

# Developing International Competency Centers in Cuenca, Ecuador

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## **Abstract**

Many people come to Cuenca seeking a better life, but there exists a problem of integration which stems from a difference in language and culture. Our work addresses how to integrate immigrants into Cuencan society using a Competency Center, allowing them to participate in society in ways they could not before. We had several objectives in our work here such as: discerning the location for the center, the best types of programs for the center, language comfortability, and the overall budget for the center. We finally recommended a program structure emphasizing casual social interactions, professional development, and cultural exchanges for the Competency Center. We also found the best initial location for the center to be near the Alcaldía for accessibility.

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Understanding Expats and Lifestyle Migration	Daniel Petro	Aidan Bryar
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Evaluation of immigrant comfort levels with languages in Ecuador.	Keyla Zelaya	Daniel Petro
Discussion Introduction Paragraph	Daniel Petro	Keyla Zelaya
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Recommendations Introduction Paragraph	Daniel Petro	Aidan Bryar
Center Location and Programs/Events	Aidan Bryar, Daniel Petro, & Keyla Zelaya	Margaret Krawitz
Budgeting and Logistics for the Center	Aidan Bryar, Margaret Krawitz, & Daniel Petro	Daniel Petro
Budget Considerations	Margaret Krawitz	Daniel Petro
Conclusion	All	-
Appendix A	All	Margaret Krawitz
Appendix B	Aidan Bryar, Daniel Petro, & Keyla Zelaya	Margaret Krawitz

Appendix C	Aidan Bryar, Daniel Petro, & Keyla Zelaya	Margaret Krawitz
Appendix D	All	Margaret Krawitz
Appendix E	Daniel Petro	All
Appendix F	Keyla Zelaya	-
Appendix G	Keyla Zelaya	-

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

Our work focused on the historical and demographic aspects of migration in Cuenca, as well as the wide variety of cultures and viewpoints that can be found there. Immigrants who have traveled to Cuenca have been displaced due to problems in their country of origin, or they were intrigued by the opportunities present within Cuenca. The resulting migration cultivated a culture disparity between immigrants and locals living in Cuenca.

We have addressed the need for cultural integration of immigrants into Cuencan society. We look into past research as well as data we cultivate through our objectives to create a plan for the institutionalization of the competency center in Cuenca. The institutionalization of the competency center in Cuenca, Ecuador, will become a network where the many cultures can exchange professional and cultural knowledge as we try to bridge the gap that exists between them.

### **Background**

Migration is a global phenomenon in which people leave their habitual place of residence and settle in other states, or more broadly, other countries (Tsegay, 2023). It is a complex and dynamic process that affects one's native country, their destination country, and themselves (Schiff & Özden, 2005). The process of migration is extremely personal and unique for each individual. The institutionalization of the competency center in Cuenca creates an opportunity for unity within a diverse community.

### *History*

There are various reasons why people decide to relocate to other countries, many of which are the result of “push and pull” factors. Recent government policies favoring migrants have proven to be a key factor in the rise of immigrant populations in Cuenca. Ecuador presents itself as a refuge to those coming from countries with internal conflicts, with its liberal border policies. The country additionally provides medical benefits and financial liberties not commonly

seen elsewhere. It is for these main reasons that migrants deem Ecuador, and more specifically Cuenca, as an ideal location.

Data from 2020 illustrates that the Venezuelan migrant population represents the largest foreign community within Ecuador. It is estimated that there are 547,000 refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants from Venezuela living in Ecuador. The second most prominent population of immigrants are from Colombia, of which an additional 450,000 refugees are reported (Dressel et al., 2020). These groups are followed by Peruvian and other migrants. Within Cuenca specifically, it has been reported that expats between the ages of 51 and 70 make up roughly 15% of the foreign population. These expats include those from the United States, Canada, and Europe, although the European community only represents 4% of all expat migrants within Cuenca (García Álvarez et al., 2017). In addition to this, Cuenca has a population of Colombians which are the third-highest percentage of immigrants and make up 20% of the immigrant population. Due to this large-scale migration, Cuenca has seen an increase in organizations created to provide resources for these new residents, such as Casa del Migrante and the Cuenca Soup Kitchen.

### *Cultural Dissonances*

Upon moving to Cuenca, certain aspects of local culture may result in difficulties for immigrants amongst their interactions with Cuencanos. This can give way to problems such as language barriers and pervasive social biases. These problems, combined with other differences in social cues, biases, and communication styles, can make it difficult for new residents of Cuenca to begin integrating into their host society. Without some issues along the way in the absence of planned assistance.

Due to the prominent language dimension of this project, relevant vocabulary for this study would be hybridization and integration. Hybridization occurs when two cultures create an entirely new culture that is neither one nor the other but has been influenced by both (Phillips et al., 2013) and integration is the ability of cross-cultural reliability, or coexistence. It was important that we were aware of both as we aim to provide a culturally diverse society with the tools necessary to communicate and function jointly

## *Integration*

In previous programs within Cuenca, integration has been targeted towards younger audiences for their open mindedness and susceptibility to change. Additionally, and outside Cuenca, approaches targeting older generations include bridge-building activities in which a culturally diverse group will come together to solve a problem. The contrast in these approaches is largely due to the stubbornness of adults. Another example of integration attempts encourages a case-by-case process to integration, stating that one must collect information on their public in order to provide solutions (Claveau et al., 2017).

From this research we have defined several important elements of our work such as the history of migration, foreign policy, cultural dissonances, and integration tactics. All of these elements contribute to building a clear image of the historical context behind integration in Cuenca, and underline a need for cross-cultural communication in current day Cuencan society.

## **Methods**

We have defined four objectives to understand the factors and constrictions that a Competency Center will need to consider. Our four objectives consist of: collecting and mapping demographic data of migration populations in Cuenca, identifying which programs provide the highest benefit to the Cuencan and migrant communities, evaluating immigrant comfort levels with languages in Ecuador, and determining the logistics of staffing for the center and a reasonable budget. These objectives allowed us to fill previously unexplored research areas.

This was achieved by conducting semi-structured interviews and surveys in order to collect the qualitative and quantitative data that we considered when constructing the competency center. In order to prevent the convergence of a non-inclusive and representative dataset, we utilized snowball sampling alongside convenience sampling for potential interviewee acquisition.

Additional concerns that had been addressed pertained to our work alongside at-risk communities. This was due to our work with immigrant populations and the uncertainty of an individuals' immigration status/experience. Regardless of their legal status, topics associated with immigration experiences can be potentially triggering for interviewees. In order to assure

the safety for all of our participants, we emphasized participant confidentiality and consent, and organized a way to provide security to our interviewees.

## **Findings**

Through our methods we came to conclusions regarding location, program types, language comfort, and budgeting/logistics. Looking at accessible locations for the competency center, a location in the city center would be the most appropriate. Interviewees have stated that the Historic Center of Cuenca, to them, is the city center. In terms of programs, we have found there to be a demand for a more casual as well as social approach for events in the program. We found that a program that can engage the intended audience through conversation and socialization will most likely have the greatest effect and increase in repeat attendance. Language comfortability is also a big factor in determining the nature of the programs conducted in the center. Native and non-native Cuencanos seem to agree that immersion with the language is one of the most useful tactics to learn Spanish. We also found that in terms of budgeting, our center could capitalize on this pre-existing trend of immigrants preferring a non-professional environment. This includes communication and cultural experiences by allocating a portion of the budget for the set up and maintenance of a centralized database of both new arrivals in Cuenca and native Cuencanos looking to participate in one-on-one exchanges of language, cultural information, and professional expertise.

## **Discussion**

From our findings, we decided on key components of the Competency Center that would help create the baseline for the future. In terms of the center location, it was concluded that the Historical Center is noted to be a place of general cultural and professional exchange. For this reason, the initial location of the center would be the most appropriate in the Historical Center. We have also concluded from our research that an expansion would be necessary to combat the difficulty of accessibility. Conclusions regarding programs and events show us that the center will need to incorporate programs with a social emphasis that can engage the intended participant in Cuencan culture as well as help them learn to interact with the community. We also decided that the best events would be ones that emphasize a non-professional setting to help ease a participant into the program itself. We have also concluded that food and conversation should be

the main selling points of an event as they provide a way for immigrants to get to know the culture as well as feel relaxed in the environment.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended based upon the information provided from the spatial mapping and analysis that the original center be constructed within the Historical Center of the city. Due to this location's renown for being an area of interculturality and knowledge exchange, the first competency center should utilize this knowledge. Additionally, due to concerns regarding the accessibility of the competency center within the Historical Center, it is also recommended that after determining the feasibility and success of the first competency center, to construct additional centers in other locations. The construction of additional centers would promote the participation of those who may consider transportation to the Historical Center difficult and time consuming.

The Competency Center would be the location for a series of four different event types: social events, professional social events, hobby events, and professional workshops. Social events would be used for networking and relationship building within the community, and would consist of general meet and greets. Professional social events are similar to social events, however they would aim more towards the networking and relationship building pertaining to a professional aspect. Hobby events would be rather small groupings of people who share similar interests in things such as photography or literature. It would provide a platform for a more open style exchange of professional and cultural information. The final event type would be a professional workshop, consisting of a volunteer who will focus solely on the exchange of professional experience and knowledge.

We also recommend that a website is made to more efficiently create connections between locals and immigrants to share experience and knowledge where it otherwise could not before. The website would also help to promote the future events and programs being held by the Competency Center. It would possess multiple different pages for those wishing to express interest or feedback with the events.



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## **Introduction**

Our work focused on the historical and demographic aspects of migration in Cuenca, as well as the wide variety of cultures and viewpoints that can be found there. Immigrants who have traveled to Cuenca have been displaced due to problems in their country of origin or they were intrigued by the opportunities present within Cuenca. The resulting migration cultivated a culture disparity between immigrants and locals living in Cuenca. An increasing need for resources and cultural awareness for these groups has presented a challenge in Cuencan society.

We addressed the need for cultural integration of immigrants into Cuencan society. In our work we looked into past research as well as research we cultivate through our objectives to create a plan for the institutionalization of the competency center in Cuenca. The institutionalization of the competency center in Cuenca, Ecuador, will become a platform where the many cultures throughout the area can communicate with each other and begin to integrate. We created a plan to lay the groundwork for a space where immigrants and native Cuencan residents can share their knowledge and experiences which will add to the overall knowledge of the immigrants living there. We provided a roadmap to institutionalize the centers in Cuenca through short term and long term goals that help immigrants share their own stories and build relationships in the local community. We investigated demographic data, potential programs, and linguistic factors so that we could create a cost-efficient budget that takes into account the cost of events and staffing. We gathered data that encompasses the cultural diversity of Cuenca and its many dynamics. We also created guidelines that explain how this data was processed and how it was used to plan for the institutionalization of the International Competency Center.

We defined four research objectives to understand the factors and constrictions that a Competency Center needs to take into account. Our four objectives consisted of collecting and mapping demographic data of migration populations in Cuenca, identifying which programs provide the highest benefit to the Cuencan and migrant communities, evaluating immigrant comfort levels with languages in Ecuador, and determining the logistics of staffing for the center and a reasonable budget. These objectives allowed us to fill previously unexplored research areas. With these objectives guiding us we were able to use the data and general knowledge we have collected to create a Competency Center plan that takes into account the needs and wants of diverse communities living in Cuenca. We did this by analyzing the data using manual coding

procedures to interpret it as well as visualization and statistical formulation. These analyses created a robust foundation of understanding that was needed to implement a plan for an International Competency Center.

## **Introducción**

Nuestro trabajo se centró en los aspectos históricos y demográficos de la migración en Cuenca, así como en la amplia variedad de culturas y puntos de vista que allí se pueden encontrar. Los inmigrantes que han viajado a Cuenca han sido desplazados debido a problemas en su país de origen o estaban intrigados por las oportunidades presentes dentro de Cuenca. La migración resultante cultivó una disparidad cultural entre los inmigrantes y los locales que vivían en Cuenca. Una creciente necesidad de recursos y conciencia cultural para estos grupos ha presentado un desafío en la sociedad cuencana.

Abordamos la necesidad de integración cultural de los inmigrantes a la sociedad cuencana. En nuestro trabajo analizamos investigaciones pasadas, así como investigaciones que cultivamos a través de nuestros objetivos para crear un plan para la institucionalización del centro de competencia en Cuenca. La institucionalización del centro de competencias en Cuenca, Ecuador, se convertirá en una plataforma donde las muchas culturas de la zona podrán comunicarse entre sí y comenzar a integrarse. Creamos un plan para sentar las bases de un espacio donde los inmigrantes y los residentes nativos de Cuenca puedan compartir sus conocimientos y experiencias que se sumarán al conocimiento general de los inmigrantes que viven allí. Proporcionamos una hoja de ruta para institucionalizar los centros en Cuenca a través de objetivos a corto y largo plazo que ayuden a los inmigrantes a compartir sus propias historias y construir relaciones en la comunidad local. Investigamos datos demográficos, programas potenciales y factores lingüísticos para poder crear un presupuesto rentable que tenga en cuenta el costo de los eventos y el personal. Recopilamos datos que abarcan la diversidad cultural de Cuenca y sus múltiples dinámicas. También creamos pautas que explican cómo se procesaron estos datos y cómo se utilizaron para planificar la institucionalización del Centro de Competencia Internacional.

Definimos cuatro objetivos de investigación para comprender los factores y restricciones que un centro de competencia debe tener en cuenta. Nuestros cuatro objetivos consistieron en recopilar y mapear datos demográficos de las poblaciones migratorias en Cuenca, identificar qué programas brindan el mayor beneficio a las comunidades cuencanas y de inmigrantes, evaluar los niveles de comodidad de los inmigrantes con los idiomas en Ecuador y determinar la logística de dotación de personal para el centro y un presupuesto razonable. Estos objetivos nos permitieron

llenar áreas de investigación previamente inexploradas. Con estos objetivos guiándonos, pudimos utilizar los datos y el conocimiento general que hemos recopilado para crear un plan del Centro de Competencia que tenga en cuenta las necesidades y deseos de las diversas comunidades que viven en Cuenca. Hicimos esto analizando los datos utilizando procedimientos de codificación manual para interpretarlos, así como visualización y formulación estadística. Estos análisis crearon una base sólida de comprensión que era necesaria para implementar un plan para un Centro de Competencia Internacional.

## Background

Migration is a global phenomenon where people leave their habitual place of residence and settle in other states, or more broadly, other countries (Tsegay, 2023). It is a complex and dynamic process that affects one's native country, their destination country, and themselves (Schiff & Özden, 2005). This evokes an ongoing conversation between migrant communities, international organizations and all countries involved (Schiff & Özden, 2005). There are various reasons why people decide to relocate to other countries, many of which are the result of “push and pull” factors. These are known as aspects associated with areas of origin, areas of destination, intervening obstacles, and personal influences. In addition to this, there are cases of forced exit from a person's country of origin in the search for asylum (Tsegay, 2023).

The process of migration is extremely personal and unique for each person. Therefore, reasons for immigration vary drastically from one migrant to another. These sometimes forced major life decisions can result in very different reactions in their destination countries (Tsegay, 2023). The variation within these individual experiences produces a very complex social environment, with an abundance of mixed feelings of otherness, isolation, and a general disconnect between immigrants and their new residences. As such, it is important to recognize that these experiences are fairly reliant on legal systems. Thus, Ecuador has adopted policies ensuring that there is no discrimination on the basis of nationality or migration status (Latuff, 2020). This allows for mitigation of the negative experiences and fosters a more profound and effective method of integration.

The institutionalization of the competency center in Cuenca, Ecuador, will provide a network where diverse cultures can communicate effectively and begin to integrate. This creates an opportunity for unity within a diverse community. In order to understand the cultural dynamics in Cuenca, we must consider a variety of factors that may contribute to cross-cultural interactions. Some contributing factors that will be discussed in this chapter are the history and demographics of immigrant communities in Cuenca, and the diverse range of cultures and perceptions. Additionally, information regarding integration tactics will be investigated to aid in the unification of foreign residents into Cuencan society.

## **History of Migration Within Ecuador**

This section discusses the history of migration within Ecuador. Recent government policies favoring migrants have proven to be a key factor in the rise of immigrant populations. Ecuador presents itself as a refuge to those coming from countries with internal conflicts with its liberal border policies. The country additionally provides medical benefits and financial liberties not commonly seen elsewhere. It is for these main reasons that migrants deem Ecuador, and more specifically Cuenca, as an ideal location.

### *Foreign Policy*

Ecuador has a long history of complex foreign relations with both Venezuela and Colombia. As much as 90% of the Venezuelan population was living in poverty because of hyperinflation and a shortage of goods. As both countries were the stage for mass political corruption and economic instability, many who had taken to the streets in protest were now leaving their own countries in search of a better life abroad (Miller, 2019).

More recently, the border crisis of 2008 caused long term damage regarding foreign relations between the three countries. At this point in time, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was a significant issue within Colombia as well as being involved in Venezuela. The FARC had captured several hostages, holding them for seven years, before brokering a deal with Ecuador for release. Venezuela was also accused of providing aid to the FARC overtime with resources and sanctuary (Marcella, 2008). Therefore relations between Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador had weakened over time.

The FBI worked with the Colombian government to track a conversation between Raul Reyes (one of the leaders of FARC) and Hugo Chavez (Venezuela's president), which allowed them to pinpoint Raul's position near the Colombian-Ecuadorian border. The Colombian military sprang into action and followed Raúl across the border into Ecuadorian territory and killed him, along with other FARC militants. This revelation caused Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa, to become enraged and denounce Colombia because of their border infraction. A day after the attack, George W. Bush signed a 10-month trade preference extension for Ecuador detailing a plan, so farmers would not sell coca plants, as well as promising to help mediate drug trafficking along the northern border (Marcella, 2008). This extension allowed for the Andean countries to continue exporting goods without the cost of duties, which created more job opportunities and in

turn attempted to combat drug trafficking by removing its economic necessity (Reuters, 2008). In 2009 however, President Correa decided to suspend counterdrug operations, and in 2011, he expelled the US ambassador (Miro & June, 2024).

In 1848, Ecuador first established a diplomatic relationship with the US that was based on a dependent model. Starting in the early 1970s, the US formed strategic relationships with many Latin American countries, in which they grew financially dependent on the US. This allowed the US to control many aspects of policy in Latin America, as policymakers in these countries were rewarded greatly for their compliance. Going into the 1980s, Ecuador became increasingly dependent on trade with the US, which drove the country further into debt while also becoming politically complacent (Hey, 1993). More recently, US President Joe Biden signed the United States-Ecuador Partnership act in 2022 which allowed for the US to send about 46 million dollars in aid later in 2024 to Ecuador. This amount was meant to mitigate the refugee crisis as well as reinforce their military and police presence. This new relationship dynamic between the two countries promises increased security and prosperity throughout Ecuador (Miro & June, 2024).

### *Understanding Expats and Lifestyle Migration*

The Great Recession of 2008 in the United States caused significant financial turmoil for working class citizens within the United States, Canada, and several European countries, resulting in migration to Ecuador because of its lower cost of living. This economic crisis saw a major decrease in property value and stock prices, with retirement funds taking a plummet as well (Isabel Sánchez Egüez, 2017). With the age of retirement being 67 in the United States (Social Security Administration, 2024), there were many Americans in the baby boomer<sup>1</sup> generation who feared that their retirement savings and pensions would not suffice. According to a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2011, 20% of boomers claimed that they were “not very confident” in their retirement finances, with 66% stating they may have to delay their retirement due to the current economic status of the country. Vast numbers of boomers began to look elsewhere in search of cheaper and superior living conditions, as they were “interested in

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<sup>1</sup> A person in the baby boomer generation was born between the years 1946 and 1964 (Clarke, 2023). Baby boomers, also referred to as boomers, were at the age of retirement, or nearing it, during the time of the Great Recession.



stretching their dollars and seeing the world” (Ines Zamudio, 2016). This idea of North Americans, namely those from the United States and Canada, and Europeans moving from developed countries to developing countries is often referred to as North-South Migration, or “Lifestyle” Migration (Hayes, 2014).

Despite the fact that many retirees will refer to economic distress in their home nations as the cause of their move, it is important to acknowledge that there are both push and pull factors from the home country and destination country respectively. This allows for the new nation’s policies and economic state to provide a solution to the current unsatisfactory condition of the home country. Push factors may include economic downturn, lack of quality lifestyle, and unsatisfactory climate, while pull factors would include a cheaper cost of living, an increase in lifestyle quality, and a climate that would be suitable for retirement (García Álvarez et al., 2017).

The choice to migrate stems from a desire to change these aforementioned circumstances. “Lifestyle” migrants reference the high crime rates, tax rates, pollution, and overall stress in everyday life back in their home nations, compared to the comfort of living elsewhere (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009). Hence, Latin American nations such as Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, and Ecuador are popular countries among retirees from developed nations (Delgado Pesántez, 2014). Many Europeans often fall into this category of migration, as they are often referenced to be in search of a privileged and leisurely lifestyle (Hayes, 2015).

