



Project Title: Is New York State Really a Sanctuary for All? Understanding the Implications for Undocumented Communities

Client: New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)

Project Start Date: 12-6-2017

Project End Date: 4-30-2018

Executive Summary

The Columbia School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) Capstone Workshop partnered with the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) during the 2018 Spring semester to aggregate existing county-level policies in New York State regarding undocumented immigrants in order to allow for more effective organizing and advocacy on their behalf as well as provide a greater understanding to what extent New York State is a sanctuary state for these individuals. The NYIC is a coalition of member organizations that aims to achieve a fairer and more just society that values the contributions of immigrants and extends opportunity to all. They identified a gap in the resources on and knowledge of the current county policy contexts that affects their member organizations' ability to counter anti-immigrant campaigns and protect undocumented immigrants. With over 200 members across the state, they diagnosed a lack of institutional knowledge-sharing systems and that too many member organizations felt as though they have had to reinvent the wheel when turnover within the organizing community occurs.

At the local level, the focus of this project has been around so-called "sanctuary policies," which for the purposes of this project refer to a series of immigrant protections from deportation or threats of deportation by limiting local enforcement cooperation with federal immigration authorities. NYIC member organizations are interested in learning about and recording these sanctuary policies and their manifestations across the state so that they can implement best practices into their corresponding advocacy work. In many New York State counties, anti-immigrant policies are actively practiced and heavily susceptible to federal executive orders and influence. In their work, it is imperative that NYIC member organizations are aware of what local policies comply with anti-immigration sentiment as well as federal collusion with local law enforcement in order to design measures that will protect immigrant citizens effectively.

Given the incredible importance of this knowledge, the SIPA Capstone team was tasked with conducting research on immigration-related local and law enforcement policies across New York State and compiling it into a searchable database for the coalition and member organizations to access. The SIPA team prioritized 18 counties based on parameters set by NYIC, the size of the estimated, undocumented population in a given county, and current available information. The approach to research was twofold: conducting primary research through interviews with members of the NYIC, community organizers across the state in different counties, the Attorney General's Civil Rights Bureau, the New York chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, and county executive offices, while simultaneously reviewing secondary sources such as county websites to collect statements by elected officials around their approach to supporting undocumented individuals, news articles, and available policy announcements.

To build the database infrastructure, the SIPA team enlisted additional support from an independent consultant to create a user-friendly and accessible digital tool that the NYIC and its member organizations will be able to use and update over time. A user guide was also created to equip future users and allow the tool to stand on its own. Given the breadth of immigration policies and the difficulty of capturing the anecdotal information that is often crucial to gaining a better understanding of the more informal, sensitive nuances of policy practice, this database ultimately provides a foundation meant to be further developed and improved upon. Some original goals of the project were either out of the scope of the initial request or our timeline and/or our technical capabilities did not allow for results in this phase of project implementation. To conclude this report, the SIPA team offers a list of future ideas and corollary projects for future capstones or projects for NYIC to this end. This report also provides a project overview, methodology, appendix, and a final report deliverables checklist.

1. Project Overview

1.1. Project Case

The NYIC works to promote immigrants’ full civic participation, foster their leadership, and provide a unified voice and a vehicle for collective action for New York’s diverse immigrant communities. However, the effects of local, state, and national immigration policy and practice are often felt differently in individual New York counties, particularly in the context of “sanctuary” city and state policies. Therefore, the NYIC engaged the SIPA Capstone Workshop on a data collection and comparative research project on “sanctuary” and anti-immigrant policies throughout New York State as a focused tool to aid in advocacy efforts. As current national policies target immigrant communities at higher and higher levels, NYIC member organizations and local communities who want to protect their immigrant citizens have had no data-sharing mechanisms to help enforce immigrant protections or respond to anti-immigrant actions. Policy information is not always easily accessible and may be subject to change or revision— especially regarding law enforcement. The particular variance in policy practice outside New York City further calls for an informed, specific, multifaceted strategy. A comprehensive database of New York immigration-related policies will bring together valuable information— from laws on the books to anecdotes of practices on the ground— in a cohesive, central, user-friendly place in order to strengthen NYIC’s core missions to serve immigrant and undocumented populations across the state.

