



Welcome to the presentation of

Hiring Skilled Immigrants: What Employers Need to Know

Wednesday, June 12th, 2024

9:00 to 10:30am





Emmanuel Owusu

Executive Director

African Bridge Network



2024 Massachusetts Skilled Immigrant Integration Briefing

Emmanuel Owusu

6.12.2024



Population and Impact

Population Impact

- 240,000 immigrant residents of MA with foreign degrees, 20% of adult foreign-born population
- 106,000 bachelor's degree holders face the biggest workforce barriers
- Top Degree Subjects:
 - Medical and healthcare
 - Finance and business
 - Engineering
 - Education and social science

Geographical Concentration

Brockton, Boston, Revere, Worcester, Framingham, Lynn, Quincy, Malden, Cambridge, and Springfield

Source: Massachusetts Business Roundtable, [Tapping Untapped Talent: How Foreign-Educated Immigrants Can Strengthen the Massachusetts Economy](#), 2023

Talent Mismatch Cost

Individual Level

- Foreign-trained Immigrants earn 20% less than U.S.-educated peers
- Average ABN program participant income is \$32,000

State Level

- \$2.3 Billion Loss per year in lost earnings and productivity

Source: Massachusetts Business Roundtable, [Tapping Untapped Talent: How Foreign-Educated Immigrants Can Strengthen the Massachusetts Economy](#), 2023

Local Programs Supporting Skilled Immigrants

- **Service and Advocacy Organizations**

- Welcome Back Center at Bunker Hill Community College
- AACCA Boston
- Northern Essex Community College
- Accelerated Career English Program at Holyoke Community College
- JVS
- MIRA Coalition
- African Bridge Network (ABN)

Local Programs Supporting Skilled Immigrants

- **Employer Efforts**

- Mass General Brigham Foreign-Trained Health Care Professionals Program
- Immigrant Professional Fellowship employer partners

- **Funders**

- The Boston Foundation
- SkillWorks
- English for New Bostonians
- The Clowes Fund
- The Cummings Foundation

Local Programs Supporting Skilled Immigrants

- **Local Partnerships and Initiatives**

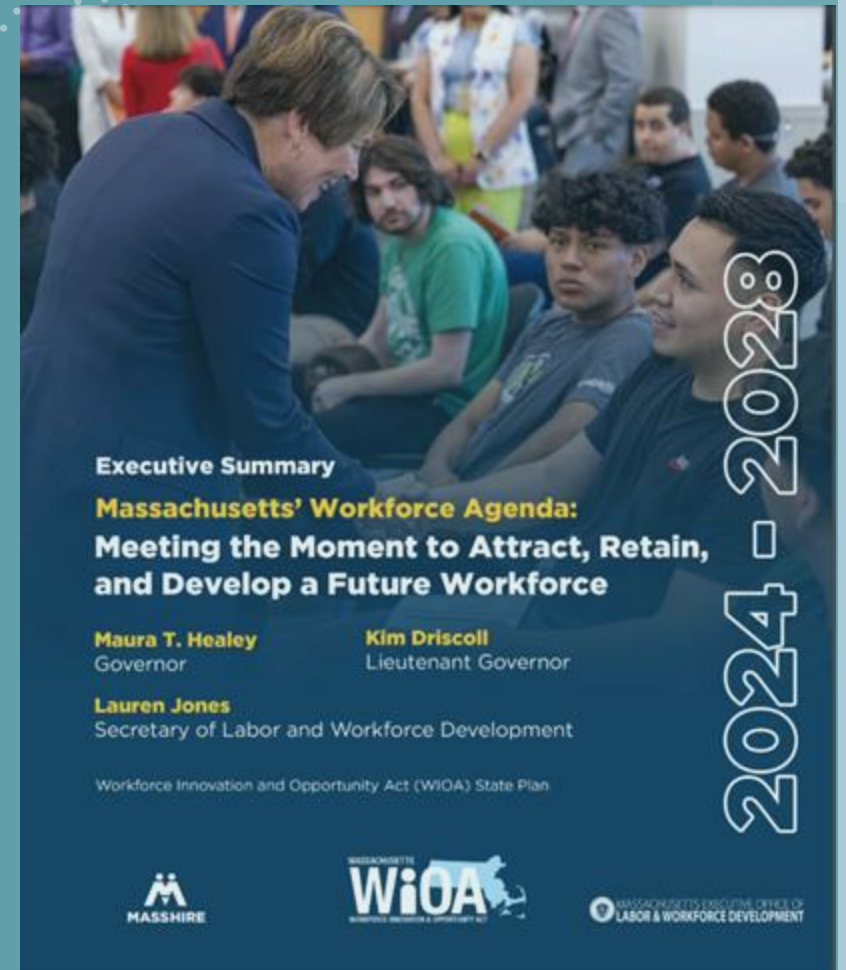
- ABN/City of Boston Immigrant Professional Fellowship
- Massachusetts Business Roundtable (MBR) policy priority on skilled immigrants