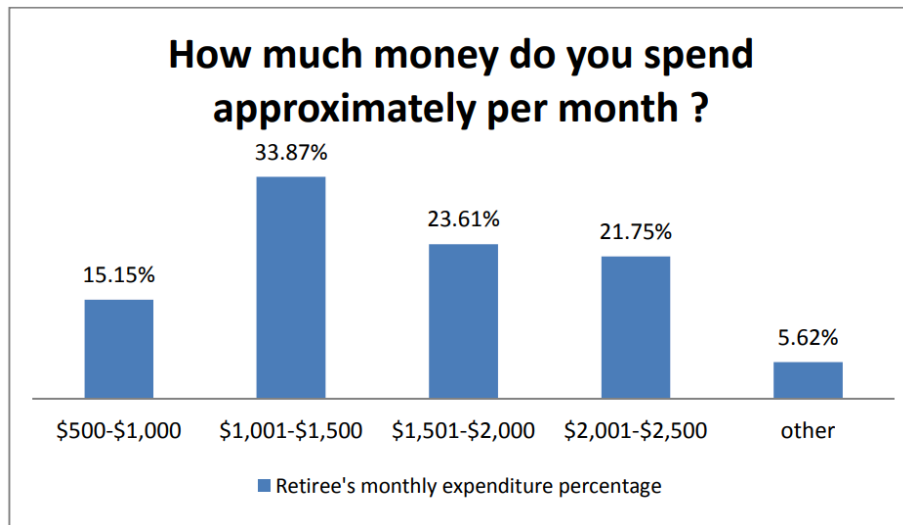
Nevertheless, the economic freedoms offered in Latin America compared to countries in the United States, Canada, and Europe are still the main factors in this move. Expats from the United States and Canada from the United States and Canada noted that the move to a Latin American country allowed them to leave the workforce at a younger age, because their retirement funds and savings were sufficient to live a life of economic comfort (Hayes, 2014). This added factor in the overall decision to migrate stems from the notion that retirees can comfortably move south without fear of living on an income that is not adequate to pay for rent or food. For instance, studies show that living in Costa Rica is 57% cheaper than living in the city of Philadelphia (Isabel Sánchez Egúez, 2017), retirees often feel they have no other choice than to move south (Hayes, 2014).

Considering these factors, Cuenca has become a hotspot for lifestyle migrants. Principally, its cheap cost of living along with cheap health care and benefits are the key factors in attracting such a large expat community. The low cost of living in Cuenca is encapsulated by

the fact that a middle class family in the United States could spend upwards of \$3,532 per month on basic household needs. However, a study has shown that a majority of interviewees in Cuenca stated a monthly budget of \$1000 to \$1500 was enough to live comfortably, as shown in Figure 1 (Delgado Pesántez, 2014). This is reflected in several surveys, as the main reason for migration to Cuenca, according to a survey shown in Figure 2, is the “low cost of living” (Delgado Pesántez, 2014).

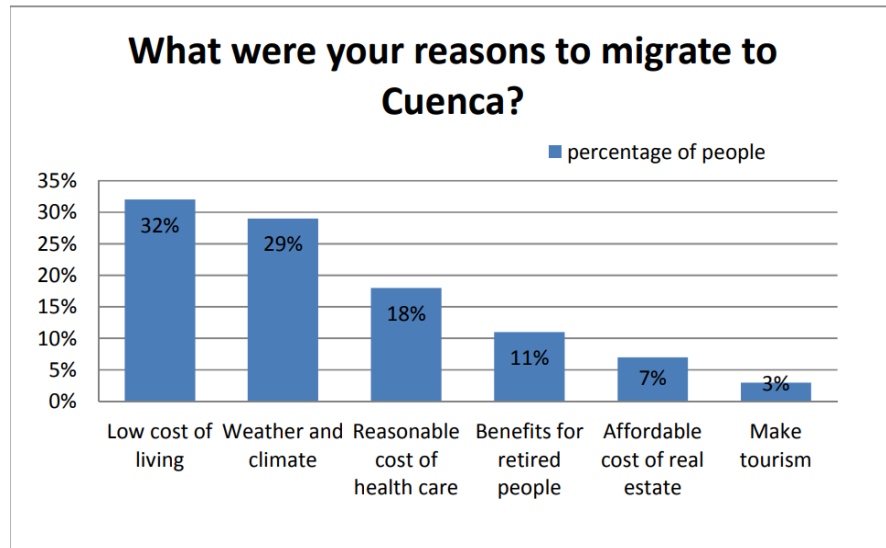
**Figure 1:**

Monthly average spending for expats from the United States in Cuenca (Delgado Pesántez, 2014, p. 34)



**Figure 2:**

Reasons expats from the United States move to Cuenca (Delgado Pesántez, 2014, p. 38)



Cheap and affordable healthcare and benefits that go along with it are additional positives when considering the move to Cuenca. Under the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Seguridad Social (IESS) system, expats receive a variety of care options and only have to pay monthly fees based on a percentage of their income, averaging roughly \$75 per month (International Living, 2024). This is significantly different from the average American health care premium, which is roughly \$660 per month (KFF, 2022). Other added benefits for expats over the age of 65 include: half price reduction for any means of transport, 50% discounts for sports, culture, and public events, along with preferential treatment at banks (Delgado Pesántez, 2014). Many expats from the United States deemed health services and retiree benefits as very important factors for deciding on Cuenca as their final destination for the move (García Álvarez et al., 2017).

### *Latin American Migratory Patterns in Ecuador*

Much like the effect lifestyle migration had on the immigration demographics of expats from North America, the Venezuelan refugee crisis is the largest of its kind in Latin America. In 2019 more than 12% of the country's population had left Venezuela (Arnson, 2019).

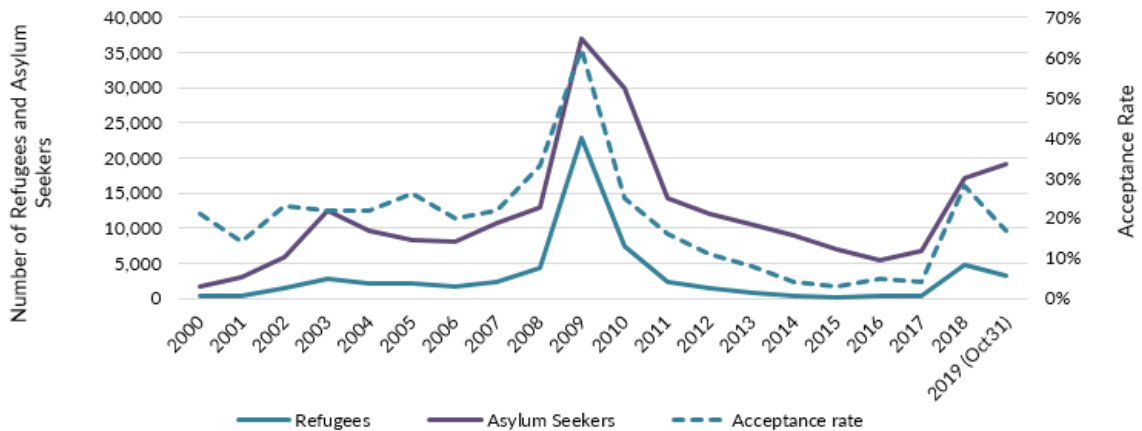
Ecuador has taken in many of these refugees since the start of 2014 when anti-government protests first started breaking out. Ecuador, however, lacks the resources to

effectively help them after a large influx of migrants entered due to the country's migration policies (Arnson, 2019). A major contributing factor in Ecuador's failure to accommodate the refugees is due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While migrants were still included in Ecuador's COVID-19 protection care, they were barred from other basic services like housing and higher paying jobs, which further weakened their health, mental as well as physical, and safety (Latuff, 2020). In response to the country's inability to provide/support this influx of immigrants the Ecuadorian Government implemented entry restrictions for migrants, such as requirements for passports, visas, and criminal record certificates (Latuff, 2020). In addition, immigrants were statistically more likely to be infected with the virus, as seen in trends worldwide where disadvantaged groups of people are disproportionately affected. This is especially true for Venezuelan refugees, as they are a much newer population in Ecuador and therefore have had less time to get settled (Serrano & López-Cevallos, 2023).

Similarly to Venezuela, Colombia has also recently been the stage for an internal conflict, leaving many citizens displaced. Ecuador has received a large number of Colombian refugees as a result. This trend can be seen in Figure 3 which shows that the refugee influx peaked in 2009 but has slowly tapered off until recently. This temporary downward trend is due to the decline of the domestic struggle in Colombia. Although the conflict has ended in principle, it is still too dangerous for Colombian refugees to return to their home country. Many Colombians have reported facing discrimination throughout Ecuador due to their perceived association with their country's violent conflict (Latuff, 2020). Venezuelans, on the other hand, seem to fare better in this respect and have reported less discrimination, although they have still experienced this to a significant degree (Latuff, 2020).

**Figure 3:**

The number of refugees and asylum seekers and their acceptance rate through 2019 (Latuff, 2020)



This fundamental difference in the socio-political climate between these refugee groups and Ecuadorians has created instability in Ecuadorian society. Migrant groups stay only out of necessity even though discrimination is widespread and negative views on the Ecuadorian government from these groups are increasing due to the growing disregard for immigrants (Latuff, 2020).

### Demographics of Migrant Populations

This section provides demographic data describing migrant communities living within Ecuador and more specifically, Cuenca. In pursuit of economic relief, expats have been drawn increasingly towards Ecuador, representing one of the largest migrant populations residing in the country, and the largest in Cuenca. Additionally, in a search for social and political liberty, Latin and South American migrants represent the largest immigrant population in Ecuador, and the second highest in Cuenca.

## *Expats in Cuenca*

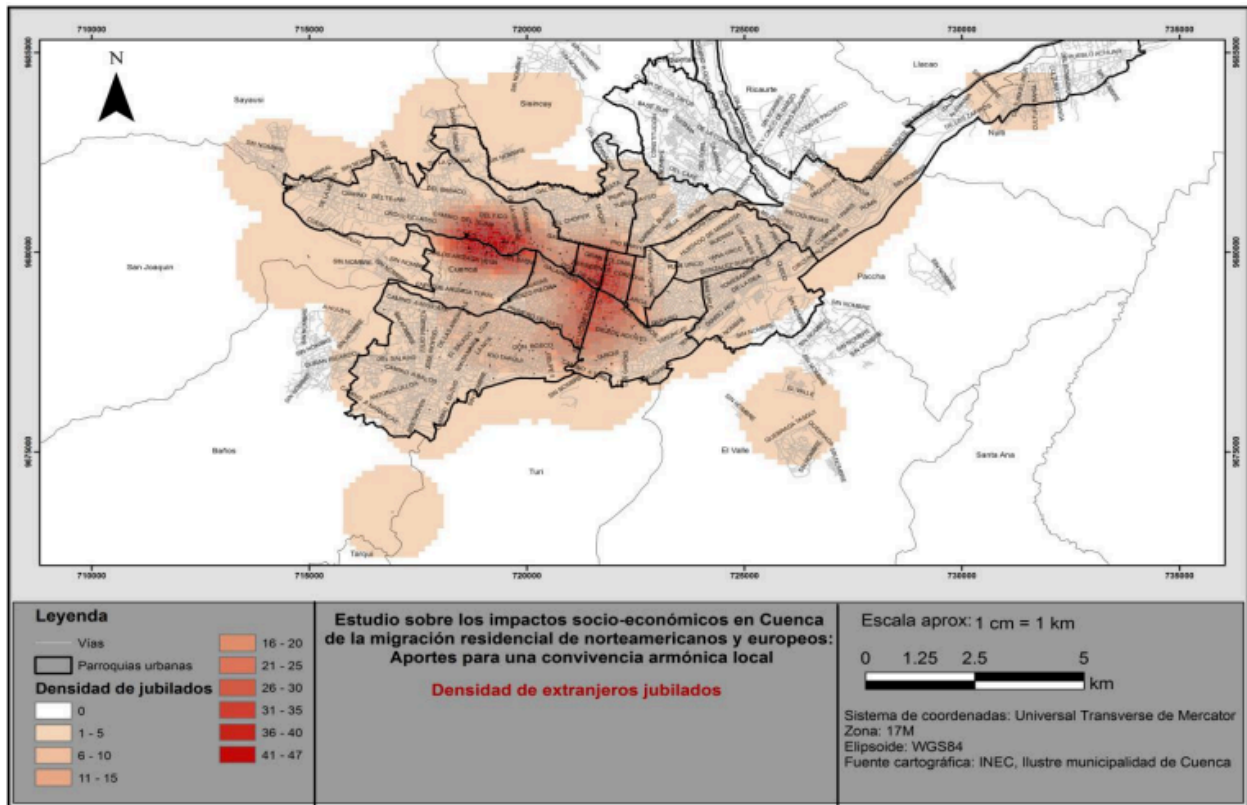
A look into demographic data shows a clear correlation between the Great Recession and the influx of expats to Ecuador. The expat community representing the United States is the most predominant of the three differing expat communities. Prior to 2000, the average North American expat migrant numbers ranged from roughly 150 to 1,200 people over a time period of ten years. However, this number saw a large uptick between 2005 through 2010 when the average number of migrants was upwards of 3,000 people (Herrera Mosquera et al., 2012). With this, North Americans became the third-highest represented immigration demographic residing in Ecuador (Delgado Pesántez, 2014). Expats between the ages of 51 and 70 make up roughly 15% of the foreign population, according to data from 2010 (Delgado Pesántez, 2014). The exponential growth previously discussed is illustrated in data from 2016, in which lifestyle migrants represented a total of 17% of the migratory population (García Álvarez et al., 2017). Furthermore, approximately 80% of migrants with retiree visas arrived during the period between 2012 through 2016. This large increase can be attributed to the majority of those in the boomer generation eventually reaching the age of retirement in the United States (Hayes, 2014).

The European and Canadian expat communities represent much smaller portions of the overall immigration within Cuenca. The European community only represents 4% of all expat migrants within Cuenca (García Álvarez et al., 2017). Of the European community, those emigrating from Spain are the most common in Cuenca, with roughly 14,000 residents according to data from 2011 (Herrera Mosquera et al., 2012). Furthermore, Canadian expats represent a slightly larger percentage of the expat community, at 9% (García Álvarez et al., 2017).

In Cuenca specifically, population densities show areas within the city that have developed a strong expat population, as shown in Figure 2. The two main areas that host this community are the Historical District, with roughly 45% of the expat population residing in or around the Ejido and the Avenido Ordóñez Lasso (García Álvarez et al., 2017). This correlates to the many news and journal outlets that put these as some of the best places to live, with Ordóñez Lasso having acquired the name “Gringolandia” (International Living, 2024). The high concentration of expats in specific areas stems from the notion of striving to feel a sense of comfort by living amongst people with similar backgrounds.

**Figure 4:**

Population density map of lifestyle migrants in Cuenca (García Álvarez et al., 2017, pp. 54)



### *Latin and South American Migrants*

One major theme regarding the increase in migration to Ecuador due to social and political factors can be seen in migrant communities whose countries of origin are in Latin and South America. A lack of concrete statistical data for these communities must be taken into account, due to the fact that not all refugees migrate legally, without the notice of the Ecuadorian government (Delgado Pesántez, 2014). Nevertheless, estimates regarding these populations have been produced and analyzed in census releases. Data from 2020 illustrates that the Venezuelan migrant population represents the largest foreign community within Ecuador, with 30,000 Venezuelans entering Ecuador in only one week as recently as 2018, soon after the Human Mobility Law was passed (Jokisch, 2023). Colombians, who were previously the largest population in Ecuador according to census data, are now the second largest, with Peruvian and Indian migrants being the third and fourth largest respectively (Ledezma, 2019). It is estimated

that there are 547,000 refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants from Venezuela living in Ecuador, with an additional 450,000 from Colombia (Dressel et al., 2020). As the number of immigrants entering has risen in recent years, the percentage of immigrants in Ecuador has climbed to over 5% total (Jokisch, 2023).

The city of Cuenca has experienced similar trends in comparison to those seen in the entirety of the country. As noted primarily with Colombian migrants, who represent the third-highest percentage of immigrants in the city, making up 20% of the immigrant population (García Álvarez et al., 2017). Cuenca itself has acknowledged these large populations, and have implemented several organizations, such as Casa del Migrante and Cuenca Soup Kitchen, to provide goods and services for refugees entering the city (Burlison et al., 2019).

## **Culture**

There are a wide variety of cultures represented among the residents of the city of Cuenca. In developing a new program to assist foreign residents with better integrating into the native culture and facilitating intercultural communication, it is important to first understand where and why cultural dissonances are occurring as well as the work that has already been done in trying to address these issues. In this section, we first discuss the current government policy regarding international relationships and previously implemented programs with similar goals of integration. We then provide a brief overview of different aspects of Cuencan culture which immigrants may encounter difficulties with in interactions with Cuencanos such as language and pervasive social biases.

### *Shifts in Policy Promoting Cooperation and Multiculturalism*

In this section, we discuss current government policy in the municipality of Cuenca, specifically regarding international relations as well as previous programs with municipal backing that looked to improve intercultural relationships.

Cuenca's government has undergone a recent change with the election of Mayor Christian Zamora on February 5, 2023 (Vargha, 2023a). He ran as a member of the Democratic Left on a platform which focused on underscoring his personal approachability and wish to see the sustainable development of the city of Cuenca (Vargha, 2023b). His vision encompasses various programs with an aim of improving intercultural communication, revitalizing public



spaces and providing additional support for at-risk members of the community, as outlined in his 101 Propuestas (Alcaldía de Cuenca, 2023). Mayor Zamora has already fulfilled or made strong progress on fulfilling several of his campaign promises. He has canceled a contentious contract for the installment of speed cameras around Cuenca put in place by the last administration; the already existing cameras have not been fully turned off, but their termination is to be scheduled soon (Soarres, 2023). However there has not been a more specific timeline provided (Beltrán, 2023). In addition, he has scheduled one day a week where his office maintains a completely open door policy, any person in Cuenca can come meet with him without an appointment to air any grievances or ask any questions they may have. This makes good on his promises of transparency and accessibility he made while on the campaign trail (Soarres, 2023; Beltrán, 2023).

There have also been a few previous programs championing the cultural integration of foreign residents into the Cuencan culture to support intercultural cohesion and cooperation. Our work draws from these in creating our center's programs. Previous initiatives include the creation of a resource guidebook, which worked to identify and address the most pressing needs of Venezuelan refugees as they looked to settle in Cuenca by providing access to already available programs such as Casa del Migrante (Burlison et al., 2019). Casa del Migrante is another government sponsored program looking to improve the lives of immigrants after their arrival in Cuenca. Their mission is to protect human rights and provide support to any and all immigrants through improving their ability to access social services, legal backing as well as providing a community space within the infocenter to promote social cohesion. Casa del Migrante is not specifically focused on only new arrivals in Ecuador, but has set out to provide additional support for all migrants, including those returning home to Cuenca after their emigration to other countries (Alcaldía de Cuenca, 2023d). This project began on April 25, 2007, and staff have been working hard in cooperation with other entities within Cuenca to protect the rights of migrants and improve intercultural dialogue ever since with many successful events (Rivas, 2023). Another project focused on a different population of foreign residents was a tandem program where new residents were paired with local volunteers in order to improve their language skills (Collucci, N. et al., 2018). This program identified language as a key issue blocking cultural integration, especially for North American expats.

Language still remains a key issue to be taken into account when creating an inclusive center for cross-cultural communication. Studies have shown that successful cultural integration relies on common language being used between the host community and the newcomers being used (Chen et al., 2008). When new arrivals take the effort to learn the host culture's language and use that learning process to connect with members of their host culture, they have more favorable attitudes towards the local people and identify more strongly with their host culture (van Niejenhuis et al., 2018). This higher regard for the host culture, in this case Cuencano culture, allows for foreign residents to integrate better overall (van Niejenhuis et al., 2018). As previously mentioned, a large portion of newcomers to Cuenca are North American retirees looking to capitalize on the benefits of Cuenca's high standard of living and relatively low cost of life (García Álvarez et al., 2017). Unfortunately, studies have shown that a little more than half of American expats say they do not speak the language of their host country (Expatriate Insider, 2015). This represents a barrier to communication as they attempt to navigate social and business interactions within their host countries. This inability to successfully communicate can cause friction with local community members who may feel that by not visibly attempting to learn their language or customs these newcomers are disrespecting their culture or trying to change it to better suit themselves (Dubs, 2015).

### *Cultural Dissonances*

Even beyond the lack of a shared language there are other aspects of Cuencano culture which may cause cultural dissonances with certain populations of foreign residents trying to make a home in the city. This section will cover a brief outline of two aspects, gender roles in Cuencano society and the different forms of racism present in the different communities within the city.

