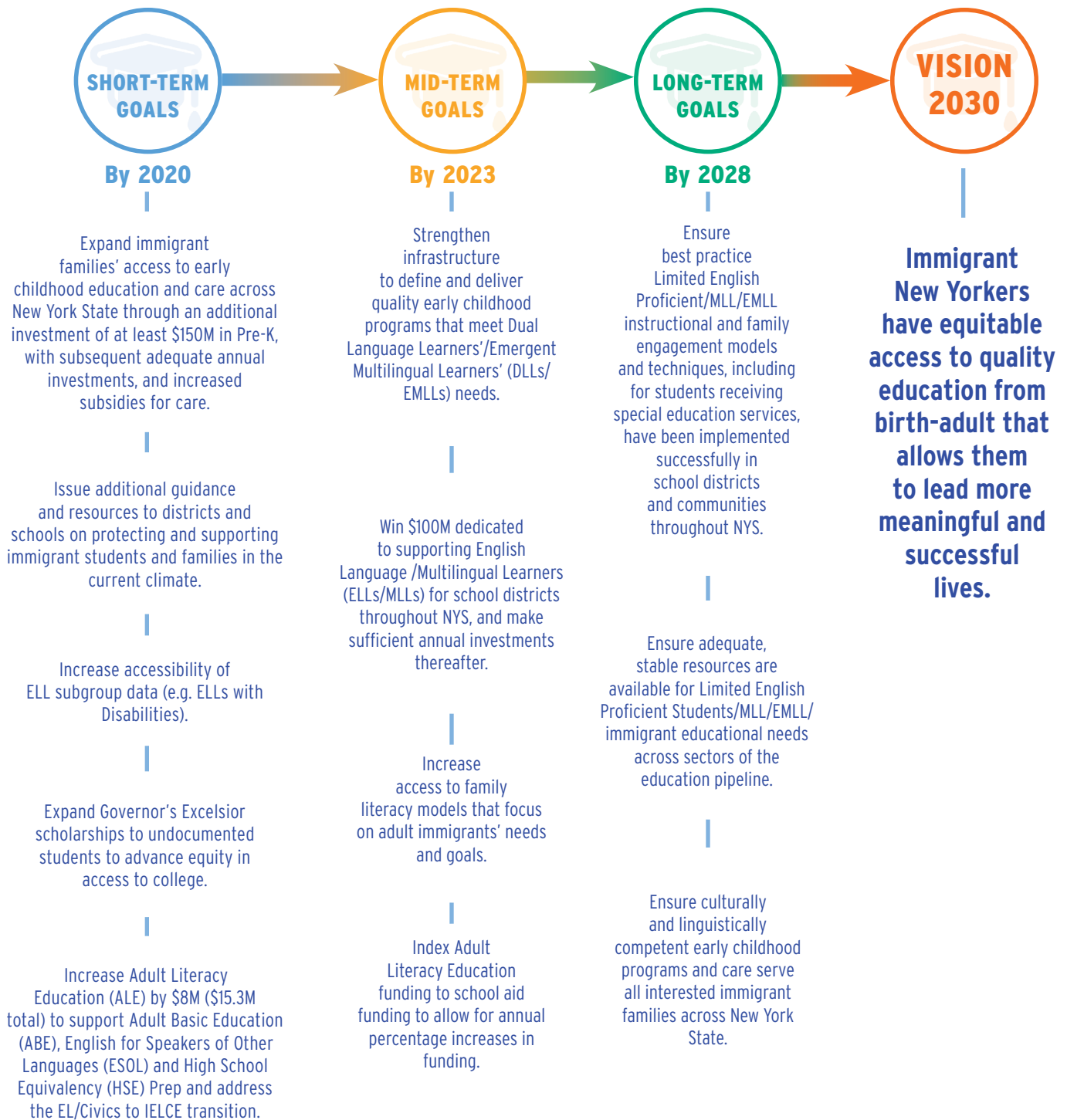
## Healthcare



# SUCCESS

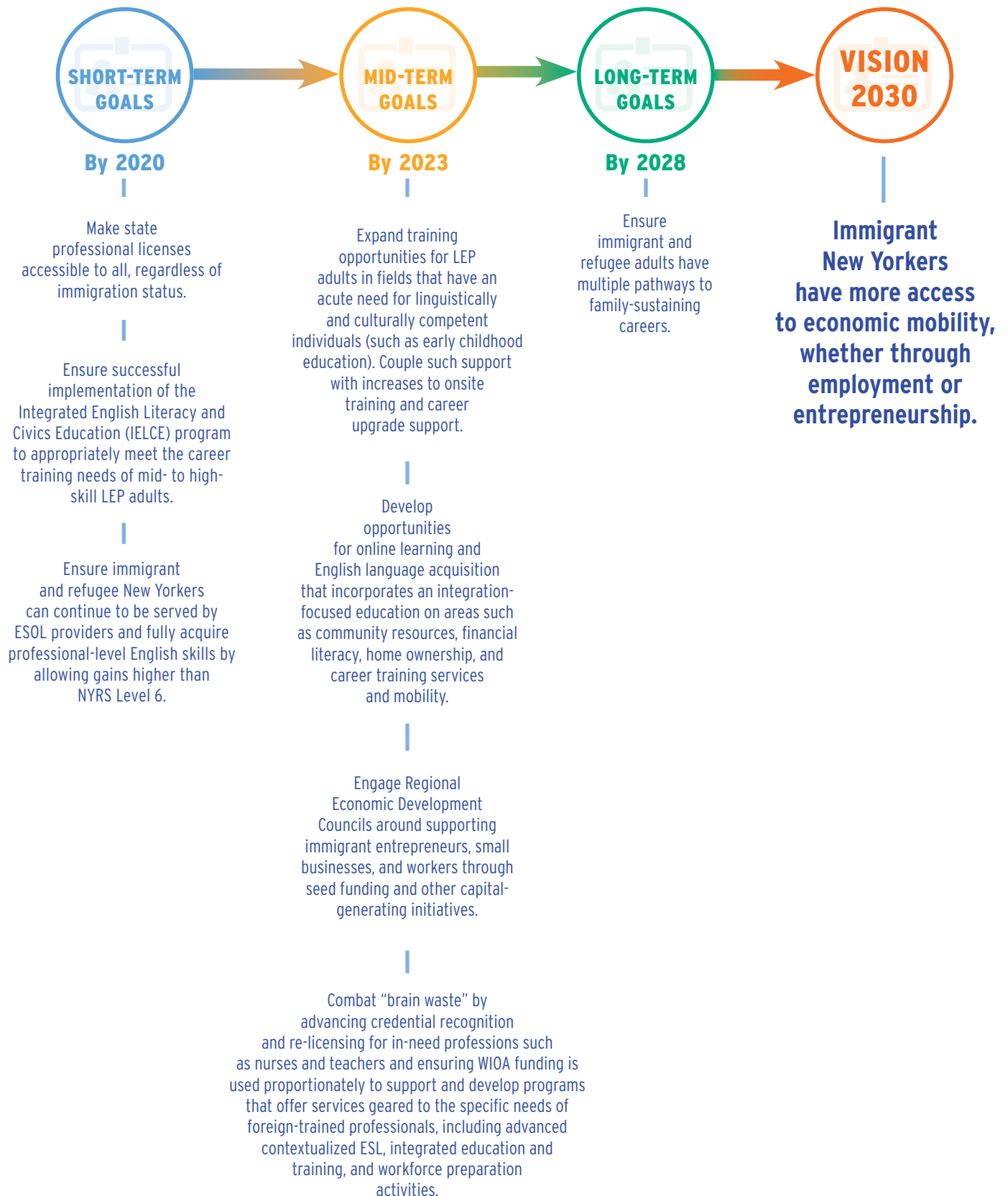


## Education



# SUCCESS

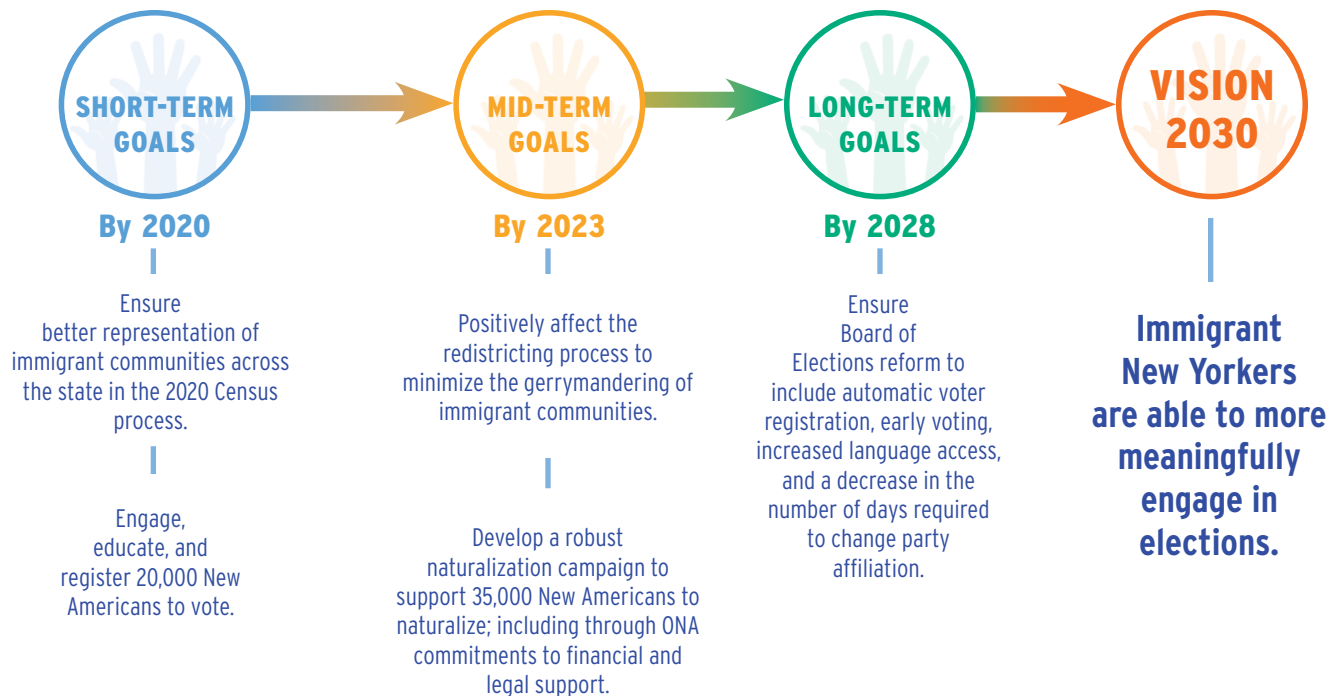
## Economic Development



# SUCCESS



## Civic Engagement



### Blueprint: Phase II

Phase II of the Blueprint process will pivot towards the more difficult and longer term tasks of determining how to realize the goals above. How can we achieve the policies we have advocated for countless years that have stalled in Albany? This will be an opportunity for the NYIC and its members and partners to recalibrate our respective approaches to advocacy on a number of different campaigns. We will need to consider a variety of factors, such as where in the state local coalitions of organizations or local champions exist and how best to strengthen them, and how we can build bridges to receiving communities across the state and grow our network of allies. This has been a top priority for the NYIC and we have worked to build out our regional staff and capacity, placing full time staff in key areas throughout the state. We will also need to consider how best to message and frame immigrant integration campaigns and may be