- **Local Groundbreaking Research**

- MBR Report: "Tapping Untapped Talent: How Foreign-Educated Immigrants Can Strengthen the Massachusetts Economy"
- Harvard Project on Workforce Report: "Addressing the Labor Shortage in Massachusetts: Engaging Untapped Talent"
- UMDI Report: "Hiring Skilled Immigrants: Recommendations for Massachusetts"

State of Massachusetts Initiatives

- Special Commission on Foreign Trained Medical Professionals
- Physician Pathway Act
- Funding for the Welcome Back Center
- 2024 Workforce Development Plan and Economic Development Plan focus on skilled immigrants
 - Contextualized ESOL, work readiness
 - Statewide recredentialing center
 - Facilitate investments in workforce opportunities



Other States' Efforts

Programs

- Targeted programming at immigrant and refugee service providers, community colleges, and American job centers, drawing on federal, state, and local funding
- Regional, statewide, and local service providers: Global Talent (Utah and Idaho), New Mainers Resource Center (ME), CareerLadder (Lincoln NE)

Community Colleges

- Howard Community College MD, Skilled Immigrant Program
- Austin Community College TX, Internationally Trained Professionals Program
- Miami-Dade College FL, Internationally Trained Professionals Program
- Chemeteka Community College OR, Empowering Professional Immigrant Careers
- Emily Griffith Technical College CO, Careers for Immigrants and Refugees