Gender roles in Cuenca reflect an interesting mix of both traditional values and modern dynamics. As in most of Latin America there is an underlying, widespread culture of machismo where women are perceived as caregivers and being less capable outside the home (Sacaquirin-Rivadeneira & Peña-Contreras, 2020). However, due to the unique historical migratory patterns into and out of the city, Cuenca has shifted away from a more traditional expression of these roles. The men were often away making additional money in the US and as such the women began to step out of the home and take on more public facing jobs with

additional leadership responsibilities (Miles, 2022). There is now an interesting dynamic where women are still perceived as far more vulnerable and better suited to caretaking roles, but they are also more likely to be encouraged to heavily pursue additional education in the hope that they could support themselves in adulthood according to observations made over a period of 30 years between 1988 and 2018 (Miles, 2022). Despite this belief there is still a marked difference in the treatment and expectations of men and women in Cuencano culture which may not align with that of new foreign residents, especially North American expats.

Another difference in inherent social biases in the different cultures represented in Cuenca is how race-based prejudice is perpetuated and presented. In Latin America the prevalence of racism is far less than in North America where it has been institutionalized over hundreds of years (Gayles, 2020). One is more likely to encounter colorism, a hold over from Spanish imperialist policies which places a larger emphasis on skin tone rather than ethnicity alone as a marker of social class (Miles, 2022). As multiple ethnic groups have lived in the same region for hundreds of years, discrimination based solely on race is not present, with few exceptions. However, it is clear that those with a lighter skin tone have more social capital and prospects than those with a darker tone (Falicov, 2013). This presents quite overtly to a North American eye, the switch in body language when talking to someone of a lighter or darker skin tone is often immediate and stark (Miles, 2022). North American expats are more used to a covert style of prejudice, characterized by prejudiced institutional policies and social biases which are seen as a taboo topic of discussion (Chin, 2015).

These combined with other differences in social cues, biases, and communication styles can make it difficult for new residents of Cuenca to begin to integrate into their host society without some issues along the way in the absence of planned assistance.

### *Hybridization vs. Integration and Benefits*

Both hybridization and integration have generally positive effects on society. For the purposes of this discussion, we would like to formally introduce a definition for each term. Hybridization occurs when two cultures create an entirely new culture that is neither one nor the other but has been influenced by both (Dear & Burrige, 2005) and integration is the ability of cross-cultural reliability, or coexistence. It is important that we are aware of both as we aim to provide a culturally diverse society with the tools necessary to communicate and function as a

whole, while also highlighting and respecting their individual cultural identities. For integration to occur within countries containing different languages, dialects and proficiencies, we can expect there to be miscommunication. In overcoming this barrier, we may encounter a mix of everything, in addition to the correct usage of words and phrases from specific cultures. The presence of both throughout this process, necessitates the understanding of each to account for their roles within our plans.

In addition to coexistence, integration also serves to lessen discrimination, and provides the potential for appreciation for cultures outside of one's own. Ecuador has a history of conveying a certain history of a white *mestizo*<sup>2</sup> portion of society (Merchán & Sebastián, 2003). This constructed image misrepresents even some native Ecuadorian residents. By facilitating integration through cross-cultural communication, it can provide people a sense of recognition in Ecuadorian society. In addition to this sense of belonging, the knowledge provided on different cultures can allow people to discover themselves in ways that they were not aware were possible (Mishel Molina Panoluisa et al., 2022). This is due to the exchange of knowledge that is made possible by cross-cultural conversations. Overall, the implementation of integration practices will pose benefits for both new and native residents by fostering communication, and providing an opportunity for self discovery.

## **Perception**

This section provides insight into the perceptions of and dynamics between the cultures that make up the social fabric of the city of Cuenca. The North American expats represent a large portion of the newest immigrants making their home in Cuenca. This section will discuss their perception of both themselves within a Cuencan context and Cuencano culture. We will also cover the native Cuencano's perception of both the previously discussed North American expats and other migrant populations in the city.

### *North American Perception of Cuencan Life*

Many North Americans feel a strong sense of comfort and safety within Cuenca. Mentions of the cleanliness, calmness, and overall sense of community within the city are factors that heavily impact this positive perception. Interviews of North American expats display their

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<sup>2</sup> Of mixed race, having Spanish and indigenous descent.

admiration for Cuencan values regarding the importance of family and pride in their city and country (Isabel Sánchez Egüez, 2017).

It is for these reasons, and the hospitality of many Cuencan families, that the North American community attempts to regulate any instances of social conflict. Common courtesy and decency push expats to readily accept changes and adapt to their new life in Cuenca, so as to not paint a target on the back of their community in the eyes of the locals. It is noted throughout a variety of surveys that expats already feel alienated and out of place because they physically do not look the same as the local community (Hayes, 2015). In this sense, it is essential to maintain that interactions among the locals are cordial, well-mannered, and professional. As such, stories of Americans berating local clerks for not speaking English or causing outbursts for not being catered to, are shared among the expat community in a similar connotation to horror stories. Stories circulating around the North American immigrants about these types of interactions are intended to demean, shame, and make an example out of the classless actions of the individual (Hayes, 2015). It is through methods like that, in which expats attempt to avoid being called an “Ugly American” by not only Cuencans, but others in their North American community (Hayes & Carlson, 2017). It is through methods like this that expats attempt to avoid being called the self-imposed term “Ugly American” by Cuencans and North Americans alike (Hayes & Carlson, 2017).

### *Societal Dynamics*

As previously mentioned, Cuenca has experienced a large influx of immigrants from all over the world. Because of this large presence of immigrants, in order to discuss the positive effects of integration, we must first familiarize ourselves with the pre-existing dynamics that are present within Cuenca today. Several examples of these dynamics are discussed by Ann Miles, in her book *Unraveling time*. Moreover, researchers sought to capture these insights, and with respect to the Venezuelan immigrant community, found that discrimination and bias often influenced the perceptions Ecuadorian residents had of immigrants (Dressel et al., 2020).

Cuencans are known for their unhesitating kindness during conversations with strangers. Despite these widespread customs, their skepticism towards immigrants is still present during conversations with non-native residents. An excerpt from *Unraveling Time reads*: “Living close together in the city and sharing the open spaces did not bring people together. Most had only a

passing sort of cordiality with their *conventillo* neighbors and a healthy suspicion of strangers.” (Miles, 2022, p. 118). This quote provides insight into the Cuencan mentality when it comes to other members of the community, and especially their feelings towards foreigners. This reveals that although they are outwardly hospitable, there is still that distrust from the very beginning.

In studies of these occurrences, Ecuadorian residents typically felt as if they had to overcompensate for the immigrants, as it was in their nature to be kind and welcoming to newcomers. However, over time these native residents felt as if their demeanor was taken for granted, and sometimes exploited. One Ecuadorian health care worker stated “We (Ecuadorians) are calm, we are not violent, actually we are welcoming... this benefits those that come to our country, but at our expense, and it cannot be this way” (Dressel et al., 2020). This quote shows that the general perceptions of Ecuadorian people make them vulnerable to manipulation, as migrants anticipate a welcoming nature and then use it to their advantage. Additionally, it was observed that native residents wanted to help immigrants, but tended to become conflicted if they believed that the resources provided to immigrants meant fewer services for Ecuadorian-born citizens (Dressel et al., 2020). This is to show that despite the truth behind Ecuadorian kindness, there is still weariness and a general uncertainty towards immigrant populations in Ecuador.

Alternatively, it was emphasized that the mentalities of immigrants in Cuenca were greatly affected by stress. In the case of Venezuelan families that immigrated as refugees, for asylum, or due to poverty, the decisions to move were not voluntary. Furthermore, many of these immigrants chose Ecuador because of its use of the American dollar, as it was seen as an opportunity to earn, with the prospect of moving away thereafter (Dressel et al., 2020). This provides us with an understanding of immigrant mentalities, in that they can not only be greatly disturbed by their relocation, but that some are only intending to stay for a short while. Although this research was produced through observations of a specific cultural identity in Ecuador, it provoked thought in the context of our work. Its relation to similar observations made by Ann Miles reminded us to be considerate of the backgrounds of the many people we interacted with, and provided awareness of the cultural gaps that we were trying to bridge.

## **Integration**

In this section, we discuss the application of integration within the city of Cuenca, and the benefits that it could provide for Cuencan society. We present cross-culture integration tactics

that we have found in research such as cultural information based play activities during school recess (Mishel Molina Panoluisa et al., 2022), and bridge building activities in integrated communities (Phillips et al., 2013). We then relate our findings to a previous IQP that had been tasked with a similar project (Claveau et al., 2017).

### *Integration tactics*

When implementing integration into school playground activities in Cuenca, they aim to educate children at an influential age in the hope that it can mitigate the propagation of cultural stereotypes and discriminatory beliefs (Mishel Molina Panoluisa et al., 2022). These mentalities can be generated by households that are not culturally diverse, and by people who carry these mental stereotypes without being fully aware of different cultures. This tactic is geared towards children because they are much more susceptible to change, in contrast with adults, who tend to move forward with their preconceived notions. The goal of these activities is to educate and get ahead of the issue for future benefit (Mishel Molina Panoluisa et al., 2022). This information presents the stubbornness of older generations and informs us of the increased amount of effort required to assist in their diversification.

Bridge building activities utilize a mediated group discussion to resolve an issue. These tactics were tested in the community forums of culturally diverse locations that also happened to have been affected by large scale immigration. In these forums, people, regardless of background or cultural identity, provided their insights and opinions on an issue impacting the group as a whole. This integration tactic has been observed to have a positive effect on the people in attendance, with people stating that despite having different cultural identities, they were much more similar than anticipated (Phillips et al., 2013). Bridge building activities are useful in adult cross-culture conversations, because it is in the activities' nature to break down the walls that people put up. Getting past that initial shock is the first step towards progression. This will be important towards the development of a plan for cultural integration as it provides an example of how to bring people together effectively, which is something we will consider during the research and design phases of our project.

Another example of integration tactics can be seen in student-led IQPs. A past IQP from March 201 named *Integration Nation: Supporting the Promotion of Community Engagement in Cuenca, Ecuador*, in which they combatted integration in Cuenca by setting out to collect

information on their public in order to provide solutions on a case by case basis (Claveau et al., 2017). From this, we learn that in order to try and provide solutions to integration, we must determine the clashes between cultures and better facilitate and mediate interaction. We also learn that there is not just one standard solution to this issue. Much like the constantly changing makeup of Cuencan residents over the last 20 years, our plan must also adapt to the current demographics in order to benefit the community.

### *Conclusion*

From our research we have defined important elements of our work such as the history of migration, foreign policy, cultural dissonances, and integration tactics. These elements contribute to a clear image of the historical context behind integration in Cuenca, and furnish a need for cross-cultural communication in current day Cuencan society.

In our work, we created a plan for the institutionalization of the competency center in Cuenca. This would allow for a space where immigrants and native Cuencan residents can share their knowledge and experiences and contribute to the collective knowledge. The creation of the planned outline for the center was achieved through investigating demographic data, potential programs, and linguistic factors to propose a reasonable budget for events and personnel.



## Methodology

The goal of our work was to provide a roadmap to institutionalize the centers in which foreigners can exchange knowledge and life experiences in Cuenca through a series of short and long-term objectives. In order to achieve this goal, we developed the following research objectives. The team has:

1. Collected and mapped demographic data of migration populations in Cuenca.
2. Identified which programs provided the highest benefit to both Cuencan and migrant communities.
3. Evaluated immigrant comfort levels with languages in Ecuador.
4. Determined the logistics of staffing for the center and a reasonable budget.

This chapter provides an overview of the methods we used to cultivate relevant information specific to Cuenca's cultural diversity. In addition, we explain how this information was processed and the impact it can have on the institutionalization of the International Competency Center.

### **Objective 1: Collect and map demographic data of migration populations in Cuenca.**

To better understand which areas within the city are the most accessible for migrant populations, we employed the usage of spatial mapping and analysis and semi-structured interviews. In using these methods, we obtained data to determine potential locations for the implementation of the center, while also identifying locations for subsequent interviews.

#### *Spatial Mapping and Analysis*

The concept of spatial mapping and analysis allowed for the team to generate an understanding of migrant communities in terms of their displacement throughout the city. This form of environmental analysis required the study of maps and density figures to determine the frequency of subjects within a geographic space (Cumming & Seppelt, 2022). Statistics regarding the total number of immigrants per nationality were collected via research into census data collected by the Ecuadorian government, between the years of 2010 and 2022. Additionally, the location of different migrant communities within the city were determined through an analysis of population density maps. With the 2020 census data for Ecuador currently not

released to the public, more recent information was provided as needed by the GAD Municipal de Cuenca or local universities.

Information gathered from this analysis allowed the team to create a rationale for the location preferences of the center. As previously stated, analysis of population density maps provided the team specific areas in which migrant communities are the most prominent. The information obtained from specific analyses utilized for cross-reference interview answers regarding this specific topic, provided the team with locations for the placement of the center that were the most accessible.

Consequently, analysis of population density figures provided areas in which the team confined their efforts for data retrieval to specific locations. In these bounded study areas, information provided from the figures allowed for a more structured and inclusive set of interviews and surveys. In this sense, the understanding of which migrant groups are the most predominant within Cuenca, and where they reside, allowed the team to administer these interviews and surveys that were tailored to specific language preferences. These data additionally allowed for a more comprehensive decision to be made regarding programs and locations that will be most beneficial and accessible for everyone involved.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to grasp a more cohesive understanding of the city and its diverse population (Johnson, 2017). The team based the locations for these interviews on popular migrant locations found in the spatial mapping and analysis. Several areas within the historical center of the city, including Ordonez Lasso Avenue, have been established as settling locations for lifestyle migrants due to the relatively high housing costs (García Álvarez et al., 2017). Regular expat meeting spots such as Nomadas Bistro proved to be beneficial places to find interview and survey participants. Furthermore, restaurants such as Moliendo and La Quinta Maravilla, allowed the group to interact with migrants coming from different cultural backgrounds, such as Colombia or Peru. The selection of different well-known and populated migrant locations allowed for a diverse set of thoughts and opinions, giving way to a more inclusive and accommodating center.

The qualities of a semi-structured interview allowed for a diverse set of participants to describe and illustrate their own opinions and experiences in relation to the research topic

(Johnson, 2017). The questions focused on how the migrant communities view their interaction with the local populous, which places are most frequented by migrant communities, and overall conveniences regarding the location of the center and transportation to it (see Appendix C). With guided questions focusing on these topics, we achieved a deeper understanding of the local migrant communities.

Responses were expected to describe the intercultural relations migrants have amongst themselves and the local community, while also touching upon their standing and place in Cuencan society. The group discussed easily accessible locations in which transportation to and from is adequate, cost effective, and timely with interviewees. An analysis of the results required a search for similar and recurring themes, which could be used for the implementation choice of the center.

### *Surveys*

The administering of surveys aided in determining potential locations for the center. Questions pertaining to location were asked to obtain quantitative and logistical data from a large population (Jones et al., 2013). Surveys were both face-to-face and electronic, as these two methods provided the ability to interact with a large population, fostered a high percentage of response rates, and allowed for relatively quick data collection and analysis (Jones et al., 2013). The same locations used to obtain participants for the semi-structured interviews were the same locations in which the surveys were administered as well. The questions focused on the participant's country of origin and *parroquia*<sup>3</sup> they currently reside in (see Appendix F). Answers were expected to only be countries that are not Ecuador, and areas or neighborhoods within Cuenca.

These questions were in an open-ended format since multiple choice format may have created boundaries if specific choices were not represented. Although this format had the possibility to yield qualitative data that can be hard to analyze quantitatively (Rubenfeld, 2004), answers regarding locations and places were able to be transferred into easily representable data.

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<sup>3</sup> *Parroquia*, translated to “parish” in English, represents the smallest general breakdown of a specific area within the city of Cuenca. This can often be compared to a neighborhood as seen in the United States. For a map of what the *parroquias* look like, please refer to Appendix F.

This method produced quantitative data regarding demographics that was used for cross-referencing, and implemented into the spatial mapping and analysis.

**Objective 2: Identify which programs provide the highest benefit to the Cuencan and migrant communities.**

To find which programs are most beneficial, the group looked for those that offer the most help and foster the largest engagement. We started by looking at the data available from past research journals and collections of data from universities. We then collected our own data using the coding technique to interpret surveys and interviews, which were used to visualize aspects of established programs and other resources available. This gave us a comprehensive understanding of the historical and current impact of programs and integration in general in Ecuador. We obtained results that include immigrant opinion on program inclusion of language learning, development of cultural understanding, and other beneficial resources.

*Interviews and Surveys*

We used surveys that ask the participant fixed-answer questions to gauge their opinion. Participants were asked about their experience with integration systems and resources, as well as their experience being an immigrant in Cuenca. With the data obtained through the surveys we were able to turn responses into numerical data using the fixed responses (seen in Appendix D). We conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C), with locals who work for the programs as well as local immigrants. From the interviews, we learned a great deal about what people want to see in a program and were able to incorporate those ideas into our programs. Correlations between these factors and immigrant satisfaction decided what ideas we incorporated. This has worked well in the past for gathering public opinion about services for immigrants such as in the *Refugee Guidebook* created by WPI students which states that they conducted 18 separate interviews with support organizations to collect resources and services available to refugees compiled into their very own guidebook (Burlison et al., 2019). In using these methods, we created a robust understanding of what needs to go into a program suited for cultivating cultural awareness amongst immigrants.

### *Data Collection*

We were able to collect data from the surveys we conducted using Qualtrics that gave us a database of information to use in our findings. Qualtrics made it easy to group together data and create graphs/figures that are relevant to our objectives. The survey was posted in many places including on the GAD Municipal's Facebook page as well as distributed to individuals we thought would provide good insight into areas we were researching.

### **Objective 3: Evaluate immigrant comfort levels with languages in Ecuador**

In this evaluation, we aimed to recognize and account for different language abilities in English and Spanish to better accommodate a large variety of cultures within integration practices. By acknowledging these different understandings, we have considered the needs of distinct cultures and implemented programs that better equip them for integration within Ecuadorian society. We achieved this by conducting semi-structured video interviews that focused on the verbal barriers present within the community (Johnson, 2016). These questions were open-ended and targeted the experiences migrants encountered when they immigrated to Cuenca. In addition, we provided options for our prospective interviewees in the case they wanted to participate but had different comfort levels regarding the interview format. These additional options were provided in the form of both anonymously recorded semi-structured interviews and surveys with no video aspect. Other data collected for this objective was obtained by a survey that self-reports the language proficiencies of participants.

#### *Semi-Structured, Video Recorded Interviews*

Our video recorded interviews were conducted in a location provided to us by our sponsors, or at the discretion of our participants. These private locations allowed for a distraction free, relaxed environment. We recorded our interviews using an iPhone camera, as it is available and provided adequate quality audio and video for our investigation. The videos were uploaded to our shared Google Drive and deleted from cellular devices to establish a video storage system in a considerate and responsible way for interviewees' privacy. In addition to the video recorded file that we acquired from these interviews; we also required the attendance of two team members during the interview with both team members responsible for collecting their own notes (Johnson, 2016).

Video recorded interviews were selected for their effectiveness in capturing interactions and dialog (Johnson, 2016). The face-to-face aspect of the interviews was selected to provide a relaxed environment, as it provided us with an opportunity to build rapport between our team and our interviewees during the video recording process (Johnson, 2016). The utilization of these methods in our interviews allowed us to reflect on the different dialects of the migrants and provided us with a deeper understanding of the interviewees' life and experiences in a country that was once, if not still is, foreign to them. Additionally, these interviews provided an opportunity to ask interviewees about their feelings towards learning other languages in their community, a chance to learn their awareness of language based educational resources in their area and provided an appropriate place to ask if these resources were effective learning resources for their specific backgrounds.

The audience of these interviews included, but were not limited to, North American expats, Colombian and Venezuelan immigrants, and other less prevalent groups (Bernal Pesántez & Laura, 2015). There has been a history of underrepresentation of the wider variety of immigrants into Cuenca. Researchers state that this lack of representation is due to language barriers. These dynamics often leave minority groups of immigrants isolated from society because they do not have the means of integrating into it (Bernal Pesántez & Laura, 2015). This representation is important because many immigrants believe that learning Spanish in Cuenca results in increased acceptance due to respected effort to learn and practice any amount of Spanish (Hayes, 2015).

The face-to-face interviews were conducted in the language of fluency for the interviewee (Johnson, 2016). With this consideration in mind, we prepared questions in both English and Spanish. Due to our language levels, we conducted the interviews with a mix of both English and Spanish to ensure that the questions are fully understood by the interviewee (Johnson, 2016). The intention of this flexible and fluid approach to the interview process was to yield clear and detailed answers. These interviews provided our team with insight on the cross-cultural dynamics and language barriers specific to Cuenca, which we then accounted for in the formulation of our plan for the institutionalization of the competency center in Cuenca.

## *Surveys*

We implemented a variation of the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire, or LEAP-Q for short. LEAP-Q is a self-reported series of questions that provide an accurate level of language proficiency (Marian, et al. 2007). Studies have shown that the adaptation and application of a LEAP-Q in other countries have revealed a correlation between the differences in language levels and experiences within a community (Narasimhan, et al. 2023). Through the modification of these questions into surveys that better fit Cuenca, we were able to acquire data that reflects language comfort levels numerically, and with a direct association to one's background. This was done by using variations of the survey in both English and Spanish. This provided us with better visualization of comfort levels throughout Cuenca and allowed us to prepare accordingly for the cross-cultural events and institutionalized procedures for integration within Cuenca.