1.2. Primary Question

Is New York State Really a Sanctuary for All? Understanding the Implications of Immigration Policies for Undocumented Communities.

1.3. Project Objective

The primary goal of this project is to increase NYIC’s understanding of the existing immigration policy infrastructure in each county in New York State, as well as which New York counties have explicit policies regarding local law enforcement collaboration with federal immigration entities. The creation of a custom database to capture this information will enhance the NYIC’s ability to organize and advocate to support

immigrant New Yorkers. In particular, accessible documentation of how New York State is or is not protecting its undocumented communities will help NYIC educate lawmakers on the ongoing need for advancement, bolstering both state and local policy and advocacy work in real time. The database as a final deliverable will further lay a foundation for NYIC to provide holistic information on New York’s policies to stakeholders throughout the state as well as country as they are often turned to as a resource on immigrant affairs.

The project will also touch on the social and political contexts of “sanctuary” policies and/or practices by law enforcement agencies through analysis and inclusion of press coverage and other available media. It will seek to shed light on the types of environments which foster policies that limit collusion between law enforcement and immigration enforcement. The insight gained from this research will be particularly helpful for counties where sanctuary-like policies may be in practice, but perhaps not publicly announced, given their political environment etc. The findings of this project will not only serve to inform the NYIC’s advocacy efforts in counties throughout the state, but also provide a tool to help eventually tease out patterns and models that could be replicable in other counties and states, as well. Finally, this project will also grant SIPA Capstone students research experience and practical knowledge on the factors that lead to the enactment of policies and the specific practices by government agencies.

1.4. Scope

This partnership is the first of its kind for NYIC and SIPA. Due to the time constraints of this consulting project, the following counties were prioritized based on a variety of parameters including directions from NYIC member organization offices, reports from the Attorney General’s office, population of undocumented individuals, and precedence of “sanctuary” policies:

1. Albany County
2. Erie County
3. Franklin County
4. Monroe County
5. Nassau County
6. New York County
7. Niagara County

8. Onondaga County
9. Ontario County
10. Orange County
11. Rensselaer County
12. St. Lawrence County
13. Suffolk County
14. Tompkins County
15. Ulster County
16. Wayne County
17. Westchester County
18. Yates County

The most important aspects of this project were the quality of research for the content component of the database, as well as the technical functionality of the database itself. Research and user testing were key in both areas. The research phase took up a majority of the SIPA team's time. Internet research and reaching out by phone were the primary methods, saving in-person work for future projects. As for the database, we worked with an independent engineer to make it easy to use for the NYIC, as well as updatable and generally accessible. Maintaining the nuance of immigration policy in New York State in this format was also a consideration. In order to achieve these goals, SIPA students worked with NYIC staff, specifically Anu Joshi and Muzna Ansari.

The team also relied on primary interviews with member organizations and NYIC staff to understand use-case. Interviews with local law-enforcement bodies to understand the feeling on the ground were postponed for future projects. Secondary research including analysis of executive orders and existing policies, as well as anecdotal data about the shortcomings of these policies were utilized. The SIPA team did experience some challenges including limited county-specific information online, delicate dynamics and information around immigration-related policies, as well as timing and customization of the technical aspects of the database. This added a layer of constraints, but also enabled the team to clarify the project's focus on building and creating the foundational information to include in the database. Thus, there was ultimately little room for scope creep.

