



FACT SHEET: National Skills and Credential Institute Participating Communities

In March 2015, the Task Force on New Americans called on communities to share ongoing work on immigrant and refugee integration happening at the state, county, or municipal levels. Last month, the Task Force invited eighteen of these communities to participate in the National Skills and Credential Institute, a peer-learning forum aiming to facilitate a better understanding of how policies and practices affect credential attainment and to develop solutions to the barriers that skilled immigrants and refugees face when they seek to use their education and experience from abroad. Each community selected put forth a proposal that demonstrated a true commitment to improving outcomes for skilled immigrants and refugees and engaged community leaders that have a role in tackling this complex issue.

Creative initiatives implemented by these communities include:

- **California:** The Santa Clara County Refugee & Immigrant Forum works to improve collaborations with public, private, and nonprofit service providers to ensure that refugees and immigrants maximize use of their skills, achieve their professional career goals, and become productive members of the society.
- **Colorado:** In the Greater Denver area, the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning houses the Colorado Welcome Back initiative, which assists underemployed refugees and immigrants with foreign training or experience in the health field to reestablish their careers in the state.
- **Georgia:** In Atlanta, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs has launched a series of economic integration initiatives, including programming on financial literacy, digital literacy, and vocational and civic leadership, and is actively pursuing grant funding and partnerships for additional endeavors.
- **Idaho:** Global Talent Idaho uses supplemental funding from the Department of Labor to research and publish relicensing guides aimed at educating skilled immigrants about the complexities of licensing processes.
- **Kentucky:** In the Greater Louisville region, the workforce board KentuckianaWorks seeks to bolster immigrant participation in the advanced manufacturing, sales, information technology, and healthcare sectors in the Greater Louisville region, and is currently working with the local chapter of Prospanica and local Hispanic media to target information and training available at the Kentucky Health Career Center to Hispanic residents.

- **Maine:** The Maine Legislature created and renewed support for the New Mainers Resource Center, which provides programming to help skilled immigrants re-enter the workforce. Since January 2014, the Center provided assistance to 546 new Mainers.
- **Maryland:** Building on work begun by its Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations, the State of Maryland is seeking to create a multi-sector Skilled Immigrants Workforce Development Taskforce to implement strategies promoting economic integration and track relevant metrics and milestones.
- **Massachusetts:** The City of Boston, under the leadership of the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement and the Mayor's Office for Workforce Development, recently created a Task Force on Foreign-Trained Professionals to coordinate and guide the city's work on economic integration. The office further uses Community Development Block Grants and the Neighborhood Jobs Trusts to award grants to English acquisition programs.
- **Michigan:** The State of Michigan, through its Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), initially partnered with Upwardly Global to create 11 professional licensing guides to help skilled immigrants understand and fulfill the requirements to practice their professions in the state. Since then, LARA has expanded the guides to include over 40 different occupations.
- **Minnesota:** The Minnesota Legislature created the first-in-the-nation comprehensive program to integrate immigrant international medical graduates into the state's health care delivery system based on demographic research and recommendations provided by the Foreign-Trained Physician Task Force.
- **Missouri:** In addition to providing workforce training services, the International Institute of St. Louis has partnered with St. Louis Community College by providing Bridge to College ESL preparation.
- **Nebraska:** As part of the umbrella coalition Omaha Community for New Americans, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska has used grant money from the United Way of the Midlands to fund the Successful Transitions to Economic Progress and Sustainability program, which connects new Americans with transferrable skills or education to employment case management and career mentoring designed to help participants enter or progress along their chosen career pathway.
- **New York:** The New York State Board of Regents voted to allow lawfully present immigrants to apply for professional licenses from the State Education Department, while the New York State Department of State created a new nail salon trainee license to reduce barriers to entry and create a new pathway into becoming a licensed nail salon specialist.
- **Ohio:** The International Institute of Akron provides comprehensive career and workforce development services and counseling, and, in partnership with the City of Akron, Summit

County, and many other community-based partners, actively works to identify and implement critical workforce initiatives focused on skilled immigrants.

- **Ohio:** The City of Columbus New Americans Initiative and Franklin County Workforce Welcoming Consortium was created to engage members of the local business community; manufacturing associations; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics organizations; and educational and licensing institutions to provide direct services to skilled immigrants and develop a navigational tool to strengthen their career pathways.
- **Pennsylvania:** The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians has developed an Immigrant Professionals Program and proposes to build capacity through a network of state agencies and partner organizations in municipalities across the state to share best practices, develop tools, and provide training on the employment, educational, and advising services required to support skilled-immigrants.
- **Texas:** In Texas, the Dallas-based Forced Migration Upward Mobility Project recently finished a comprehensive, two-and-a-half-year study with recommendations to improve economic integration based on how immigrants in the United States for over 30 years have career-laddered over time.
- **Washington:** The King County Consortium combines expertise from a variety of immigrant service providers and agencies, the City of Kent, the State's Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance, and the Professional Educator Standards Board to work towards increased availability of career pathway programs and other assistance for immigrant professionals.

These communities are expanding coalitions and developing new strategies to facilitate licensing of skilled immigrants and refugees. We look forward to our continued collaboration following last month's Institute.