### **Objective 4: Determine the logistics of staffing for the center and a reasonable budget.**

Our final objective was to determine the most cost-effective method to implement large scale, institutionalized international centers in Cuenca. These centers are meant to provide programs which support foreign residents as they begin to integrate into Cuencano culture and facilitate cross-cultural information exchange. In creating a budget for these centers, certain cost points were identified such as the number of staff needed to facilitate all the programs identified as being the most beneficial through our previous research. We also needed to identify a feasible salary for center staff based on other international development and language learning projects within Cuenca as well as what additional support personnel need to be available such as translators and the costs associated.

To this end, we performed a comprehensive institutional analysis of successful integration programs in other countries to determine how funds and manpower should be allocated within our proposed center. Institutional analysis focuses on identifying the role of institutions in shaping the opportunities available to and the constraints on people as they interact with one another and their environment (Epstein et al., 2022). We had already begun this work with our preliminary literature review prior to our arrival in Cuenca, however continuing this analysis entailed a more detailed investigation of specific existing frameworks and their success factors, including funding allocation.

In addition, a cost-effectiveness analysis allowed for a direct comparison of the programs used in these locations, with respect to their budgets and other resource allocations, with the programs already identified as the most necessary within Cuenca and their most effective implementation (Drummond et al., 2015). Using a cost-effectiveness analysis allowed for us to consider the possible benefits of our center beyond the monetary value that a conventional cost-benefit analysis focuses on by necessity. In building this program we were looking to develop a sustainable solution for the promotion of intercultural communication which is not necessarily directly beneficial economically. There is more value in the boost it gives to social cohesion, thus using a more contextual analysis method was more useful overall.

The best way to identify and address the budgetary needs of this program was to utilize the Ingredients Method. This method had us identify the logical model of our program, then identify specific resources needed, then try to value the overall costs of these resources and using that information estimate the total cost (Rifenbark et al., 2023; Crowley et al., 2018). First, we utilized the comparative research done in our institutional analysis to build a basic budget design. Then we began to reallocate resources to ensure the specific needs of the people of Cuenca, as identified in our previous interviews and survey, are being met and funding matches the economic necessities of working in Cuenca. This included a comparative analysis of similar positions and salaries, such as Spanish teachers at second language programs in the city and translators already working in Ecuador. This analysis was based on data collected from publicly available job postings and online job boards for the city of Cuenca including the salary ranges. Beyond establishing the economic benefits and constraints on this center, we analyzed what social benefits these programs can offer to the community and integrated this into our overall funding allocation. This was done with a deductive coding analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews previously outlined.

## **Interview and Survey Standards**

### *Interview Procedure*

The team utilized the snowball sampling method as the primary method in obtaining participants for semi-structured interviews (Nikolopoulou, 2022). This sampling method involved the selection of a base set of participants, who then referred the interviewer to others



that they felt would be relevant candidates for further interviews (InnovateMR, 2023). The first selection of participants included those who have previously worked, and those who are seeking to work with our sponsor. Additionally, the team worked with Casa del Migrante, whose objective is to provide aid to immigrants in need to obtain a more diverse set of participants (Alcaldía de Cuenca, n.d.). This effort sought to mitigate neglect of underrepresented and underprivileged immigrant communities within the city. As the resulting investigation and data was ultimately reliant on this first selection of participants, it was essential that they represent the multicultural nature of the immigrant community in Cuenca (InnovateMR, 2023). To further this notion of creating a diverse and inclusive data set, the team aimed to interview a baseline of five people representing each North American, Venezuelan, and Columbian demographic, as the base of our study was focused toward these groups. Objectives 1, 2 and 3 aimed to have at least one interview per week pertaining to that specific objective, occurring over a period of 5 weeks. This led to a total of 15 fifteen interviews, with each objective completing one interview per week. Nevertheless, the team was receptive to interviewing any and all immigrants willing to participate in this study, regardless of national background.

The snowball sampling method allowed for the group to interact with hard-to-reach communities. This is because the participant would only refer to someone “whom they know and trust to the researcher” (Nikolopoulou, 2022). In doing so, the future participants felt a sense of trust with the researcher, as someone they personally knew and trusted had recommended them for this data collection (InnovateMR, 2023). This method is used extensively to collect data on refugee populations in which there may be instances where individuals within these populations have no records, or groups who tend to “conceal their presence” and identities (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). Given there was more information and data pertaining to North American and European immigrants within the city (Delgado Pesántez, 2014), this method provided an insight into communities that are traditionally underrepresented in academia. This then provided the group with an avenue for data collection allowing for a more inclusive study (Parker et al., 2020).

Because snowball sampling can lead to a convergence of a non-inclusive and representative dataset (Bhat, 2018), the team employed convenience sampling as a supplementary method (Qualtrics, n.d.). Convenience sampling involved the random selection of participants based on convenience of accessibility for the researcher (Qualtrics, n.d.). In practice,

this required the group to visit locations pointed out by the spatial mapping and analysis, along with visiting random locations throughout the city. The selection of location inherently led to bias, since not every subset of a population was present in the randomized location (Fleetwood, 2018). To combat the effects of bias, the group conducted this convenience sampling multiple times to obtain a diverse set of thoughts and opinions (Fleetwood, 2018). Furthermore, this type of sampling allowed for data to be collected in a time, labor, and cost-efficient manner (Fleetwood, 2018).

To obtain usable and relevant information, the previously mentioned semi-structured interviews followed a general format. Interviews aimed to be one-to-one, conducted in a face-to-face manner, and were held in locations provided by the sponsor (Taherdoost, 2022). Prior to any questions being asked, an introductory statement regarding interviewee rights, along with the intended purpose this interview was orally presented to the interviewee (see Appendix E). The reading of this preamble ensured that IRB practices pertaining to the study of human subjects was upheld; guaranteeing that the participant felt comfortable that their information was going to be used properly. Furthermore, questions posed were presented in a manner that allows for the participant to provide their full insight and thoughts about the matter. Questions became progressively more thought-provoking throughout the interview, and follow-up questions were used to either clarify a statement or prompt more elaboration on a prior answer (Taherdoost, 2022).

### *Interview Data Collection and Analysis*

Interviews were audio recorded using the Voice Memos app on iPhone. These audio recordings were then converted and saved as an MP3 file. Upon doing this, the audio will be transcribed using the encrypted site of goodtape.io. This transcription was reviewed to ensure accuracy and saved as a Microsoft Word document.

The team used manual deductive coding (Delve, n.d.) to analyze the qualitative data collected. Broadly speaking, coding is a way of grouping and organizing qualitative data into themes for further analysis (Burnard et al., 2008). The group used a method of this called deductive coding. This involves creating a set of codes prior to conducting the interview (Medelyan, 2019). Although this can lead to a set bias regarding what types of answers one is looking for, it is time efficient for reports that have a “predetermined structure” for how findings

should be (Delve, n.d.). Deductive coding is the ideal method, because the team dealt with a fixed set of data findings (see Table 1), consisting of main topics including location, language, and programs.

**Table 1.** Coding Themes

<b>Main code</b>	<b>Themes that will address the main code</b>
Location	Countries of origin
	Current residential locations in Cuenca
	Frequented locations
	Accessible center locations
Language	Period lived in Cuenca/background
	Language preferences/knowledge ability
Needs	Events in programs
	Professional Knowledge
	Cultural integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programs/events in place that will be used for cultural integration</li> <li>● Ways people have culturally integrated</li> <li>● Active event, physically going somewhere</li> </ul>
Concerns	Barriers in accessibility
	Connections available
	Relations with locals
Culture Shocks	Observations of Ecuadorian Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● words/customs/culture shocks</li> <li>● Passive things</li> </ul>
	Uniqueness of interviewee's culture

### *Survey Procedure*

To obtain relevant information surveys were conducted to obtain data points for analytical purposes. Surveys can cover a large population in a short amount of time and have few ethical concerns. The questions within the survey (see Appendix D) had maximum clarity to ensure that they minimized ambiguity and bias (Jenn, 2006). More simplified versions of questions from the interviews were used in the survey so that there were fixed responses. This served as the basis for data collection as well as visualization that will allow for a comprehensive analysis. Surveys were administered both in person and asynchronously. In-person surveys were conducted in pairs at population hotspots through convenience sampling. The surveyor provided the option for participants to complete the survey orally or use a link to complete the survey privately. Asynchronous interviews were administered via a link and QR code on posters placed in communal spaces such as Sunrise Cafe in the historical city center. Links were distributed through posts on the Municipality's social media in addition to posts in FaceBook groups such as Expats in Cuenca and in the Gringo Post. The survey's final question asked if the participant was willing to participate in an in-depth interview regarding the topics of the objectives: location, programs, and language. If a participant answered yes a new set of questions emerged, to request the participant's contact information and potential availability. Responses were used as data to map out potential correlations using data analysis. This allowed for a collection of preliminary data which then led to more substantial discoveries at later points in time.

### **Participant Confidentiality and Consent**

All interviews conducted began with a statement concerning the organization the team is collecting data for, along with subsequent questions regarding the confidentiality and consent of participants. Interviewers stated that all data and information collected will be utilized in its entirety by the GAD Municipal de Cuenca. Participant's identifying information, such as names, would only be turned into the GAD Municipal de Cuenca if they state that they would like for their names to be attached with the information and data they provide in their respective interviews and surveys. All participants were assigned a numerical identifier which indicates geographic location data and connection to the previous participant who referred them to this

study. Names and other identifying information were only collected if the participant specifically consented to the release of their identity to the public and the GAD Municipal de Cuenca. Additionally consent to gather audio recordings for all interviews was asked for, along with participant preference for name release. Furthermore, there were no questions or information collected pertaining to any participant's legal immigration or residency status within Ecuador.

### *Convenience Sampling*

Participants contacted during convenience sampling were asked for their identity release preference; whether or not they would consent for their name to be attached along with the information and data they provide. If they consented to their identity being released to the public, their name was attached next to their numerical identifier. This numerical identifier simply uses the location in which the person was first contacted, and the subsequent number of their interview or survey within that location.

### *Snowball Sampling*

Each interviewee was asked to provide a reference to a new possible participant within their community. References made by participants for the snowball sampling method were placed into a confidential Excel spreadsheet containing the person's name and contact information, that only the group will have access to. After initial contact was made, this information was deleted. The following procedure of confidentiality and privacy used the same method as the convenience sampling. Our interview series began with a set of primary interviewees referred to this enterprise by the GAD Municipal de Cuenca who are leaders within their communities. These primary interviewees were assigned a single digit numerical identifier. The next round of interviewees had this number in addition to their own single letter identifier in order to track which communities each participant is connected with without the use of identifying information. For each subsequent round of referred interviews participants were assigned the identifier of their reference as well as their own single digit identifier. The personal identifier of each participant switched off between numerical and alphabetical with every round, odd rounds having numerical identifiers and even having alphabetical. For example, the first contact interviewed representing the North American community will be given the identifier "1". The interviewees that this contact refers to would be labeled 1A, 1B, 1C, etc. Future participants

referred by 1A will be given the identifier 1A1, 1A2, 1A3, etc. Further participants referred by 1A1 will be labeled 1A1A, 1A1B, 1A1C, etc.

### *Additional Concerns Addressed*

We are aware that working with migrant communities brings some additional risks, one of which is the difficult topics associated with immigration experiences that can potentially be triggering for interviewees. Moreover, immigration presents risks pertaining to our participants' legal status. Our team is aware that when conducting community-based research, participants may differ in legal status, and regardless of this fact, their perspectives are valuable to our study (Jack et al., 2020). Because of this, our team took additional measures to ensure confidentiality is maintained for the protection of our interviewees. We believe this clarity is essential due to our joint work with the GAD Municipal de Cuenca, as we did not want to discourage participation within our study due to legal fears.

Our team protected participants by utilizing a mix of anonymity, and confidentiality. When conducting convenience sampling, we did not record personal identifying information such as names or phone numbers. However, our use of snowball sampling required collecting minimal information to contact recommended interviewees. To execute this in a protective manner, we used numerical identifiers when processing the data collected, and only included names alongside identifiers if the participants chose to contribute that information to our study. Additionally, we continuously conveyed to our interviewees that their participation is entirely optional and provided them with the option to redact statements if they felt that the disclosure of that information may put them in jeopardy.

We believe this reduced the risk for all our participants as it provided them with multiple opportunities to reconsider their amount of participation in this study and provided interviewees with an adequate level of confidentiality between them and our team. This ensures that the data collected is independent of the person and alleviates them from any concerns pertaining to their legal documentation while participating in a project conducted with the support from the GAD Municipal de Cuenca.

## Findings

This section illustrates the data that was collected during the interviews and surveys conducted. The section is broken up into multiple parts, pertaining to data collection statistics, and three objectives presented within the Methodology. The group interviewed and surveyed multiple demographics, leading to sets of opinions and insights that are encompassing and representative of the cultures and communities present in Cuenca.

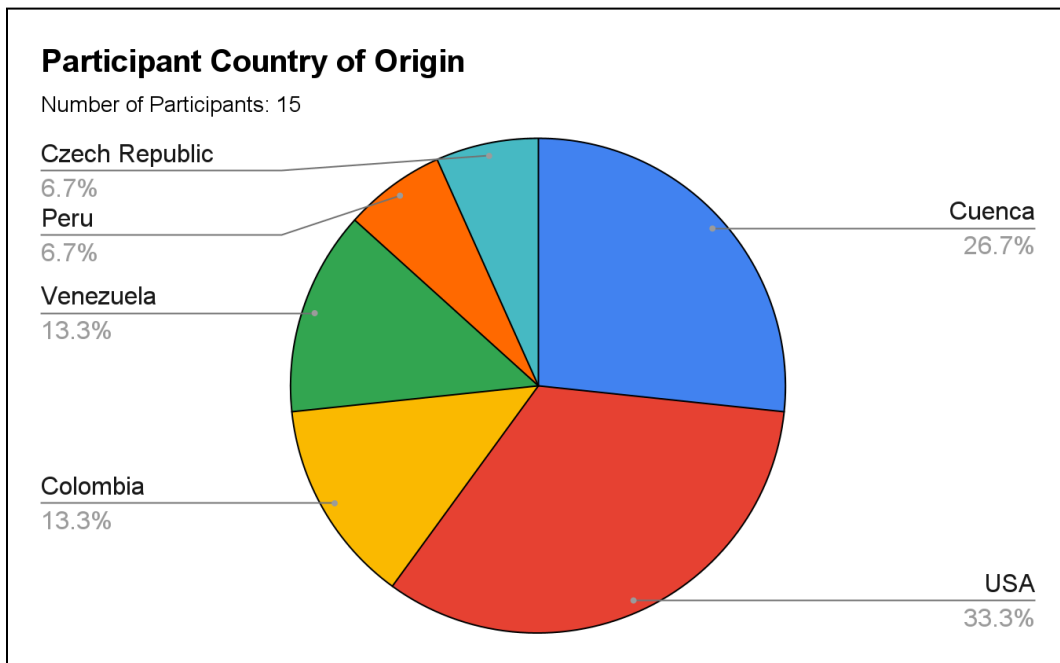
### Breakdown of Participant Demographic

#### *Interviews*

Our group conducted a series of 15 interviews with a variety of people from different demographics. Amongst those interviewed, the majority were from the United States and native Cuencanos. Additional demographics were Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and the Czech Republic (seen in Figure 5).

**Figure 5:**

Country of origin for those who participated in the interviews

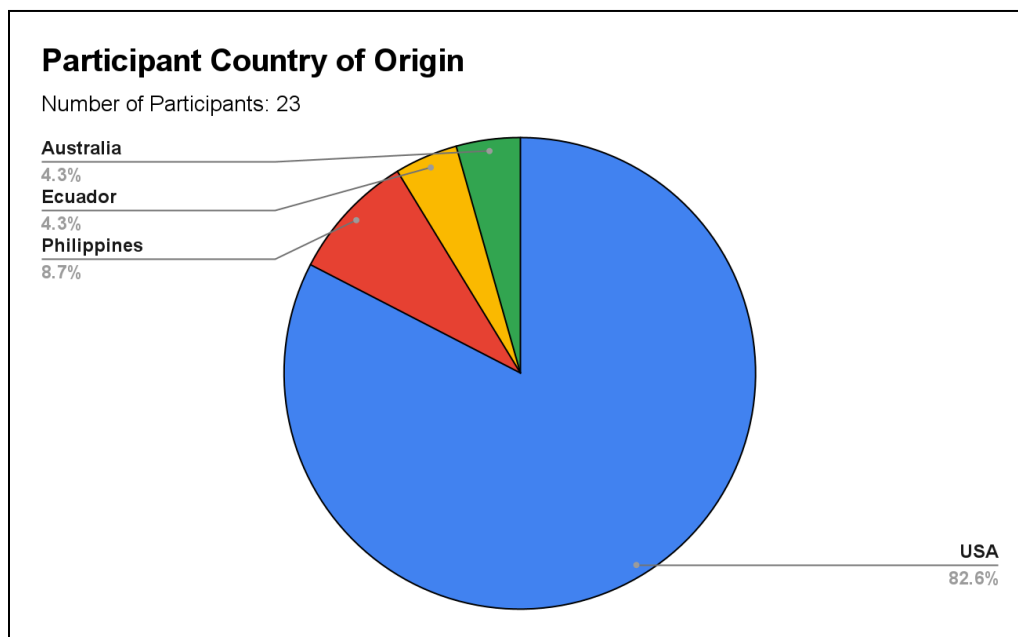


## Surveys

The group used two additional surveys to obtain further information and insight regarding the Competency Center. The first survey, published in both English and Spanish, focused on the events pertaining to the Competency Center. The English version of this survey garnered 23 responses, with most of the participants claiming they were from the United States (see Figure 6). The Spanish version of this survey received 4 responses, with half coming from Cuencanos and the other half coming from Colombians.

**Figure 6:**

Country of origin for those who participated in the English survey pertaining to the Competency Center

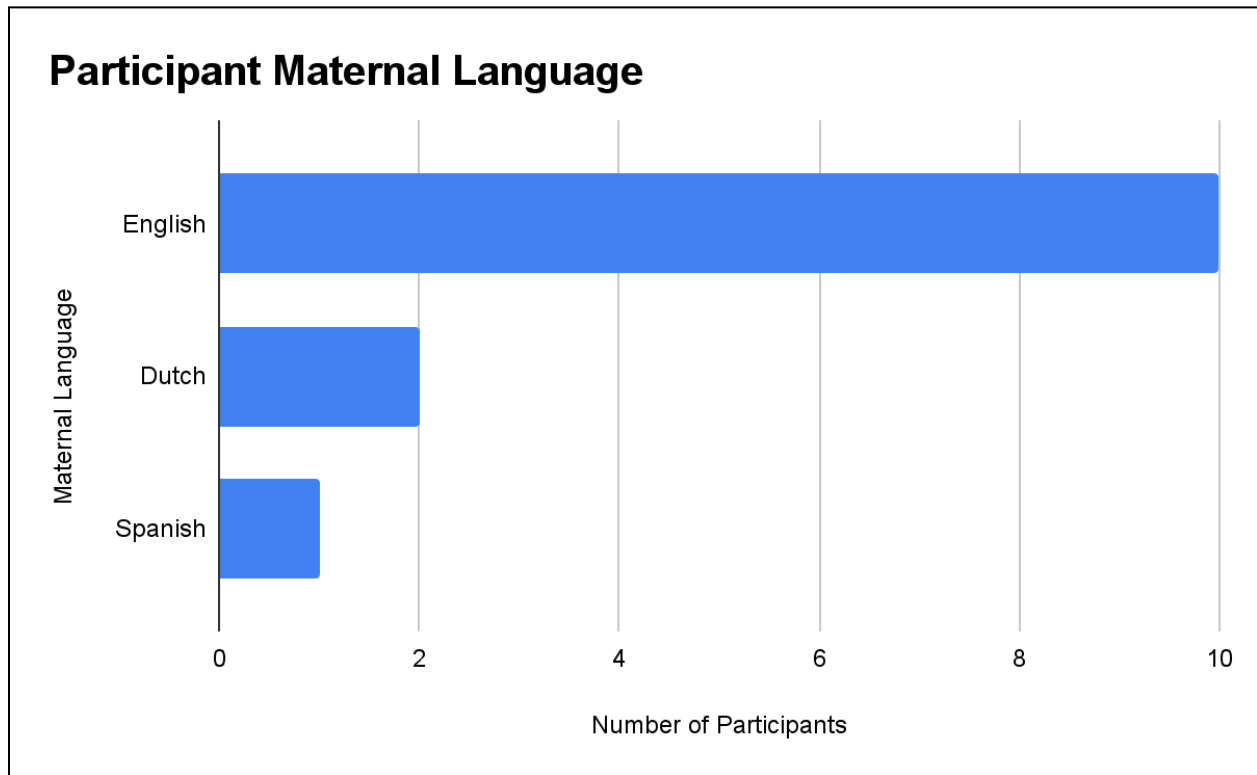


The second survey that was distributed was the LEAP-Q, which focused primarily on gauging the participants' comfortability with language learning and comprehension. The English version of this survey had 13 responses, with a majority of the responses claiming English was their maternal language (seen in Figure 7). The Spanish version of this survey did not obtain any responses.