1.5. Summary of Impact

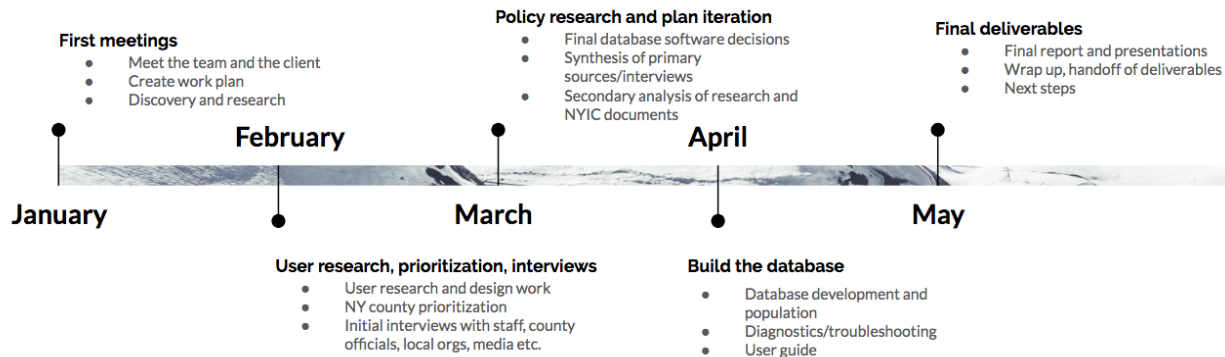
This project created several positive results. First, custom database creation can run in the thousands and even tens of thousands of dollars and the SIPA team was able to collaborate with members of our network to deliver a final product for free of charge. We honed in on uses for the database within the NYIC context both in New York City and in the other regional offices. The database, called PolicyFindr, can now capture institutional knowledge and expertise of county-based immigration policies, their political context, and the legal enforcement of such policies. PolicyFindr will improve member organization and immigration policy practitioners' advocacy and legal efforts by creating a one-stop, policy and data hub. Access and comprehensive New York State data was paramount in this project and the final deliverables have the potential to be used to help onboard new NYIC staff, share information across the coalition of members, and promote accessible institutional memory for NYIC and other stakeholders. Furthermore, throughout the building and populating process, this project has allowed for real time reflection of local policy knowledge by various NYIC core staff as well as on how to capture internal organizational information and research. To this end, the database will help to make unprecedented cross-county comparisons and informed decisions across the state when advocating for policies or working with elected officials. In fact, the findings of this project could potentially highlight patterns and models that could be replicable in other states as well.

1.6. Changes Made to Improve Methodology

The following changes were made throughout the project based on continual consultation with the client:

- Conducted and incorporated findings from a user survey into the NYIC database design
- Expanded our initial number of counties covered by the database
- Created a system of keywords to improve the search process
- Revised database interface to create a more user-friendly tool
- Discussed future NYIC-only levels of access

1.7. Timeline



1.8. SIPA Team Members

Name	Role
Stacey Cumberbatch	Faculty Advisor
Aliya Bhatia	Client Liaison
Molly Dow	Project Manager
Molly Holden	SIPA Administrative Liaison
Maricela Perryman	Field Work Coordinator
Tevita Tapavalu	Written Report Editor

2. Methodology

With a broad mission of documenting “sanctuary city” policies in a searchable database, the Capstone team began the project by defining what is meant by the phrase “sanctuary city.” At a preliminary meeting with NYIC, the SIPA team settled on researching policies and practices that fit these broad definitions or purposes:

- Overall guidelines set by the New York Attorney General’s office
- Language-access component for individuals who do not speak English as their primary language
- Drivers’ license programs for undocumented individuals
- Counties that do not hand over data to federal ICE agencies without a judicial warrant
- Counties that prescribe that their law enforcement agencies cannot ask for immigration status

Building off of this framework, the SIPA team sought to conduct two rounds of research in order to find and document these policies. The first round of research included primary research, and specifically interviewing NYIC and their regional organizers in Buffalo and Syracuse. Through discussions with NYIC staff, the SIPA team was able to better understand which stakeholders the regional organizers depend on and, as a result, create a list of key collaborators to interview. Interview efforts, thus, included talking to members from the Attorney General's Civil Rights Bureau, the New York chapter of the ACLU, and county executive offices. These interviews were crucial in mapping out the gap between what the laws say and what happens in practice.

