



## 2016 CITIZEN IMPACT AWARD

Presented by the Partnership for Public Service and the Leadership Alumni Board

**Confidential: Embargoed until August 18, 2016**

**Finalists:** Laureen Kapin, Peder Magee, Angelike Mina and MaryKay Mitchell Federal Trade Commission

**Achievement:** Created an easy-to-use educational guide in seven languages to help recent immigrants and refugees avoid falling prey to fraud

Immigrants and refugees who come to the United States from all over the world face many challenges—figuring out the language, finding housing, getting work and navigating a new and vastly different culture. Understanding how to avoid fraud usually isn't high on the list of issues to deal with until someone falls victim to a con artist who fleeces them of money.

A group of Excellence in Government fellows from the Federal Trade Commission, aware that thousands of immigrants and refugees are defrauded every year, decided to help address this problem by creating a now widely distributed "Fraud Handbook for Recent Refugees and Immigrants."

Working with the International Rescue Committee, a national organization that assists recent refugees, and the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection, the EIG group in 2015 put together an easy-to-understand guide translated into seven languages that helps immigrants and their caseworkers spot scams related to debt collection, visa lotteries, immigration assistance and sweepstakes.

The handbook encourages readers to talk with friends and family about identity theft and how to spot and avoid various types of fraud. The group also created posters with information about frequent fraud schemes, such as imposters pretending to be from the Internal Revenue Service and other government agencies, and how scammers often demand money for fake jobs.

"This handbook has been an amazing resource. Clients come in to take a pile for new neighbors," said Kate Christman, cultural orientation coordinator for the International Rescue Committee.

"It was distributed by IRC across all our 26 regional offices. It has simplified something very complex into tools and best practices that are clear enough for clients to remember and use even when they are in the midst of the overwhelming process of rebuilding their lives in the United States," said Christman.

In less than a year, more than 600 organizations throughout the country have requested 57,000 copies of the handbook. The materials, translated into Arabic, Amharic, Dari, French, Spanish and Somali, are available on the FTC's website ([www.consumer.ftc.gov/refugee](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/refugee)). The group promoted the handbook with a featured blog post and through mail distribution to hundreds of partners, presented the materials to the State Department's chief of domestic resettlement and to other local and faith-based organizations.

To develop the handbook, team members Laureen Kapin, Peder Magee, Angelike Mina and MaryKay Mitchell talked with caseworkers about known scams and discovered they needed a quick and simple resource for review and distribution. They also observed refugee orientations and gathered information from the FTC staff.

“They were a great team who listened and had a true passion for the project,” said Jennifer Leach, the assistant director of the FTC’s Division of Consumer and Business Education. “They reached out to various immigrant communities and organizations to conduct research and identify areas of concern. They partnered with my division, the International Rescue Committee, and attended multiple community-led events to assess the needs of this underserved population.”

Felicita Sola-Carter, a coach with the EIG leadership program, said the handbook is an important “empowerment tool.”

“The team was determined to break down barriers and identify the specific needs to produce readily accessible material that will strengthen a community that is vulnerable,” said Sola-Carter.