**Figure 7:**

Maternal language indicated by participants in the English LEAP-Q survey



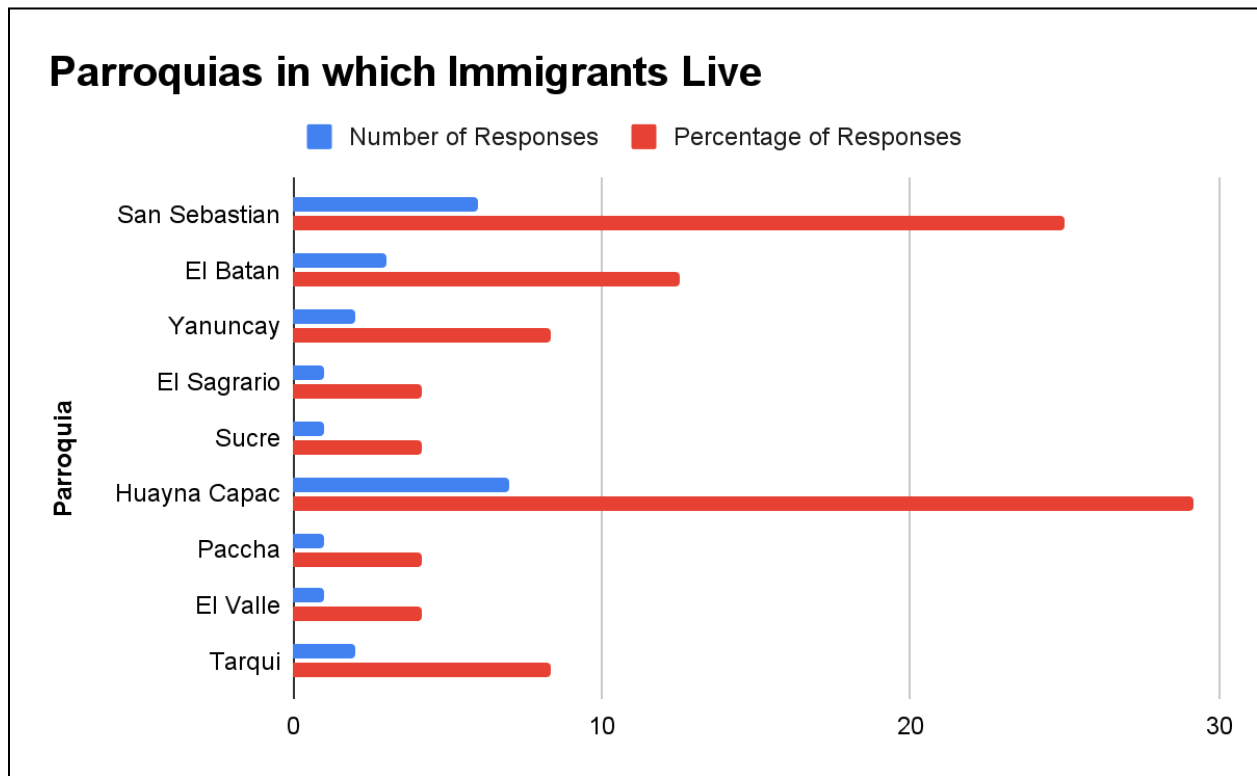
### **Collection and mapping demographic data of migration populations in Cuenca**

As mentioned above, scholarly articles and journals have noted that Gringolandia is the general area in which people from the United States/Canada live. Upon speaking to a variety of different people from a multitude of different cultures and backgrounds, many point to the fact that in the past, those hailing from the United States/Canada have been generalized to live in this area. Nevertheless, in recent years, expats from these countries have made it a point to live amongst the locals within the city, and not in their own isolated groups. Many of the people who were interviewed stated that they live in mixed communities. Interviewee 1, from the United States claimed, “I didn't come here to hang out with Americans. I wanted to be immersed in the community.” Another expat from the United States, interviewee 4, expressed that they chose their place of living based on the fact that it was not Gringolandia, and emphasized the Cuencan neighbors and friends that they have. This person noted, “I think more of the expats are connecting some up with people in their neighborhoods.” From the survey data collected, there

was an even distribution amongst the *parroquias* in which United States expats currently reside, with most *parroquias* garnering roughly 5-10% of the responses. The only outlier would be the *parroquia* of Huayna Cápac, which contains the area El Vergel, in which interviewees have noted it to be a place where expats tend to live, containing roughly 29% of the responses (see Figure 8). Furthermore, of the expats that were interviewed, all touched on the factors for their selection of housing. The selection of housing is generally based on the idea that there are a few people in the community who speak English and wish to establish a “support system.” Housing selection is additionally based on the rent, view, and overall quality of living in that area is suitable for the person.

**Figure 8:**

*Parroquias* where immigrants indicated they live



In terms of looking at accessible locations for the competency center, a location in the city center would be the most appropriate. Interviewees have stated that the Historic Center of Cuenca, to them, is the city center. Interviewee 1 touched on this when describing the festivities around the city center during holidays, going on to say, “Because El Centro really is to us Cuenca.” When asked where the center should be located, a Cuencana, interviewee 3, pointed to the idea, “If it is a center to meet and discuss these things... [the historic] center would look good.” A Venezuelan restaurant owner, interviewee 6, also pointed to the Historic Center being an ideal place, “Well, the Historic Center always seems to be a place like... Cuenca is easy to walk, etc. For example, when I wanted to open a restaurant, I wanted to open it downtown because it was easy for people.” Interviewee 3A, a teacher at a local Spanish institute stated, “I think that everything here is around the historic center, right? It should be in the historic center.” Interviewee 4 noted, “So if you're looking for that mixture, you've got El Centro,” referring to the cultural diversity of the area. Walking around the Historical Center of the city, the group made observations regarding the diverse set of restaurants within the area, ranging from local Ecuadorian foods, Chinese, Peruvian, Colombian, and Venezuelan. This suggests that people value the city center as a place where cultural, social, and professional exchanges take place. It is a generalized location where people have attributed these activities to, and people easily identify this location as such.

However, the traffic and overall feasibility of implementing a competency center within the city may cause some logistical and accessibility difficulties. Interviewee 3, who was quoted previously, also went on to claim, “But for practice it would be better somewhere outside the city. That is, not from the city, but from the center. For the practical part.” Furthermore, interviewee 4 stated, “Everything can't be in El Centro.” Multiple expats expressed similar concerns stating, “It would be better to have more centers around the city rather than one” and, “You know everything can't be in El Centro.” Multiple interviewees have also quoted that health and time commitment would be the biggest deterrents for them attending the center. From this, it is apparent that although people have attributed the essence of El Centro to this exchange of culture and professional knowledge, accessibility poses an issue. These issues arise when taking into consideration that people may not live relatively close to the center, or that getting to the center is a rather difficult task.

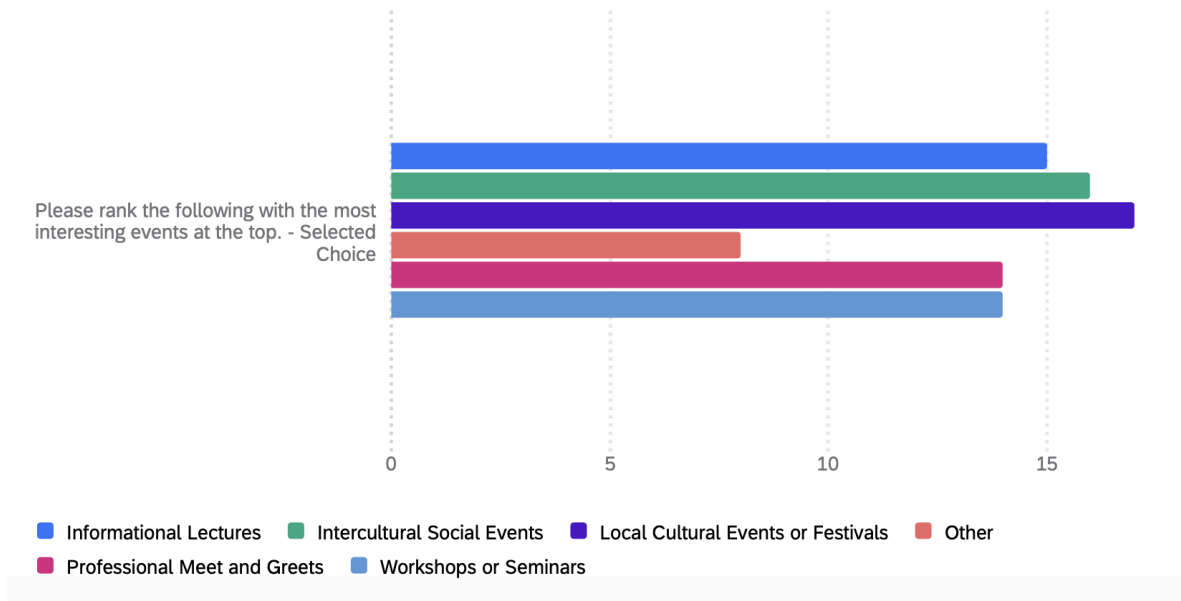
## **Identification of which programs provide the most benefit to the Cuenca and migrant communities.**

Through our research we have found that interpersonal communication and trust is essential for fostering a sense of community within immigrants and locals alike. In response to being asked which type of programs would be most beneficial, our contacts seem to like the idea of a more casual approach and less of a formal lecture. We found that a program that can engage the intended audience through conversation and socialization will most likely have the greatest effect and increase in repeat attendance. A Peruvian immigrant when asked their preferred way of learning said “For me, I learn more in conversations than someone like you, for example, because many people there take online classes. But... But for me it doesn't really, no, it doesn't work.” Intercultural social events were also found to be the second most popular pick for the events people are most interested in. By introducing immigrants to a less formal setting where they can feel comfortable, they can focus more on understanding the culture of Cuenca and less on if people will judge them.

We used coding techniques to observe which factors are most important to immigrants trying to integrate. Once we collected the data we were able to perform visual and statistical analysis to find correlations in our observed data using the data analysis tools present in Qualtrics. This allowed us to highlight and rank the most important aspects that an immigrant values in an integration program. We specifically looked for which factors of implementation of programs could be improved in Cuenca, which factors currently make a program successful, and also what kind of environment would feel the most welcoming to immigrants.

**Figure 9:**

Ranking of desired events



We made it a goal to find out exactly which activities immigrants would be interested in joining. We found that settings such as an event with food, volunteer opportunities, and even just a cultural excursion will be the most beneficial. A Cuencan interviewee stated: “So, logically all programs include culture. All the people who enter our school learn a little about the culture on a city tour or through a trip to a nearby town in the city or we take them to museums. That is, culture is always immersed.” We even gathered through our survey that at the top of the list for events people are most interested in local cultural events or festivals with 73.9% of people wanting these events. The reason for this being is due to the carefree nature these environments create to welcome immigrants into the community. So called “lifestyle migrants,” especially, are more inclined to participate in something they deem virtuous or exciting.

Though many immigrants in the city look for social connection, it is hard to cultivate, which is evident through the language barrier but also the cultural barriers present in Cuencan society. This is why immigrants will be encouraged by activities that are fun and easy for them to relate to. For immigrants to share their own culture they must first understand the city, but this cannot be achieved if the exchange of that culture is not welcoming.

## **Evaluation of immigrant comfort levels with languages in Ecuador.**

Through our interviews, we have learned that language and culture go hand in hand. Native and non-native Cuencans seem to agree that immersion with the language is one of the most useful tactics to learn Spanish. When asked what the most important thing in a language learning program is, Cuencano 3A responded, “Culture. When you learn a language, the most important thing is to also learn about the culture.” This instinct to include culture alongside language acquisition can be seen across a variety of interviews, where culture can take the form of community fairs, local broadcast radio, or music.

Because of this, people often recommend that non-native Spanish speakers attend cultural events around the city. Visiting local markets, and historically significant landmarks can not only familiarize them with the Spanish language, but also educate them on the history of Cuenca and the everyday life that can be experienced there. Cuencan 2A even went as far as to say, “Well, there are institutes that teach Spanish. But the day-to-day is the one who teaches you. More than an institute.” This quote is even more important when you consider that this interviewee has a deeper understanding of language learning in a foreign country, as they had lived in the US and experienced this same phenomenon while learning English as a native Spanish speaker. As a resource to the United States immigrants, they respect the struggles that the expats face, and they try to reduce the prominent language barrier that exists.

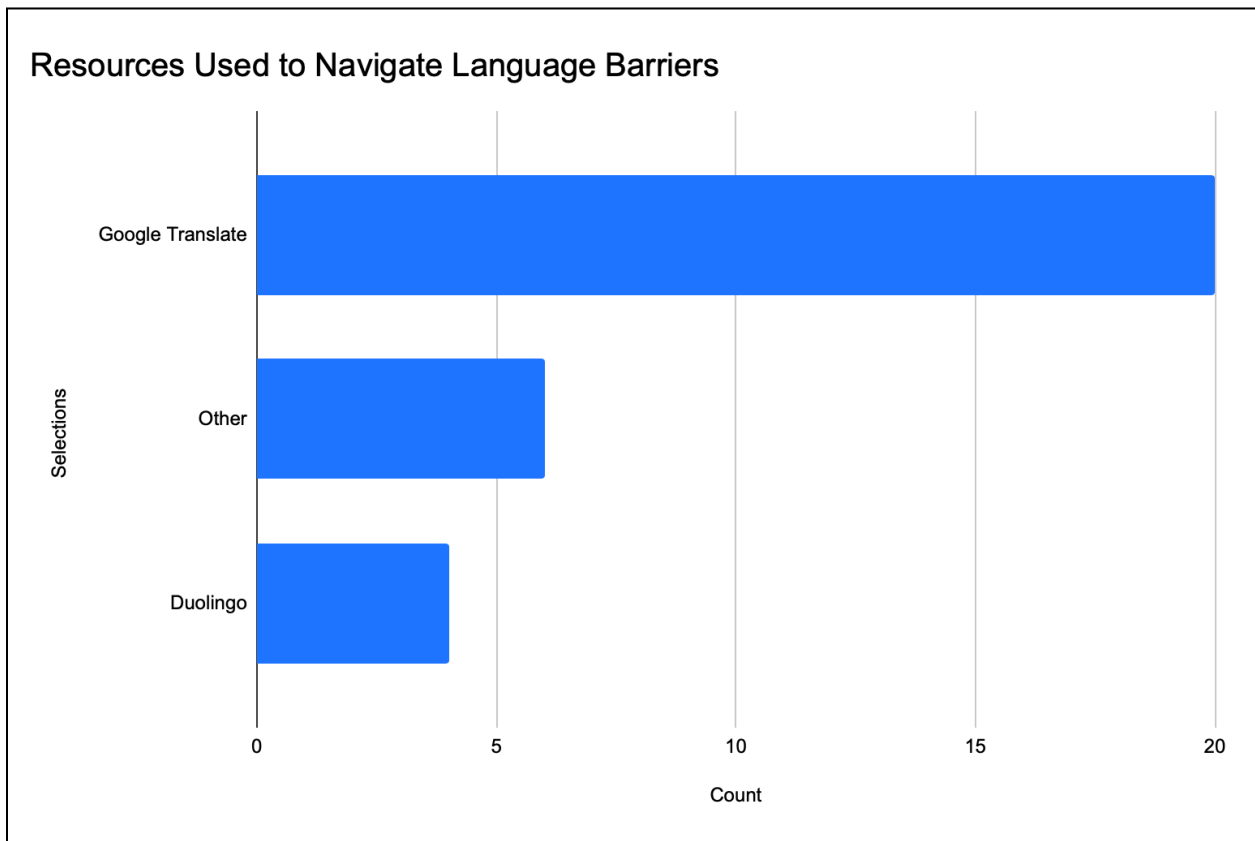
Furthermore, it can be observed that people benefit from this dynamic approach to learning Spanish, more than solely relying on in-classroom learning for extended periods of time. These types of learning have the potential to be mentally fatiguing and may not foster the most engagement with the material. An interviewed Spanish instructor admitted that for unmotivated students, the teachers “know that they have to change activities at all times. Otherwise, students would start to get bored or sleep.” To combat this, they implement icebreakers, games, competitions, and songs to subconsciously convey the language and increase classroom participation. Additionally, our interviews revealed that many of the US expats participants have worked to overcome this learning difficulty via one-on-one tutoring from people found online or in Gringo Post, not through one of the many traditional Spanish schools available in Cuenca.

They seek these routes for individual social connections that are more informal and allow for a deeper connection to be formed than is possible with a formalized teaching style.

When learning a different language, people often choose to learn out of necessity. Normally, the motivating force behind this decision is communication with friends who speak a different language. For Cuenca specifically, other methods immigrants have used include mobile language learning services like Duolingo, Google Translate, and other AI (Artificial Intelligence) assisted software, as per our survey responses. Moreover, when asked within our survey how people navigate a situation when confronted by a language barrier, they accredited Facilitators, Babbel, and online translation tools, see Figure 10 and Table 2.

**Figure 10:**

Usage of Language Resources by Survey Participants



**Table 2.** Additional Translation Resources Provided by Participants

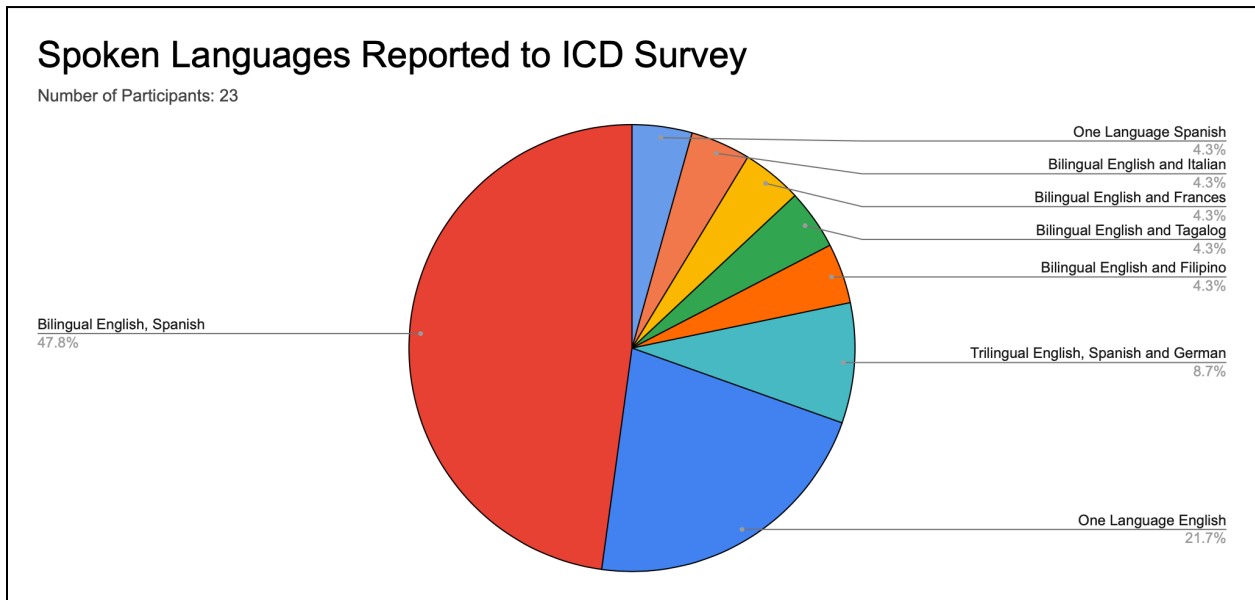
Resources used to navigate language barriers	Communication through Text
	Babbel
	Facilitators
	Language transfer
	ChatGPT
	Other AI-Assistance

Although these resources provide them with enough awareness to get by, many people experience a plateau in their learning, and have even self-modified their learning dynamic so that they can restart that learning period. With one North American Expat from the US stating they must “overcome” Duolingo. They do this by restarting their language program but exchanging visual learning/memorization with audio learning in hopes it will improve speech recognition in real life scenarios. We have also found that most people do not claim fluency in their second or third acquired language. In our LEAP-Q survey, people on average reported a 56.9% comfort level in speaking, reading, and comprehension of their second acquired language. This is important to note, as many people resort to a mix of both languages during conversation.