The SIPA team depended on interviews as well as on secondary research by looking at press hits, as well as county executive website to collect statements by elected officials to understand which county leaders supported protecting immigrants and undocumented individuals and which did not. City council minutes were also utilized to examine how different acts and policies were enacted, and which adhered to the Attorney General Schneiderman's guidelines put forth in March 2017. During our research, internet sources for data and information collection did not provide as much information as initially thought. Where the SIPA team assumed that policies to support undocumented folks and immigrants around New York would be easily accessible, they were often either unavailable, hidden, or intentionally not put onto public websites. There was not an apparent central repository of these policies in any county, underscoring the need of this project, and often there were not any relevant policies in the last 8-10 years in the first place.

2.1. Choosing Counties

Once the defining and initial research phase was complete, the second focusing effort included identifying 10-15 on which counties to focus. The SIPA team selected counties across New York State based on the following criteria:

- Population of undocumented individuals, based on estimates and anecdotal information
- Proximity to the northern border, where border control patrol and federal agents are more present
- Communities where raids or ICE oversight had been reportedly prevalent
- Communities resistant of calling themselves sanctuary cities
- Finally, communities that NYIC had already worked on to a certain degree and where they wanted more work done

The initial list of counties was reviewed by NYIC's regional organizers and ultimately expanded with the help of the existing NYIC Policy Tracker in order to provide an effective underpinning for the database.

2.2. Database Creation

The database, PolicyFindr, was engineered by a third party contractor. Their generous in-kind donation further helped us shape the scope of the final deliverables. To ensure the final database would be user friendly and on par with the needs highlighted by NYIC, the SIPA team created a questionnaire to understand how the client would use the database (see Appendix 3.3.) The answers to this survey informed the design process and particularly the fields that would be included in the database, as well as the functionality of it as we understood more about how NYIC organizers would seek to use the database.

Presenting a beta look of the database to NYIC two-thirds through the semester, the SIPA team ensured that the feedback provided by the client informed the work for the remainder of the term. Many items of the project were either out of the scope of the initial request, our timeline, or our technical capabilities. As a result, a list of future ideas and corollary projects that will be helpful to the NYIC that the client or future capstones can build upon is included at the end of this report. In addition, the SIPA team ensured that the user guide created for the client as part of the final deliverable, will include ways that NYIC can update and expand the database and make it a living document as policies and laws change (see Appendix 3.1.)

2.3. Challenges

The two main challenges were, first, how to document this anecdotal information as much of it is secure and private. The second was how to find policies and make this database useful in certain counties where there is little to no information about sanctuary city policies. With regards to anecdotal information, this included priority areas such as stories about stakeholder engagement and summaries of conversations with elected officials and law enforcement. Much of this is sensitive information and paves the way for future advocacy efforts. As a result, it is important that this anecdotal information is documented somewhere so organizers are not recreating the wheel every time they work in a county, while ensuring that this information doesn't fall into

the wrong hands. From a logistical standpoint, as creators and conceptualizers of this searchable database, documenting this anecdotal information that differs county by county was challenging as we sought to standardize the look and operation of the database. Moreover, because it was difficult to find these “sanctuary” policies, we relied increasingly on anecdotal information and conversations with stakeholders, which we corroborated afterwards.

3. Appendix

3.1. Database User Guide

PolicyFindr User Guide

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Downloading Mongoose
- III. User Interface Guide
 - A. Launching PolicyFindr
 - B. Search Features
 - C. Advanced Search Features
 - D. How to Add a Policy
 - E. Keyword Search
 - F. Utilizing Keywords
 - G. How to Upload a PDF or Word Document
 - H. How to Edit
- IV. Troubleshooting
- V. Contact Information