able to learn from counties in upstate New York where the contributions of immigrants are valued. Furthermore, we will need to examine which parts of New York have significant immigrant voting power and explore where there is potential to build this power (and subsequently what the best practices are to do so). These are some of the challenging questions we will have to answer in order to develop meaningful strategies. Yet this task is achievable: with the NYIC providing essential connective tissue across the state and in specific regions, we have faith that working collectively, we can begin achieving policy victories for the immigrant community, and for New York.

### Closing

The ability to move immigrant integration policies in a state with such complicated political dynamics like New York will not only provide lessons for us and our allies' state advocacy, but can serve as a model for other states with similar political landscapes. We cannot realize this change until we all contribute, by supporting organizations engaged in this advocacy, by uplifting the stories of immigrants, and by committing to making our communities ones where everyone can thrive.



## ENDNOTES

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- 10 California Legislative Information, October 2017, "California Values Act (SB 54)", [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180SB54](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB54).
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- 12 NOTE: MA proposed a TRUST in 2013, 2014, and again in 2015/16: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/Senate/S1258>. Also see: [http://www.masslive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/02/trust\\_act\\_revives\\_debate\\_over.html](http://www.masslive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/02/trust_act_revives_debate_over.html) and <http://www.cpresente.org/what-we-do/campaigns/ma-trust-act-campaign> and <http://www.ndlon.org/en/pressroom/press-releases/item/1054-ma-trustact-committee>
- 13 NOTE: In 2016, DL were restricted from undocumented immigrants, through Governors' amendment: <http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/20160821/some-immigrants-lament-license-laws>
- 14 NOTE: In 2011, IL began offering in-state tuition. See: <https://www.uleadnet.org/map/illinois-policy>.
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