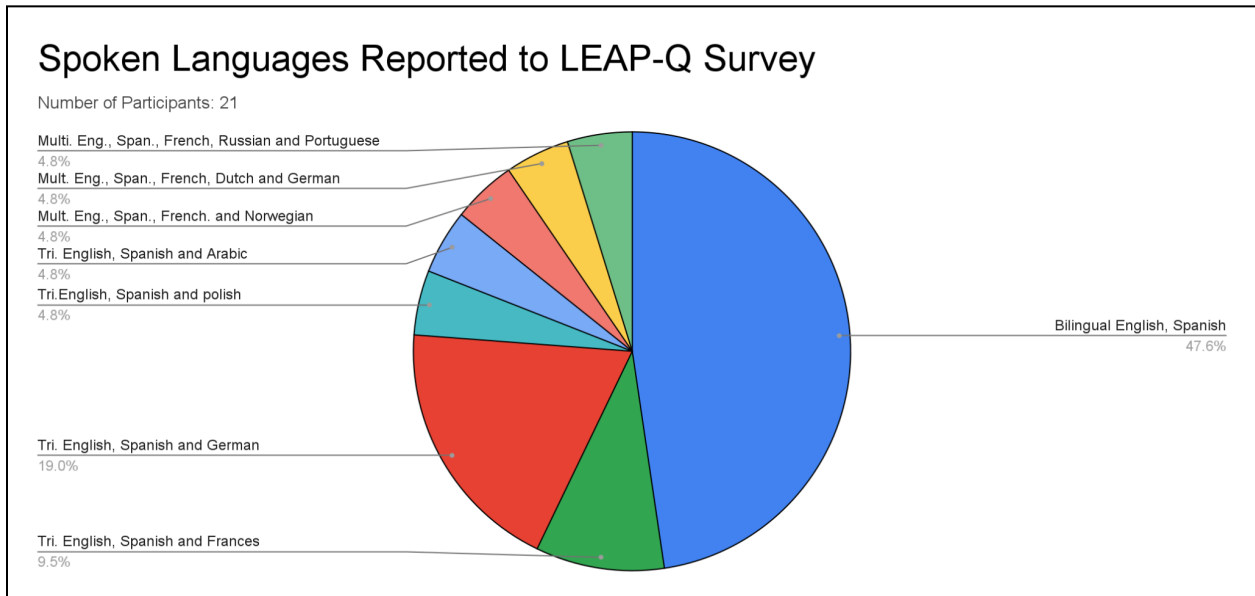
**Figure 11:**

Languages spoken from our main International Competency Center Development survey



**Figure 12:**

Languages spoken from LEAP-Q survey



As seen in Figures 11 and 12 each individual survey yielded different results for the same question regarding the number of languages spoken by the participant. We suspect that this is due to the nature of our language proficiency questionnaire and how it implies the acquisition of a second language. Nonetheless, the graphs above show that there is a range of 57-100% of our responses who know some level of both English and Spanish.

We have also learned that every place in the world has their own unique vocabulary, whether they speak the same language or not. This can be seen on international and national levels. One of the most significant additions to the Cuencan vocabulary would be their quechuismos which were derived from the indigenous vocabulary of the Quechua people. The history of this indigenous group is present in most conversations, and this emphasizes the importance of learning the history of Cuenca, because of the influence it has on modern day life in Cuenca. When asked about quechuismos Cuencan interviewee 3 stated “There is a conflict there. Because while here in Cuenca we use some words. In Guayaquil, you may not understand them anymore. Or in Quito, either... it's nothing serious... [but] if you learn these words, you are getting a little more involved in the conversation, and you can understand the conversation better.” This conveys the magnitude of this vocabulary of indigenous influence. It is so frequently used that the lack of knowledge of it can lead to significant confusion.

Within modern day life in Cuenca, there are already opportunities around the city to converse and practice one's non-dominant language or deepen your understanding of Cuencan culture. From our findings, we have learned that one of the largest barriers to participation in an intercultural exchange is the language barrier. In saying that, language and culture go hand-in-hand meaning social settings would be the ideal event environment for people to benefit from a more fluid approach to language learning. Taking these things into consideration will lessen the severity of the “stumbling blocks” to language that many interviewees mentioned as one of the effects of interacting with people from new cultures.

## **Discussion**

This section aims to make meaning of the information presented within the Findings section, in terms of the overall goal of our work. To represent the overall deliverable and final goal of the project, the discussion section has been broken down into: center locations, programs/events, and budgeting/logistics. Each of these categories draws upon information and findings pertaining to multiple objectives, and demonstrates a synthesis and analysis of the aforementioned findings.

### **Center Locations**

This section discusses the location for the center's initial placement within the city of Cuenca. This is to ensure that those who would be participating in the programs provided by the center would find them easily accessible. A non-accessible center location can potentially provide transportation issues that have the possibility to neglect or ostracize different demographics within the city. With this, the usage of the first objective and its methods was essential in helping determine the location of the center.

The survey and interview data collected and analyzed points to the idea that the initial center location should be placed within the Historical Center of Cuenca. Throughout the various conversations had with both local Cuencanos and immigrants, the importance the Historical Center holds to those living in the city was noted. Native Cuencanos have noted the importance the Historical Center has in terms of a general place where people of all different backgrounds tend to congregate.

From these observations and data, it was concluded that the Historical Center is noted to be a place of general cultural and professional exchange. For this reason, the initial location of the center would be the most appropriate in the Historical Center. The overall goal of this center reflects and perfectly coincides with the perceptions held by those residing in Cuenca regarding the Historical Center. As the Historical Center of the city is often regarded to be the epicenter of these exchanges of information, the initial placement of the Competency Center should take advantage of this.

Nevertheless, the traffic and ease of transport to and from, and within the Historical Center has been cause of some concern. Local Cuencanos have noted that the difficulty navigating traffic, and the overall crowding of the Historical Center can cause issues. This is also

elaborated on by expats, many of whom claim that distance and overall accessibility would cause problems for them.

With this additional information, it becomes clear that a singular center location would provide difficulties for those trying to attend the programs. Thus, an expansion would be necessary to combat the difficulty of accessibility. From those that have expressed concern regarding this topic, the proposed solution would be to have at least one center in the *parroquias* that house relatively large immigrant populations. After assessing the feasibility and the effectiveness of the competency center within the Historical Center, the next area to look at would be Huayna Cápac. More specifically, the El Vergel area, as 13% of survey respondents stated this as their specific area of residency. Furthermore, interviewees noted this location to have a good mix of different demographics, along with real estate opportunities.

## **Programs and Events**

This section addresses the type of programs and events that will be active within the center. Programs need to be widely accessible as well as interesting enough to be able to have a high attendance rate. Gathering public opinion allowed us to understand the preferred type of event that immigrants would like to participate in.

Through our research we have found that programs that are casual and social will most likely have the highest attendance rate between immigrant groups. This is due to people preferring an experience that will be perceived as welcoming and relaxed. Those that we have interviewed seemed to prefer events that placed emphasis on cultural experiences that would be able to immerse the participant and give them further insight into Cuenca as a whole. This tells us that the center will need to incorporate programs with a social emphasis that can engage the intended participant in Cuencan culture as well as help them learn to interact with the community. Interviewees have expressed their dislike of lecture style presentations which can intimidate and discourage a participant from attending such as an American expat saying “I'd say a meet and greet would go over better than a lecture.” This tells us that the best events would be ones that emphasize a non-professional setting to help ease a participant into the program itself. We have found that people will be drawn to food and conversation as the main selling points of an event with one native Cuencan referring to teaching Cuencan culture with “At the same time as talking about history, it can be with food, it can be with typical phrases from here, like, only

here.” This is why we feel as though food can be incorporated into events such that immigrants can feel more comfortable in the space provided. These experiences can provide comfortability as well as facilitate an informational exchange between locals and immigrants alike.

Furthermore, another idea that came up during our interviews was the possibility of a website based tandem program. As one interviewee mentioned “If there were some way and this isn't, you know, your project could be another project. Develop a website so that people can easily go.” In addition to this very specific comment, the repeated discussion of the importance of developing individual relationships to facilitate language learning and cultural immersion throughout our research necessitates the development of a program that capitalizes on this existing trend. The tandem website would work to more efficiently create connections between locals and immigrants to share experience and knowledge where it otherwise could not before. Our center could capitalize on this pre-existing trend by allocating a portion of the budget for the set up and maintenance of a centralized database of both new arrivals in Cuenca and native Cuencanos looking to participate in one-on-one exchanges of language, cultural information, and professional expertise. This would allow the Municipality to support and encourage these connections in a relatively informal manner and that would likely drive an increase in overall participation in all programs offered.

## Recommendations

This section will aim to make recommendations based on the commentary and information provided in the prior sections. The group has taken into consideration the information from each of the four objectives, to create a roadmap containing three notable categories: center locations and programs/events, as well as budgeting and logistics.

### Center Location and Programs/Events

Based upon the information provided from the spatial mapping and analysis, we recommend that the original center be constructed within the Historical Center of the city. Due to this location's renown for being an area of interculturality and knowledge exchange, the first competency center should utilize this precedent. Additionally, due to concerns regarding the accessibility of the competency center within the Historical Center, as previously discussed, additional centers in other locations should be constructed. The construction of additional centers would promote the participation of those who may consider transportation to the Historical Center difficult and time consuming. The expansion of the Competency Center must aim to look at populated *parroquias*, the most prominent of which being the area of El Vergel, in the *parroquia* of Huayna Cápac.

The Competency Center itself could host a series of events and programs that would be scheduled throughout the year. The first year would hold 15 events, followed by 23 in the second year, and 34 for the third year. The event outline discussed in this section represents the first working year of the center, with roughly one event per month, alternating between social events and workshops. Since many people have a greater interest in participating in events with others that they are familiar with, the initial events for the Competency Center would revolve around this idea. It would be essential to establish a cultural and social foundation for participants within the center, to have the effective and meaningful exchange of professional information.

The first event, a general meet and greet, would be an event in which people from different communities and center staff would gather at the Competency Center, in order to begin establishing both professional and personal relationships. The idea behind this is to allow people to become accustomed with the center, the staff, and others within the community who would be attending future events. This would foster more participation with future events, since people

would feel more comfortable participating with people they are already at least somewhat familiar with.

To continue building the center's cultural foundation, the following event would be a cultural workshop held by a native Colombian who has already expressed interest in sharing his experiences with Cuencan culture in this format. In continuing to run this center similar events could be planned with different leaders offering their unique perspective. This workshop would entail a general discussion regarding the cultural biases and dissonances experienced by immigrants and native Cuencans. As with the previous event, this would allow for a discussion amongst participants in an effort to establish connections and relations. This workshop would also provide a precursor to what future professional workshops will entail in terms of staffing, general set-up, and participation.

The final event of this initial building block stage would be a meet and greet specifically for the tandem program. This program will be a one-on-one experience between a native Cuencan and an immigrant, who are partnered based on hobbies, interests, or professional experience or interest. This program will utilize the landing page (see Budgeting and Logistics section below for more information), to match people wishing to participate in the program. However, this specific meet and greet would be a platform for people participating in the tandem program to familiarize themselves with one another and an open and comfortable setting. It would permit participants to establish forms of communication, meeting times and recurrences, along with creating and building a relationship with whom they may attend future events with. This would be the final event specifically regarding the immersion and exchange of culture. Future events will take advantage of the relationships built from these initial gatherings, fostering more participation and engagement in the professional exchanges.

The events following those initial three will alternate monthly between professional workshops and meet and greets, such as the one previously described. The professional workshops would be run by a volunteer who has offered their services through the website, or through direct communication with the Center Coordinator. The workshop would be taught in a style deemed suitable by the volunteer. The workshop volunteer and the Center Coordinator will discuss the workshop in terms of any material or language needs two weeks prior to the workshop. During that meeting a decision will be made regarding the necessity of hiring a translator to assist with the event based on the level of confidence the volunteer has in their

ability to communicate effectively with everyone present. The workshop itself will have roughly 10-15 people who are interested in the professional topic that is being taught. The workshop will conclude with time allotted for a general feedback discussion, along with the distribution of a survey.

Furthermore, to continue reinforcing the cultural exchange, small hobbyist clubs will be formed by those participating within the Competency Center. Within the first year, we recommend creating two small hobbyist clubs pertaining to books and photography as suggested by a US expat with community planning experience interviewed during our research. These would be small, 5-10 people groups that would meet once a month to talk, and discuss their hobbies. The book club would be a way in which people can discuss literature and their interpretation of it, allowing for those participating to see and understand how different communities or cultures perceive themes and ideas. The Competency Center would provide books in both Spanish and English, so that people may practice their language learning whilst reading, or during discussion. Even so, it provides the opportunity for those who wish to be writers, to learn and take in information from people in the group who may have written professionally in the past.

The photography club would possess the same number of participants as the book club, while also meeting once per month. This club would be more participant driven, as the discussions and general exchange of knowledge would be initiated and led native Cuencans. The idea is to have native Cuencans provide “walking tours” of *miradores*<sup>4</sup> and historically or culturally significant locations within the city. These tours would allow for immigrants to understand the culture or history behind the city in which they now live. They would do this whilst taking pictures and exchanging professional information in terms of photography.

The culmination of these events would result in an end of the year potluck. This would be an invitation to all those who attended previous workshops, meet and greets, and clubs, to participate in the celebration of the first successful working year of the Competency Center. The event would ask for people attending to make a dish representative of their native culture. It would demonstrate some of the work produced from the professional workshops, or the work produced from the hobbyist clubs. Additionally, it would provide an avenue for both native Cuencans and immigrants to continue strengthening their connections with one another. In this,

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<sup>4</sup> Viewpoints



participants could provide feedback for the center as a whole, and determine the feasibility for an increase in events for the next year.

**Figure 13:**

Graph of the increase on the number of events of the center's years of operation



### **Budgeting and Logistics for the Center**

To help bolster the popularity and efficacy of the Competency Center, a landing page on the Municipality website should be created. This would not be an entire website; however it would have multiple tabs and forums pertaining to the planned events. The homepage would consist of the mission statement for the center, along with advertisements for upcoming events. There would be tabs dedicated to: Tandem Program, Workshop Volunteers, and Event Inquiries and Recommendations. Developing this additional page would likely cost \$300 to \$400 due to the interactivenss of the components, however, after the initial development there would be no additional cost to the center as maintenance would be handled by the existing municipal IT department.

The Tandem Program tab would allow for participants to sign-up for the program. This would consist of a general description of what the program is and what it entails. Furthermore,

this tab would also have a form for those wishing to participate. The form would ask for the person's name, age, hobbies, professional activities, and language knowledge. This information would be used to help pair people with similar interests and with different language or cultural backgrounds.

The Workshop Volunteers tab would allow for participants to sign-up for workshops. There would be a description of each workshop event and what would happen during. There would also be a form requiring the participant's name, age, and other information relevant to the type of workshop conducted. This would allow the Event Coordinator to prepare for these workshop events efficiently.

The Event Inquiries and Recommendations tab would allow participants to make suggestions on future programs, as well as inquire about future events hosted by the center. There would be a form where users could indicate their inquiries and recommendations, along with a description of past events for reference. This would help gauge interest in events already hosted as well as potential new additions.

The final portion of our recommendations covers the budgeting and logistics of the center such as job positions, salaries, and the expected budget for a three-year period. This portion of the discussion will cover the requirements to run a competency center and what its function would be within the community. The positions included were created and structured based on the identified needs of the Cuencan community, including social events, and strengthening intercultural connections. By considering this, we expect higher participation rates within the proposed center and efficient functioning of it overall. The budget plan was calculated by investigating local pay rates, and comparing them to municipality provided information on this topic as well as by identifying necessary materials for projected events and their respective costs.

In order for the center to function efficiently, we recommend first employing a Center Coordinator in a full-time position managing the center as a whole. The responsibilities of this position would include monitoring the tandem program to ensure the safety of all participants and the efficacy of all programs implemented there. During the first year as the sole employee of the center there would be additional responsibilities, however, as more positions are filled these would slowly be removed. These additional responsibilities would include all of those associated with event planning as well as acting as a facilitator during all of the center's events. They would also be in charge of screening and hiring all new employees, such as Event coordinators and

Facilitators. Additionally, they would be responsible for the coordination and management of these different positions after their hiring. Compensation for this role should be based on the existing pay scale for government employees in Cuenca. This role would be equivalent to a Jefe de Unidad as defined in the municipal pay scale table shown below and should receive an annual salary of around \$22,438.

**Table 3.** Municipal Pay Scale

ESCALAS SALARIALES LOSEP		
NIVEL	CARGO	RMU
1	ASISTENTE DE APOYO	531,00
2	ASISTENTE	675,00
3	ANALISTA	1.185,43
4	ESPECIALISTA / TECNICO	1.461,33
5	JEFE DE UNIDAD	1.869,86
6	COORDINADOR	2.588,00
7	DIRECTOR GENERAL	3.409,44
8	COORDINADOR GENERAL	3.798,00

In the beginning of the center’s second year we recommend that a trained Facilitator be hired to assist with encouraging productive conversations at events, to assist volunteer workshop leaders in making sure their points are heard and the event itself runs as smoothly as possible and allow the Center Coordinator to take a step back from attending every event run by the center. This position would ideally be filled by a bilingual person with at least a basic understanding of the different cultures represented at each event so that they can anticipate and head off any possible misunderstandings which could impede the success of the event. However, this is only an ideal and depending on the language proficiency of those present at each event a monolingual facilitator could be just as effective. Language proficiency levels of attendees would be screened for during the planning process for each event. During events a Facilitator would offer conversation topics or otherwise encourage productive conversations, or they may offer brief on the spot translations of idioms or slang which otherwise may not come across in a multicultural room. This would be a part time position, for which the schedule would be reliant on the schedule of events as laid out by the Event and Center Coordinators. This position would be

compensated on a similar pay scale as the Event Coordinator for about half the hours worked making the annual salary close to \$8,768.

After the first 2 years of operation for the center, and with the sharp increase in the number of events, we recommend hiring a trained Event Coordinator in a full-time position to ensure all of the center's events continue to function efficiently. This position would report directly to the Center Coordinator and would be compensated as a specialist on the Municipal pay scale with an annual salary of around \$17,536. Their responsibilities would include choosing topics for events, types of events, scheduling of those events and interfacing with all other positions involved in each event. They would coordinate scheduling with facilitators and volunteer workshop leaders as well as provide additional support to them where necessary for the success of each event. They would be expected to monitor feedback received about each event and monitor the center website for people looking to volunteer to host workshops or suggestions for future events. In addition, they would also be responsible for sourcing all the necessary materials for each event such as refreshments, any learning materials requested by workshop leaders, and ensuring the locations for each event fulfill all the needs including internet access or projectors.

We also recommend that translators be brought on as an additional support for the center. However, these translators would not be directly employed by the municipality. Instead, they would be hired through an outside contracting organization as is outlined in the laws and guidelines governing the whole of the municipality. These translators would not be available full time, however, they would be available ahead of time to help volunteer workshop leaders prepare their course and, depending on the needs of the workshop host, could be hired to attend the events themselves to offer their services. Translators would be compensated at a rate of \$20 to \$25 per hour worked as that is the average wage for an in-person translator in Cuenca according to UpWork.

A main focus of the events planned specifically by and for the center would be workshops run by volunteers. Volunteer workshop leaders would be members of the local community, either native Cuencanos or immigrants living in Cuenca who volunteer to share their professional knowledge or their knowledge of culture. Pulling from the local community allows for greater promotion of intercultural exchanges and allows for people to build social and professional connections outside of their usual social circle. Volunteers will largely be chosen

from the pool of applicants on the center website. After being chosen they will fill out a survey regarding what exactly they will be teaching and what materials or support might be necessary for the event. Our team already has contact with several interviewees who expressed interest in volunteering to host a workshop.

### *Budget Considerations*

In forming a budget for the first three years of operation for this center we have a few recommendations based on our research and data collection. The center itself will not have a permanent location in the first year and the GAD Municipal de Cuenca has access spaces where events could be held at no additional cost. Due to these circumstances space and building rental can be completely disregarded for budgeting. Other aspects of running this program that we recommend be considered are salary and freelance hiring wages. For those positions that are directly employed by the center we recommend a total annual salary budget of \$48,074 by the end of this 3-year period. This would cover the salaries of the Event and Center coordinators as well as the part time facilitator. An emphasis on individual interaction allows for a tightening of the budget for this program as it decreases the number of instances where an official translator would be a necessity. Instead, there is more benefit in surveying participants for their self-reported proficiency in both English and Spanish so that they might be matched with someone of a similar or compatible level of language proficiency with other cultural groups present in Cuenca. The last consideration necessary for creating a complete budget are the materials necessary for each event as outlined above. The cost of rentals for tables and chairs are not to be considered, however, refreshments and any additional materials for the success of workshops should be.

**Table 4.** Center Pay Scale and Annual Staffing Costs

Year of Operation	Center Job Title	Monthly Salary	Annual Salary	Municipal Job Title	Annual Center Cost
1	Center Coordinator	\$1,869.86	\$22,438	Jefe de Unidad	\$22,438
2	Facilitator	\$675	\$8,100	Asistente	
	Center Coordinator	\$1,869.86	\$22,438	Jefe de Unidad	\$30,538
3	Event Coordinator	\$1,461.33	\$17,536	Especialista/Tecnico	
	Facilitator	\$675	\$8,100	Asistente	
	Center Coordinator	\$1,869.86	\$22,438	Jefe de Unidad	\$48,074

*Conclusion*

This International Competency Center is a needed addition to the available social and professional opportunities for people living in Cuenca regardless of their national origin. It is noted and discussed that Cuenca possesses an extremely diverse international community. However, as of now, many of these communities live at least somewhat separately and isolated from others. This has resulted in a general blockage and obstacle pertaining to the flow of both professional and cultural information.