TEXT

- I. Introduction
 - A. About PolicyFindr
 - 1. PolicyFindr is a MEAN stack web application that utilizes Mongoose database technology to retrieve relevant policy data inputs. PolicyFindr is searchable database of various New York county laws and practices regarding local law immigration enforcement against undocumented individuals throughout the state of New York. PolicyFindr captures institutional knowledge and expertise of county-based immigration policies, their political context, and the legal enforcement of such policies. PolicyFindr will improve immigration policy practitioners' advocacy and legal efforts by creating a one stop, policy and data hub.
- II. Downloading Mongoose
 - A. To download Mongoose software, go to the mongoDB website:
<https://www.mongodb.com/download-center#production>.
 - B. Once you are on the mongoDB website, click the "download" button and follow the corresponding installation instructions.
- III. User Interface Guide
 - A. Launching PolicyFindr
 - 1. Click on the PolicyFindr icon located on the desktop to launch the PolicyFindr application.
 - B. Search Toolbar Features

1. After opening the PolicyFindr application, user will land on the PolicyFindr homepage.
2. The PolicyFindr homepage has a search toolbar that the user can use to search the database using several search criteria including keyword, date, policy name, and county.
3. After selecting their search criteria, the user will click “enter” or “search” icon on the search toolbar to have the search results returned.

C. Advanced Search Features

1. PolicyFindr’s advanced search features allows the user to sort their return results using multiple search categories.
2. PolicyFindr’s advanced search features allows the data to be returned in chronological, or reverse chronological order by original policy published date, not upload date.
3. PolicyFindr’s advanced search features allows the user to filter search results by specific New York counties. The user will select the relevant county in the drop down toolbar menu.
4. After selecting their search criteria, the user will click “enter” or “search” icon on the search toolbar to have the search results returned.

D. How to Add a Policy

1. After opening the PolicyFindr application, user will land on the PolicyFindr homepage.
2. The user should click the “Click to Add a Policy” option on the PolicyFindr landing page.
3. A form will then open for the user to fill out. The user should fill in the relevant fields, including policy title, county, year, keywords, and a summary of the item.
4. To add a keyword, users should type the desired keyword into form and click “enter” following keyword to save.
5. The user should click “add” when finished filling out the form.

E. Keyword Search

1. In addition to searching by year or county, PolicyFindr allows users to search by keyword.
2. Keywords are user generated and self defined. To add a keyword, users should type the desired keyword into form and click “enter” following keyword to save.
3. To find what keywords are associated with each policy or input, users can click the “edit policy” option to view associated keywords.

F. Using Keywords

1. One way to utilize the PolicyFindr database is through keyword search. Each policy that is uploaded into the database is tagged with relevant keywords. The keywords are chosen by the individual uploading the policy or news item. The keywords should be relevant to the topic being uploaded and should include the county, the category (i.e. news item, policy, contact information, demographics, etc.) and any relevant other terms.
2. The keyword search tags are not case sensitive. For example, if you search “Albany” or “albany,” you will be returned the same results.
3. To view the keywords and tagged criteria, an individual simply searches for the policy and then clicks “edit policy” to view the keyword tags.
4. A master list of the keywords is available in the appendix of the user guide.
5. It is important to note that keywords are self generated and able to change whenever the database manager sees fit.

G. How to Upload a PDF or Word Document

1. After opening the PolicyFindr application, user will land on the PolicyFindr homepage.
2. The user should click the “Click to Add a Policy” option on the PolicyFindr landing page.
3. The user should click the icon after the “Web Link/Upload” option of the form.
4. The user should then select the PDF or Word Document from their computer directory and click upload.

H. How to edit

1. The user should search for the desired policy using the PolicyFindr search features.
2. Once the policy has been returned using the search features, the user can select the “Edit Policy” option to edit the selected policy.
3. Once the policy is edited or updated, the user should selected “add” to save the newly edited policy.

IV. Troubleshooting

A. Error message: “Must be a URL link”

1. If user receives this error message when trying to upload a policy and include a link, simply add “http://” or “https://” before the link they have added in the form. This ensures the link is in the correct format.