The creation of the Competency Center will serve as a platform that encourages the exchange of this type of knowledge. The types of events that have been planned would act as the tools to facilitate this exchange and promote greater social participation. The proposed staffing for the Competency Center would additionally aid and foster the conversations amongst participants, as well as maintaining the upkeep of the center as a whole.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Sponsor Description

#### English

The GAD Municipal de Cantón de Cuenca is dedicated to the development of Cuenca and making the lives of its citizens easier wherever possible with people centered policies. Their mission is to create a sustainably planned Municipal administration which allows for the development of the city both physically and socially. This includes the development of the International Competency Center to promote the integration of both native Cuencanos and international residents for the benefit of all (GAD, 2023). Our work was directly sponsored by Director Felipe Ochoa Mogrovejo of La Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales y Cooperación, a publicly funded department of the municipal government of Cuenca dedicated to developing the city through the promotion of intercultural values and management of international relationships (Alcaldía de Cuenca, 2023).

There are a multitude of government directorates and organizations cooperating within the GAD Municipal de Cantón de Cuenca. For example, we worked directly under la Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales y Cooperación, a directorate whose mission is to:

Contribute to the development and internalization of Cuenca, through the management of Decentralized International Cooperation, coordination of international relations, promotion of interculturality and harmonization of international efforts based on local priorities. (GAD Municipal de Cuenca, n.d.)

The directorate's web page mentions that through its powers and responsibilities, it aims to induce a more positive and engaging cross-cultural dynamic between the citizens of Cuenca and foreigners who have moved into the city (GAD Municipal de Cuenca, n.d.). The usage of this government directorate allows beneficial information along with the use of funds allocated to this department to aid in the foundation of the Competency Center.

In addition to the government directorate, nonprofit organizations headed by expats in Cuenca offer a positive impact to the local community and allow for cultural exchange between expats and locals. Organizations such as Fundación NÚR and the University of Cuenca –

Hospitality Sciences department, give an opportunity for expats to interact with younger children and college students, respectively, by way of giving English lessons and offering their time to share information and talents to locals in the community (Snyder, 2022).

Other local organizations working in the region focus on a different aspect of intercultural communication, tourism. While this may not have a visible impact on the social cohesion of resident populations, there are still important lessons to be taken from their working practices for this undertaking. For example, Turismo Rural Sayausí is a team dedicated to the promotion of tourism in the parish of Sayausí (Turismo Rural Sayausí, n.d). In working on their project they aimed to improve tourism initiatives by communicating with locals as well as tourists. The tourist group also hosts events that promote cultural understanding such as hiking and various cultural experiences (Turismo Rural Sayausí, n.d). The organization benefits from being composed of families from the community.

The issue of cultural integration is crucial for the future of Ecuadorian society as the country contains many groups of different cultural backgrounds. Plans for community engagement that seamlessly integrate a variety of cultures are an essential part of promoting cross-cultural cohesion and lead to a more positive living environment. The government needs to facilitate and mediate conversations between native residents and immigrants to challenge the biases people may have that would separate groups within the community (Phillips, et al., 2014). Research shows that bridge-building exercises and communal efforts within discussions can lead to opportunities for the appreciation of other cultures, self-exploration and also serve to reduce discrimination (Phillips, et al., 2014). This fits the organization's mission because of the positive effects on society when intercultural conversations are prioritized.

## Sponsor Description

### Español

El GAD Municipal del Cantón de Cuenca está dedicado al desarrollo de cuenca y a hacer la vida de sus ciudadanos más fácil, siempre que sea posible con políticas centradas en las personas. Su misión es crear una administración municipal planificada de manera sostenible que permita el desarrollo de la ciudad tanto física como socialmente. Esto incluye el desarrollo del Centro de Competencia Internacional para promover la integración tanto de los cuencanos nativos como de los residentes internacionales en beneficio de todos (GAD, 2023). Este proyecto está patrocinado directamente por el Director Felipe Ochoa Mogrovejo de La Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales y Cooperación, un departamento financiado con fondos públicos del gobierno municipal de Cuenca dedicado al desarrollo de la ciudad a través de la promoción de valores interculturales y la gestión de relaciones internacionales (Alcaldía de Cuenca, 2023).

Existen varias direcciones y organizaciones gubernamentales que cooperan dentro del GAD Municipal del Cantón de Cuenca. Por ejemplo, este proyecto trabaja directamente bajo la Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales y Cooperación, dirección que tiene como misión:

Contribuir al desarrollo e interiorización de Cuenca, a través de la gestión de la Cooperación Internacional Descentralizada, la coordinación de las relaciones internacionales, la promoción de la interculturalidad y la armonización de los esfuerzos internacionales con base en las prioridades locales. (GAD Municipal de Cuenca, s.f.)

La página web de la dirección menciona que a través de sus facultades y responsabilidades, busca inducir una dinámica intercultural más positiva y atractiva entre los ciudadanos de Cuenca y los extranjeros que se han mudado a la ciudad (GAD Municipal de Cuenca, s.f.). El uso de esta dirección gubernamental permite obtener información beneficiosa junto con el uso de los fondos asignados a este departamento para ayudar a completar este proyecto.

Además de la dirección gubernamental, las organizaciones sin fines de lucro encabezadas por expatriados en Cuenca ofrecen un impacto positivo a la comunidad local y permiten el intercambio cultural entre expatriados y locales. Organizaciones como la Fundación NÚR y la Universidad de Cuenca – Departamento de Ciencias Hoteleras, brindan la oportunidad a los expatriados de interactuar con niños más pequeños y estudiantes universitarios, respectivamente,

dando lecciones de inglés y ofreciendo su tiempo para compartir información y talentos con los locales en la comunidad (Snyder, 2022).

Otras organizaciones locales que trabajan en la región se centran en un aspecto diferente de la comunicación intercultural: el turismo. Si bien esto puede no tener un impacto visible en la cohesión social de las poblaciones residentes, aún quedan lecciones importantes que extraer de sus prácticas de trabajo para este proyecto. Por ejemplo, Turismo Rural Sayausí es un equipo dedicado a la promoción del turismo en la parroquia de Sayausí (Turismo Rural Sayausí, s.f.). Al trabajar en el proyecto, su objetivo era mejorar las iniciativas turísticas, comunicándose tanto con los lugareños como con los turistas. El grupo turístico también organiza eventos que promueven el entendimiento cultural como caminatas y diversas experiencias culturales (Turismo Rural Sayausí, s.f.). La organización se beneficia de estar compuesta por familias de la comunidad.

La cuestión de la integración cultural es crucial para el futuro de la sociedad ecuatoriana, ya que el país contiene muchos grupos de diferentes orígenes culturales. Los planes de participación comunitaria que integren perfectamente una variedad de culturas son una parte esencial para promover la cohesión intercultural y conducir a un entorno de vida más positivo. El gobierno necesita facilitar y mediar en las conversaciones entre residentes nativos e inmigrantes para desafiar los prejuicios que puedan tener las personas y que separarían a los grupos dentro de la comunidad (Phillips, et al., 2014). Las investigaciones muestran que los ejercicios de construcción de puentes y los esfuerzos comunitarios dentro de los debates pueden generar oportunidades para la apreciación de otras culturas, la autoexploración y también servir para reducir la discriminación (Phillips, et al., 2014). Esto se ajusta a la misión de la organización debido a los efectos positivos en la sociedad cuando se priorizan las conversaciones interculturales.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions for Cuencanos/as

(Pregunta 1)

¿Cuántos idiomas hablas?

(Pregunta 2)

¿Te imaginas aprendiendo otros idiomas?

(Pregunta 3) ¿Qué considera que es más importante en los programas de aprendizaje de idiomas?

(Pregunta 4)

¿Cuáles fueron algunos de los choques culturales que cree que existen para los inmigrantes al mudarse a Cuenca?

- O en su experiencia, alguna diferencia notable
- ¿Hay algún paso en falso que vea que cometen los inmigrantes en Cuenca en términos de diferencias en las expectativas de interacción y etiqueta?

(Pregunta 5)

¿Cómo describiría las influencias culturales que tiene Cuenca en las conversaciones interpersonales?

(Pregunta 6)

¿Qué tipo de eventos crees que son esenciales para que las personas aprendan, comprendan y naveguen? ¿Cultura cuencana?

(Pregunta 7)

¿Qué tan conectado se siente con la comunidad de inmigrantes cuencanos?

(Pregunta 8)

¿Puede describir cuáles fueron los factores al elegir el área donde vive o ha vivido anteriormente?

(Pregunta 9)

¿Hay lugares generales en los que haya notado que tienden a vivir las comunidades de inmigrantes?

(Pregunta 10)

¿Cómo describirías la comunidad en la que vives actualmente?

(Pregunta 11)

Al planificar la construcción de un centro de competencias, ¿cuál sería, en su opinión, la ubicación más accesible para el centro?

## **Appendix C: Interview Questions for Immigrants**

### **English-speaking Immigrants**

(Question 1)

How connected to the Cuencan community do you feel?

(Question 2)

What kinds of events would you like to see in the future that would help you navigate Cuencan culture?

(Question 3)

Have you accessed any programs such as language learning programs or cultural programs available in the city and if so have they been helpful to you, what about them was helpful?

(Question 4)

How many languages do you speak?

(Question 5)

Are you aware of any language learning resources located near you?

(Question 6)

Do you envision yourself learning other languages?

(Question 7)

What were some of the culture shocks you experienced when you moved to Cuenca?

(Question 8)

How would you describe the cultural influences Cuenca has on interpersonal conversations?

(Question 9)

Can you describe what were the factors in choosing the area you live, or previously?

(Question 10)

How would you describe the community that you currently live in?

(Question 11)

Are there general locations that you have noticed immigrant communities tend to live in?

(Question 12)

In planning to construct a competency center, where would the most accessible location for the center be, in your opinion?



## **Interview Questions for Immigrants**

### **Inmigrantes Hispanohablantes**

(Pregunta 1)

¿Qué tan conectado te sientes con la comunidad cuencana?

(Pregunta 2)

¿Qué tipo de eventos le gustaría ver en el futuro que le ayudarían a navegar por la cultura cuencana?

(Pregunta 3)

¿Ha accedido a algún programa, como programas de aprendizaje de idiomas o programas culturales, disponibles en la ciudad? Si es así, ¿le han resultado útiles? ¿Qué le resultó útil?

(Pregunta 4)

¿Cuántos idiomas hablas?

(Pregunta 5)

¿Conoce algún recurso de aprendizaje de idiomas ubicado cerca de usted?

(Pregunta 6)

¿Te imaginas aprendiendo otros idiomas?

(Pregunta 7)

¿Cuáles fueron algunos de los choques culturales que experimentó cuando se mudó a Cuenca?

(Pregunta 8)

¿Cómo describiría las influencias culturales que tiene Cuenca en las conversaciones interpersonales?

(Pregunta 9)

¿Puedes describir cuáles fueron los factores a la hora de elegir la zona donde vives, o anteriormente?

(Pregunta 10)

¿Cómo describirías la comunidad en la que vives actualmente?

(Pregunta 11)

¿Hay lugares generales en los que haya notado que tienden a vivir las comunidades de inmigrantes?

(Pregunta 12)

Al planificar la construcción de un centro de competencias, ¿cuál sería, en su opinión, la ubicación más accesible para el centro?

## Appendix D: Survey

### English

1. The Directorate of International Relations and Cooperation of the GAD Municipal de Cuenca is working to build a plan for an International Competency Center in Cuenca. This center will provide a location and safe space in which people from different cultures and backgrounds, currently residing in Cuenca, can interact with one another to exchange professional and cultural information and experiences. The goal of this survey is to help provide the Directorate of International Relations and Cooperation with the knowledge and insight to create programs fostering this type of intercultural exchange. The information you provide in this survey will be used by the Directorate of International Relations and Cooperation, however, your name and contact information will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified by you.

2. What country are you from originally?

---

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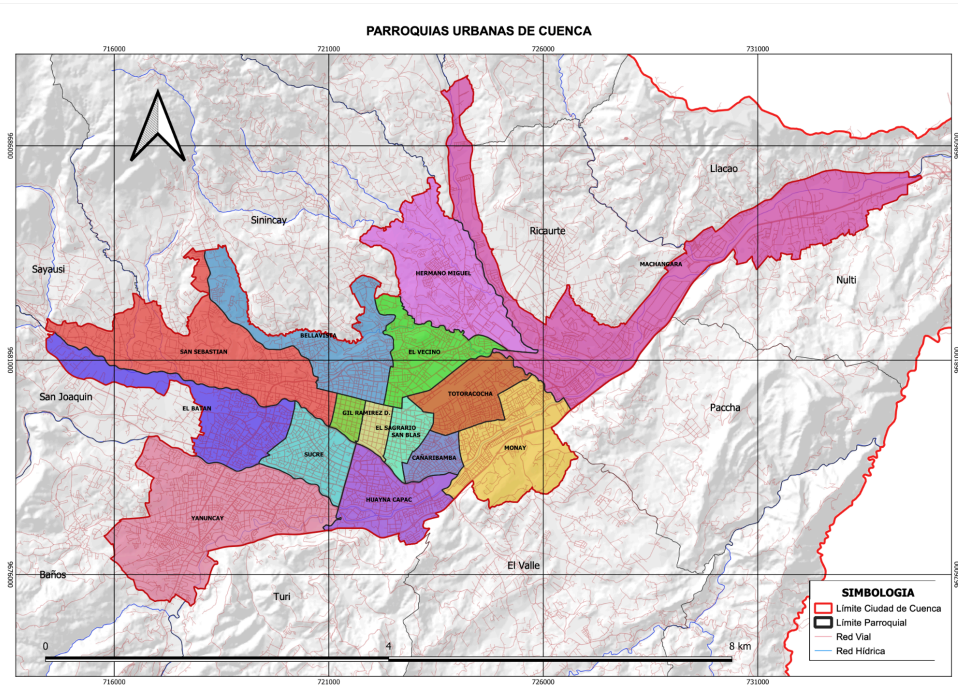
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3. How long have you lived in Cuenca

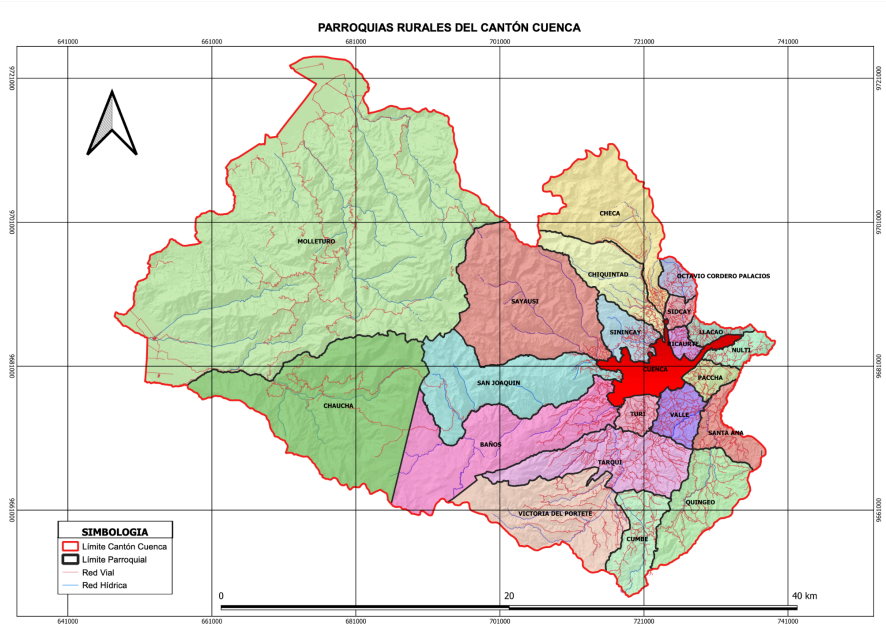
- 0–2 years
- 3–5 years
- 6–10 years
- 10+
- Entire life

4. Based on the map provided below, please indicate which urban neighborhood you currently live in, if you do not live in an urban neighborhood please select “N/A”



- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> San Sebastián       | <input type="radio"/> Sucre          |
| <input type="radio"/> El Batán            | <input type="radio"/> Huayna Cápac   |
| <input type="radio"/> Yanuncay            | <input type="radio"/> Hermano Miguel |
| <input type="radio"/> Bellavista          | <input type="radio"/> El Vecino      |
| <input type="radio"/> Gil Ramírez Dávalos | <input type="radio"/> Totoracocha    |
| <input type="radio"/> El Sagrario         | <input type="radio"/> Monay          |
| <input type="radio"/> San Blas            | <input type="radio"/> Machángara     |
| <input type="radio"/> Cañaribamba         | <input type="radio"/> N/A            |

5. Based on the map provided below, please indicate which rural neighborhood you currently live in, if you do not live in a rural neighborhood please select “N/A”



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Molleturo                | <input type="radio"/> Parroquias Urbanas   |
| <input type="radio"/> Chaucha                  | <input type="radio"/> Paccha               |
| <input type="radio"/> Sayausí                  | <input type="radio"/> Nulti                |
| <input type="radio"/> Chichintad               | <input type="radio"/> Turi                 |
| <input type="radio"/> Checa                    | <input type="radio"/> El Valle             |
| <input type="radio"/> San Joaquín              | <input type="radio"/> Santa Ana            |
| <input type="radio"/> Baños                    | <input type="radio"/> Tarqui               |
| <input type="radio"/> Sinincay                 | <input type="radio"/> Victoria del Portete |
| <input type="radio"/> Octavio Cordero Palacios | <input type="radio"/> Cumbe                |
| <input type="radio"/> Sidcay                   | <input type="radio"/> Quingeo              |
| <input type="radio"/> Llacao                   | <input type="radio"/> N/A                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Ricaurte                 |  |

6. If you have selected N/A for both, can you please provide the area in which you live?

---



---

7. How many languages do you speak?

- 0                       1                       2                       3                       4+

8. What language(s) do you speak?

---

9. How many other people do you live with?

- 0                       1                       2                       3                       4+

10. Have you considered learning other languages?

- Yes                       No

11. Are you aware of language pathways in your area?

- Completely aware
- Somewhat aware
- Neither
- Somewhat unaware
- Unaware

12. If so, please name the ones that you are familiar with below:

---

---

---

13. Are you satisfied with the accessibility of these services?

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Extremely Dissatisfied

14. What tools have you used to navigate situations where you were faced with language roadblocks?

- Duolingo
- Google Translate
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. How included do you feel in Cuencan culture?

- Very included
- Somewhat included
- Neutral
- Somewhat unincluded
- Very unincluded

16. What type of cultural exchange events would you be interested in participating in?

- Professional Meet and Greets
- Informational Lectures
- Local Cultural Events or Festivals
- Workshops or Seminars
- Intercultural Social Event
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

17. How much time on average would you be willing to spend participating in these events?

- An hour 2 or 3 times a week
- An hour once a week
- 2 hours every other week
- A few hours once a month
- A few hours every 6 months
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

18. Would you be willing to participate in a more in depth interview regarding your experiences in Cuenca? Yes No

19. Thank you for choosing to continue your participation in our study. We will use the information requested below to contact you to determine the next steps to schedule an in depth interview with you and 2 members of our team. This information will not be released without your consent and will be deleted after we have contacted you for scheduling for your privacy if you do not want to be publicly identified.

20. What is your full name?

---

21. What is your preferred method of communication?

- WhatsApp
- Email
- Text Message
- Other

22. Please provide your contact information for your preferred method of communication:

---

23. What is your secondary preferred method of communication?

- Text Message
- Email
- WhatsApp
- Other

24. Please provide your contact information for your secondary:

---



25. If you answer no to any of the following questions you may still be interviewed, however your identifying information will not be recorded in any documents available to the GAD Municipal de Cuenca or the public at the conclusion of this study. You will be assigned a numerical identifier in documents relating to this study in order to maintain your confidentiality.

26. Are you willing to have your basic identifying information, such as your name, recorded and publicly released in relation to this project?    Yes            No

27. Are you willing to have your contact information made available to the GAD Municipal de Cuenca for further inquiries after the conclusion of this project?

Yes                      No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your participation is invaluable to us and your response has been recorded for further review

## Spanish

La Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales y Cooperación del GAD Municipal de Cuenca trabaja en la construcción de un plan para un Centro de Competencias Internacionales en Cuenca. Este centro proporcionará una ubicación y un espacio seguro en el que personas de diferentes culturas y orígenes, que actualmente residen en Cuenca, puedan interactuar entre sí para intercambiar información y experiencias profesionales y culturales. El objetivo de esta encuesta es ayudar a dotar a la Dirección de Relaciones y Cooperación Internacionales del conocimiento y la visión para crear programas que fomenten este tipo de intercambio intercultural. La información que usted proporcione en esta encuesta será utilizada por la Dirección de Relaciones y Cooperación Internacionales, sin embargo, su nombre e información de contacto se mantendrán confidenciales a menos que usted especifique lo contrario.

1. ¿De qué país es originalmente?

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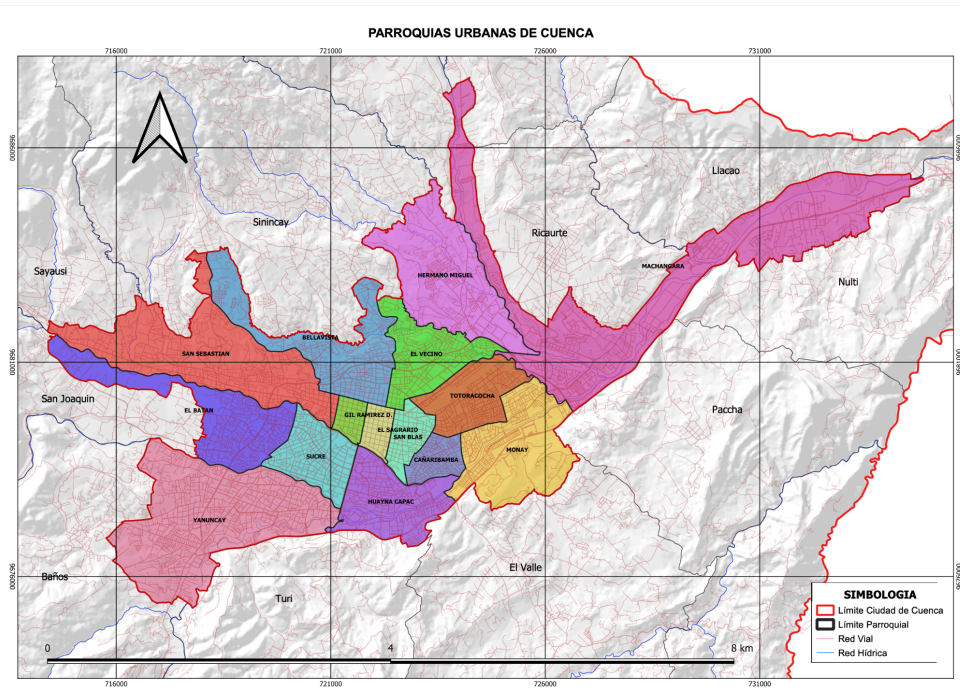
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2. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas viviendo en Cuenca?

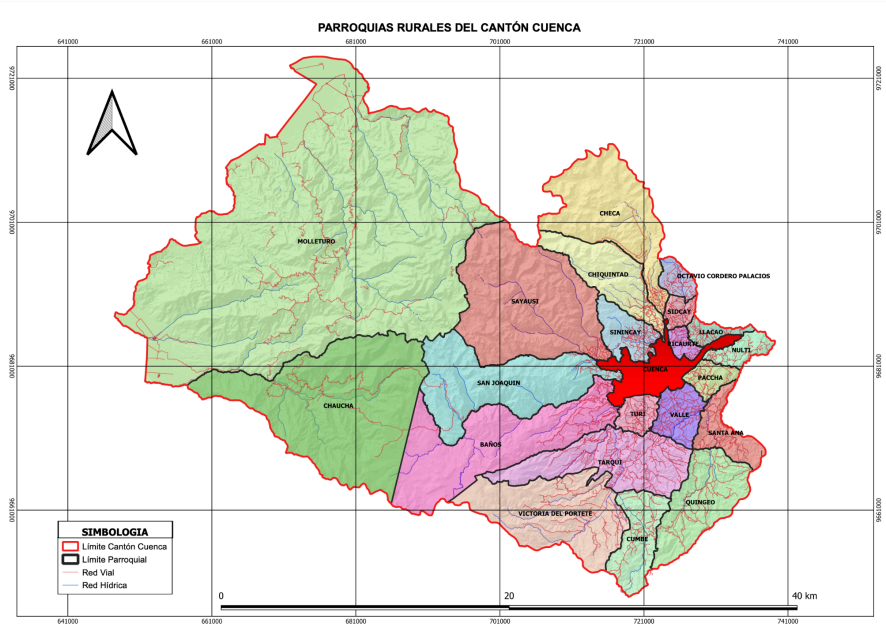
- 0-2 años
- 3 a 5 años
- 6 a 10 años
- 10+
- Vida entera

3. Según el mapa proporcionado a continuación, indique en qué vecindario urbano vive actualmente; si no vive en un vecindario urbano, seleccione “N/A”



- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> San Sebastián       | <input type="radio"/> Sucre          |
| <input type="radio"/> El Batán            | <input type="radio"/> Huayna Cápac   |
| <input type="radio"/> Yanuncay            | <input type="radio"/> Hermano Miguel |
| <input type="radio"/> Bellavista          | <input type="radio"/> El Vecino      |
| <input type="radio"/> Gil Ramírez Dávalos | <input type="radio"/> Totoracocha    |
| <input type="radio"/> El Sagrario         | <input type="radio"/> Monay          |
| <input type="radio"/> San Blas            | <input type="radio"/> Machángara     |
| <input type="radio"/> Cañaribamba         | <input type="radio"/> N/A            |

4. Según el mapa proporcionado a continuación, indique en qué vecindario rural vive actualmente; si no vive en un vecindario rural, seleccione "N/A"



- |                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Molleturo                | ■ Parroquias Urbanas   |
| ■ Chaucha                  | ■ Paccha               |
| ■ Sayausí                  | ■ Nulti                |
| ■ Chichintad               | ■ Turi                 |
| ■ Checa                    | ■ El Valle             |
| ■ San Joaquín              | ■ Santa Ana            |
| ■ Baños                    | ■ Tarqui               |
| ■ Sinincay                 | ■ Victoria del Portete |
| ■ Octavio Cordero Palacios | ■ Cumbe                |
| ■ Sidcay                   | ■ Quingero             |
| ■ Llacao                   | ■ N/A                  |
| ■ Ricaurte                 |                        |

5. If you have selected N/A for both, can you please provide the area in which you live?

---



---

6. ¿Cuántos idiomas habla?

- 0             1             2             3             4+

7. ¿Qué idioma(s) habla?

---

8. ¿Con cuántas personas más vive?

- 0             1             2             3             4+

9. ¿Ha considerado aprender otros idiomas?             Sí             No

10. ¿Conoce las rutas de aprendizaje de idiomas en su área?

- Extremadamente bien informado
- Muy bien informado
- Moderadamente bien informado
- Ligeramente informado
- No tengo ningún conocimiento

11. Si es así, ¿podrías nombrar a los que estás familiarizado a continuación?

---

---

---

12. ¿Está satisfecho con la accesibilidad de esos servicios de aprendizaje de idiomas?

- Muy Satisfecho
- Algo satisfecho
- Ni satisfecho ni insatisfecho
- Algo insatisfecho
- Muy insatisfecho

13. ¿Qué herramientas ha utilizado para afrontar situaciones en las que se ha enfrentado a obstáculos lingüísticos?

- Duolingo
- Google Translate
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

14. ¿Qué tan incluido se siente en la cultura cuencana?

- Muy incluido
- Algo incluido
- Neutral
- Algo excluido
- Muy excluido

15. ¿En qué tipos de eventos de intercambio cultural le interesaría participar?

- Encuentros y Saludos Profesionales
- Conferencias Informativas
- Eventos o Festivales Culturales Locales
- Talleres o Seminarios
- Eventos Sociales Interculturales
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

16. ¿Cuánto tiempo en promedio estaría dispuesto a dedicar a participar en estos eventos?

- Una hora 2 o 3 veces por semana
- Una hora uno vez por semana
- 2 horas cada dos semanas
- Unas horas una vez al mes
- Unas horas cada 6 meses
- Ninguna
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

17. ¿Estaría dispuesto a participar en una entrevista más profunda sobre sus experiencias en Cuenca? S/N

18. Gracias por elegir continuar su participación en nuestro estudio. Utilizaremos la información solicitada a continuación para comunicarnos con usted y determinar los próximos pasos para programar una entrevista en profundidad con usted y 2 miembros de nuestro equipo. Esta información no se divulgará sin su consentimiento y se eliminará después de que nos hayamos comunicado con usted para programar su privacidad si no desea ser identificado públicamente.

19. ¿Cuál es su nombre completo?

---

20. ¿Cuál es su método preferido de comunicación?

- WhatsApp
- Correo Electrónico
- Mensaje de Texto
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

21. Proporcione su información de contacto para su método preferido a continuación:

---

22. ¿Cuál es su método de comunicación secundario preferido?

- Mensaje de Texto
- Correo Electrónico
- WhatsApp
- Otro

23. Proporcione su información de contacto a continuación para su secundaria:

---

24. Si responde no a cualquiera de las siguientes preguntas, aún puede ser entrevistado; sin embargo, su información de identificación no quedará registrada en ningún documento disponible para el GAD Municipal de Cuenca o el público al finalizar este estudio. Se le asignará un identificador numérico en los documentos relacionados con este estudio para mantener su confidencialidad.
25. ¿Está dispuesto a que su información de identificación básica, como su nombre, se registre y se haga pública en relación con este proyecto?    Sí                    No
26. ¿Está de acuerdo con que su información de contacto esté disponible para el GAD Municipal de Cuenca para futuras consultas después de la conclusión de este proyecto?
- Sí                    No

Gracias por dedicarle tiempo a esta encuesta. Su respuesta se ha registrado.



## **Appendix E: Interview Preamble**

### **English**

We are students from the United States working for the GAD Municipal de Cuenca to create a program for immigrants looking to integrate into Cuencan culture. This program will act as a platform to encourage cultural and professional knowledge exchanges between non-native and native Cuencanos. We would like your input on key factors relating to our work here. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw whenever you wish. This information will be given to the GAD Municipal de Cuenca, and your name will maintain confidentiality if you so choose. In regards to future participants you may refer us to, those names will be kept confidential in a list until contact is made with them, where those names will then be removed.

### **Spanish**

Somos estudiantes de Estados Unidos trabajando para el GAD Municipal de Cuenca para crear un programa para inmigrantes que buscan integrarse a la cultura cuencana. Este programa actuará como una plataforma para fomentar el intercambio de conocimientos culturales y profesionales entre los no nativos y los nativos de Cuenca. Nos gustaría recibir su opinión sobre los factores clave relacionados con nuestro trabajo aquí. Tu participación es voluntaria y podrás retirarte cuando lo desees. Esta información será entregada al GAD Municipal de Cuenca, y su nombre se mantendrá confidencial si así lo desea. Con respecto a futuros participantes a los que pueda recomendarnos, esos nombres se mantendrán confidenciales en una lista hasta que se establezca contacto con ellos, donde luego se eliminarán.

## Appendix F: LEAP-Q (ENGLISH)

Northwestern Bilingualism & Psycholinguistics Research Laboratory

### Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q)

Last Name		First Name		Today's Date	
Age		Date of Birth		Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>

(1) Please list all the languages you know **in order of dominance**:

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

(2) Please list all the languages you know **in order of acquisition** (your native language first):

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

(3) Please list what percentage of the time you are *currently* and *on average* exposed to each language.

(Your percentages should add up to 100%):

<b>List language here:</b>					
<b>List percentage here:</b>					

(4) When choosing to read a text available in all your languages, in what percentage of cases would you choose to read it in each of your languages? Assume that the original was written in another language, which is unknown to you.

(Your percentages should add up to 100%):

<b>List language here</b>					
<b>List percentage here:</b>					

(5) When choosing a language to speak with a person who is equally fluent in all your languages, what percentage of time would you choose to speak each language? Please report percent of total time.

(Your percentages should add up to 100%):

<b>List language here</b>					
<b>List percentage here:</b>					

(6) Please name the cultures with which you identify. On a scale from zero to ten, please rate the extent to which you identify with each culture. (Examples of possible cultures include US-American, Chinese, Jewish-Orthodox, etc):

<b>List cultures here</b>					

(7) How many years of formal education do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Please check your highest education level (or the approximate US equivalent to a degree obtained in another country):

- |  |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than High School | <input type="checkbox"/> Some College | <input type="checkbox"/> Masters         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School           | <input type="checkbox"/> College      | <input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D./M.D./J.D. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Training | <input type="checkbox"/> a            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:          |

(8) If you have ever immigrated to another country, please provide name of country and date of immigration here.

\_\_\_\_\_

(9) Have you ever had a vision problem , hearing impairment , language disability , or learning disability ? (Check all applicable). If yes, please explain (including any corrections):

\_\_\_\_\_

## Language:

This is my \_\_\_\_\_ language (Maternal/Second/Third/Fourth/Fifth)

All questions below refer to your knowledge of:

(1) Age when you...:

<i>began acquiring:</i>	<i>became fluent in:</i>	<i>began reading in :</i>	<i>became fluent reading in:</i>

(2) Please list the number of years and months you spent in each language environment:

	Years	Months
A country where _____ is spoken		
A family where _____ is spoken		
A school and/or working environment where _____ is spoken		

(3) On a scale from zero to ten, please select your *level of proficiency* in speaking, understanding, and reading from the scroll-down menus:

Speaking		Understanding spoken language		Reading	
----------	--	-------------------------------	--	---------	--

(4) On a scale from zero to ten, please select how much the following factors contributed to your learning:

Interacting with friends		Language tapes/self instruction	
Interacting with family		Watching TV	
Reading		Listening to the radio	

(5) Please rate to what extent you are currently exposed to in the following contexts:

Interacting with friends		Listening to radio/music	
Interacting with family		Reading	
Watching TV		Language-lab/self-instruction	

(6) In your perception, how much of a foreign accent do you have?

(7) Please rate how frequently others identify you as a non-native speaker based on your accent in?

# LEAP-Q (SPANISH)

Northwestern Bilingualism & Psycholinguistics Research Laboratory

## Cuestionario de Experiencia y Competencia Lingüística

Apellido(s)		Nombre(s)		Fecha	
Edad		Fecha de Nacimiento		Masculino <input type="checkbox"/>	Femenino <input type="checkbox"/>

(1) Por favor indique todos los idiomas que conozca **en orden de dominio**:

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

(2) Por favor, indique todos los idiomas que conozca **en orden de adquisición** (su idioma materno primero):

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

(3) Por favor indique qué porcentaje del tiempo Ud. *actualmente* y *en promedio* está expuesto a cada idioma.

(Los porcentajes deben de sumar 100%):

<b>Indique idioma:</b>					
<b>Indique porcentaje:</b>					

(4) Al escoger leer un texto disponible en todos los idiomas que conoce, ¿en qué porcentaje escogería leerlo en cada idioma?

Considere que el texto original fue escrito en un idioma que Ud. no conoce.

(Los porcentajes deben de sumar 100%):

<b>Indique idioma:</b>					
<b>Indique porcentaje:</b>					

(5) Al escoger qué idioma usar para hablar con una persona con fluidez igual que Ud. en todos los idiomas que conoce, ¿qué porcentaje del tiempo escogería Ud. para hablar en cada idioma? Por favor indique el porcentaje del tiempo total.

(Los porcentajes deben de sumar 100%):

<b>Indique idioma:</b>					
<b>Indique porcentaje:</b>					

(6) Por favor indique las culturas con las cuales Ud. se identifica. En una escala del cero al diez, por favor valore hasta qué punto Ud. se identifica con cada cultura. (Ejemplos de culturas posibles incluyen Estadounidense, China, Judío-Ortodoxo, etc.):

<b>Indique cultura:</b>					

(7) ¿Cuántos años de educación tiene Ud.? \_\_\_\_\_

Por favor indique su nivel más alto de educación:

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Menos que la secundaria         | <input type="checkbox"/> Universidad trunca    | <input type="checkbox"/> Maestría terminada |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Escuela secundaria/preparatoria | <input type="checkbox"/> Universidad terminada | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorado          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Escuela técnica                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Posgrado trunco       | <input type="checkbox"/> Otro:              |

(8) Si Ud. ha inmigrado a otro país, por favor indique el nombre del país y la fecha de inmigración aquí abajo.

\_\_\_\_\_

(9) ¿Ud. tiene algún problema de la vista , problema auditivo , problema de lenguaje , o problema de aprendizaje  ?

(Indique todo lo que aplique). Si es el caso, por favor explique (incluyendo cualquier tratamiento o corrección necesaria para mejorar dicho problema):

\_\_\_\_\_

## Idioma:

Este es mi idioma \_\_\_\_\_ (Materno/Segundo/Tercero/Cuarto/Quinto)

Todas las preguntas que siguen se refieren a su conocimiento de ...

(1) Edad cuando Ud. ...:

<i>empezó a adquirir:</i>	<i>llegó a ser fluido</i> en :	<i>empezó a leer</i> en:	<i>llegó a leer fluidamente</i> en :

(2) Por favor indique el número de años y meses que Ud. pasó en cada ambiente lingüístico:

	Años	Meses
Un país donde es hablado		
Una familia donde es hablado		
Una escuela y/o ambiente de trabajo donde es hablado		

(3) En una escala del cero al diez, por favor seleccione su *nivel de competencia* al hablar, comprender, y leer de los menús extraídos:

Hablar		Comprender lenguaje hablado		Leer	
--------	--	-----------------------------	--	------	--

(4) En una escala del cero al diez, por favor seleccione cuánto los siguientes factores contribuyeron a su aprendizaje de :

Conviviendo con amistades		Material de autoinstrucción	
Conviviendo con familia		Viendo televisión	
Leyendo		Escuchando la radio	

(5) Por favor valore hasta qué punto Ud. actualmente está expuesto a en los contextos siguientes:

Conviviendo con amistades		Escuchando la radio/música	
Conviviendo con familia		Viendo televisión	
Leyendo		Material de autoinstrucción	

(6) ¿Según su percepción, cuánto acento extranjero tiene Ud. en?

(7) Por favor, valore qué tan frecuentemente los demás lo identifican a Ud. como un hablante no nativo debido a su acento en:

# Appendix G: Gantt Chart

## Gantt Chart Team ICD

PROJECT TITLE: Project Timeline		ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES:			
PROJECT MANAGER: Keyla Zelaya		PROJECT MILESTONES:			
COMPANY NAME: International Competency Center		PRESENTATIONS:			
DATE		March 4th 2024			
WBS NUMBER	TASK TITLE	TASK OWNER	TASK COLLABORATOR	START DATE	DUE DATE
0	Informal Observations			3/19/2024	3/22/2024
0.1	Notes	Team	Team	3/22/2024	3/26/2024
0.1.1	Review	Team	Team	3/27/2024	4/19/2024
1	Semi-Structured Interviews	Team	Team	4/1/2024	4/19/2024
1.1.2	Upload Audio + Transcription	Team	Team	4/1/2024	4/19/2024
2	Surveys				
2.1	Create ICD Survey			4/3/2024	4/5/2024
2.2	Create LEAP-Q Survey			4/3/2024	4/5/2024
2.3.1	Feedback	Maggie	Keyla	4/5/2024	4/9/2024
2.3.2	Distribute	Maggie	Keyla	4/9/2024	4/23/2024
3	Data Review				
3.1	Establish Codes			4/4/2024	4/8/2024
3.1.1	Annotate Transcripts	Aidan	Team	4/4/2024	4/23/2024
3.1.2	Organize Data	Daniel	Team	4/5/2024	4/23/2024
3.2	Draft of Findings			4/8/2024	4/9/2024
3.2.1	Locations	Daniel	Aidan	4/8/2024	4/9/2024
3.2.2	Programs	Aidan	Daniel	4/9/2024	4/9/2024
3.2.3	Language	Keyla	Maggie	4/9/2024	4/9/2024
4	Data Analysis				
4.1	Discussion			4/9/2024	4/17/2024
4.1.1	Mapping	Daniel	Aidan	4/11/2024	4/15/2024
4.1.2	Programs	Aidan	Daniel	4/15/2024	4/17/2024
4.2	Recommendations			4/11/2024	4/17/2024
4.2.1	Isolate Important Factors	Team	Maggie	4/12/2024	4/15/2024
4.2.2	Create an outline	Maggie	Daniel	4/15/2024	4/17/2024
4.2.3	Create a budget	Maggie	Daniel	4/16/2024	4/17/2024
4.3	Acquire Feedback + Modify			4/18/2024	4/26/2024
5	Work on Final Report				
5.1	Methodology			3/6/2024	3/22/2024
5.1.1	Initial Alterations	Keyla	Maggie	3/6/2024	3/15/2024
5.1.2	IRB Approval	Keyla	Maggie	3/15/2024	3/22/2024
5.2	Report Review			3/19/2024	4/29/2024
5.2.1	Background	Daniel	Aidan	4/24/2024	4/26/2024
5.2.2	Findings	Daniel	Keyla	4/18/2024	4/26/2024
5.2.3	Discussion/Recommendation	Maggie	Aidan	4/22/2024	4/26/2024
5.3	Final Edits			4/29/2024	4/29/2024
5.3.1	Final Submission	Team	Team	4/29/2024	4/29/2024
6	Poster Presentations				
6.1	Final Presentations			4/30/2024	4/30/2024