B. To exit a form or advance search

1. To exit the upload form or advanced search features popup, simply click an area outside of the form or advance search criteria popup.

C. Search by keyword but no result found

1. If user searches by keyword and no associated input is returned by the database, be sure to check the date range on advanced search features. The date range should either be set to full range or be set to include the year of inputted policy.
- D. Categorized inputs
1. The user will notice that each input is categorized as either *NEWS*, *POLICY*, or *INFORMATION*. These designations were added to easily organize the inputs. To continue in this way, users should add one of the above categories before each “Policy Title” input.
- E. No year for input
1. All inputs without a year are categorized as year “0” when searching.
- V. Contact page
- A. This database was engineered and designed by Johannes Basson. Please feel free to contact Johannes with any questions or concerns regarding the database.
1. Email: jhnbsn901312@gmail.com
 2. Phone: 316-250-1777

3.2. Stakeholder Engagement

Over the course of the semester, we relied on experts and stakeholders on the ground to grasp a better picture of how policies were being enacted. These are the experts we spoke with:

- Meghan Maloney de Zaldivar, Regional Organizer for NYIC
- Fabiola Ortiz, Regional Organizer for NYIC
- Lourdes Rosado, Civil Rights Bureau at Attorney General’s office
- Michael Meade, Civil Rights Bureau at Attorney General’s office (via email)
- Natalia Salgado, Civil Rights Bureau at Attorney General’s office (via email)

3.3. User Research Questionnaire

1. What is the value add of this database to current NYIC projects and initiatives?
2. How do you hope this database will affect your work personally?
3. Do you think this database should be used internally only or should it be open to the public?
4. What policy and other knowledge areas of your work could and should be captured in the database?

5. What have been your biggest challenges to date when trying to learn and share about county and police policies in NY State?
6. How should rural counties with less policies on the books be integrated into the project?
7. What are the barriers to your current policy collection and tracking?
8. Who will edit it: i.e. policy staff or IT staff?
9. What types of questions do new organizers ask regarding policies?
10. Would it be helpful to the ongoing mission & advocacy activities of NYIC to develop an infrastructure (online database) to capture an array of formal/informal information, local govt practice and/or policy to educate and assist their wide coalition of diverse organizations with varying resource and technical expertise?

4. Final Report Deliverables Checklist

User Guide	✓
Database Access	✓
Final Report	✓
Summary of Stakeholder List	✓

5. Next Steps

This project ultimately served to lay a foundation for future work. With initial internet research and crucial database design and testing completed, NYIC and SIPA teams have primarily focused on answering key questions and focusing both project and purpose for long-term success. Looking forward, natural next steps would include adding information on more counties into the database and taking a deeper dive into research across the board. This could include interviews, phone calls, local library research etc. In-person work in counties, in general, could be an interesting lens for NYIC staff or future SIPA groups to take as the

conversation about privacy and sensitive information continues to take shape. There is also certainly an opportunity eventually to combine these qualitative findings to build a toolkit that provides guidelines on how to put forth progressive immigration policies in New York State. Examining the role of the press in political campaigns, timing of policy, etc. could shed a lot of light on what influences certain policy success at the county level. The advocacy piece is a layer that deserves further development after the bulk of research is complete. Future projects can also return to the primary question of our work and particularly to the effects and implications of researched policies on undocumented communities. Exploring how and if the database can safely accomplish some of these goals is another ongoing conversation.

On the tech side, designing more comparative tools within the database— county by county or year by year, for example— could be a helpful future project for an engineer or other specialist. Work can also be done around setting up a public-facing database and open layers for the public as well as password-enabled access to certain layers for NYIC, for example using user authentication software. Next steps could additionally include a statistical analysis lens of the data and resources that are being uncovered. Future work could focus on a sentiment analysis-type of project, for example and perhaps modeled after Twitter, or similar keyword analysis work. This could particularly help the advocacy piece of finding patterns and creating tools and guides. Finally, NYIC will have to consider how and when to roll out the database out to the public and general messaging and communications around this new tool.