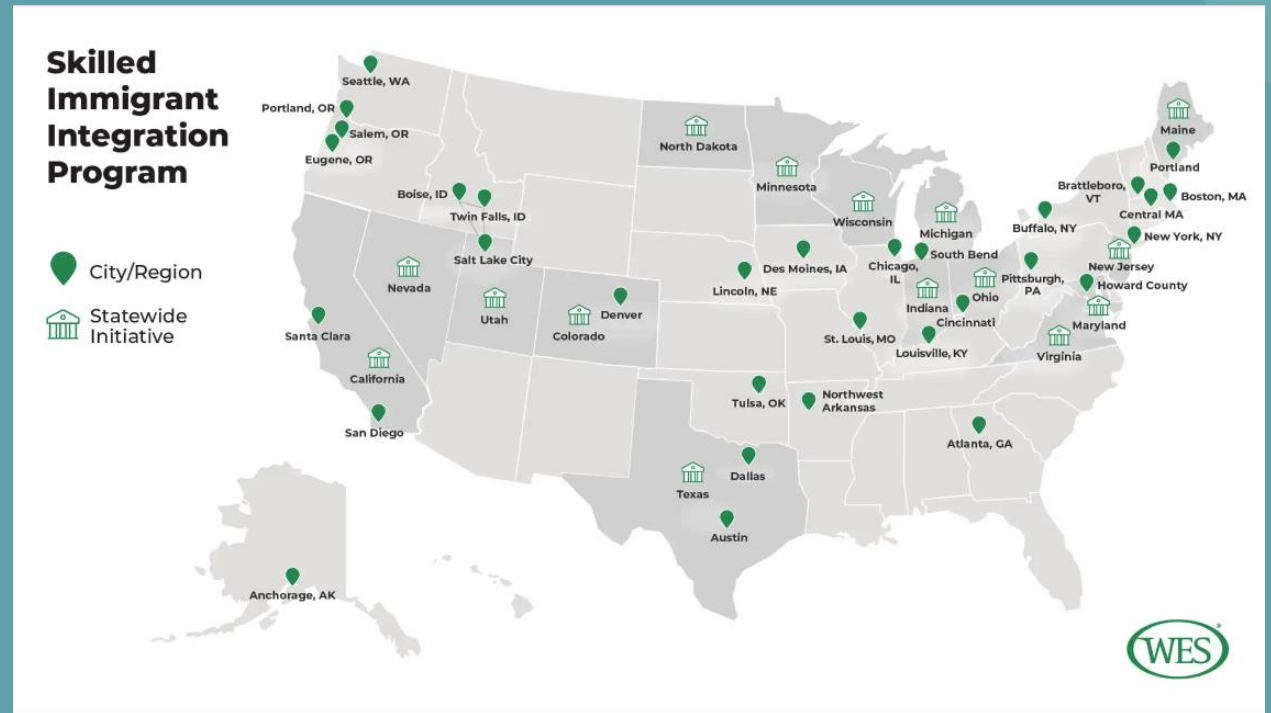
Other States' Efforts

- American Job Centers
 - One-stop career centers in VA and OR with targeted services for internationally trained immigrants
- Legislation
 - Legislative efforts to ease barriers to licensing (see more at [WES Policy Map](#)), incl many for IMGs (e.g [TN](#), [VA](#), [WA](#), [FL](#), others pending in Arizona, Iowa, Missouri, Nevada, Vermont, and Wisconsin); teachers ([VA](#), pending in [IL](#), [MI](#), [NV](#));
- Other State-level Initiatives
 - State-level Offices of New Americans and skilled immigrant task forces in 22 states, e.g., [ME](#), [MI](#), [NY](#), [MD](#), [CO](#).
 - State grant initiatives that fund programs at local service providers, e.g., NY [Professional Pathways for High-Skilled Immigrants](#) or MN [Internationally Trained Professionals Competitive Grant Program](#).
- Local, statewide, national collaboratives (service providers, local gov'ts, other stakeholders)
 - [Global Detroit](#) (southeast Michigan), [Synergy Texas](#) (statewide), WES's [Skilled Immigrant Integration Program](#) or the [Office of New Americans \(ONA\) State Network](#)

The Role of World Education Services (WES)

WES as a Field Developer

- Global Talent Bridge division launched in 2012 to help skilled immigrants fully use their talents and education
- The Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) has provided technical support to 40 programs across the nation since 2018
- Office of New Americans (ONA) State Network provides policy advocacy on state immigrant and refugee inclusion efforts (in partnership with American Immigration Council)
- Mariam Assefa Fund, grantmaking operation launched in 2019, has deployed \$32 million to build more inclusive economies for immigrants and refugees in U.S. and Canada



New Federal Report

- [Bridging the Gap for New Americans](#), DOL report and recommendations recognizing the workforce barriers facing internationally trained immigrants and calling for federal action

Findings

- States, nonprofits and community colleges have implemented a range of strategies and initiatives to integrate skilled immigrants into the U.S. workforce
- States have enacted legislative changes to remove barriers that prevent foreign-trained healthcare workers and other professionals from resuming their careers in the U.S.
- Addressing barriers will require a concerted effort from policymakers, educators, employers, and community-based organizations

Recommendations


- Increase advanced or technical English language instruction in local programs
- Provide other opportunities to gain relevant work experience or meet requirements
- Create industry-specific resources and coaching

What is Possible in Massachusetts?

- Advance Legislation
 - Support workforce and economic development plans and Physician Pathway Act
- Support Community Colleges
 - Create career pathways and provide guidance for skilled immigrants
- Strengthen Employer and Funder Engagement
 - Key focus of UMDI report and ABN verification program
 - Bridge programs for immigrant-serving organizations
- Public/Private Partnerships
 - Provide resources, training, and support for ITPs in tech, healthcare, life sciences, finance, advanced manufacturing

References

- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, [Economic Development Plan](#), 2024
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, [Massachusetts Workforce Agenda](#), 2024
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, [Special Commission on Foreign-Trained Medical Professionals Final Report](#), 2022
- Harvard Project on Workforce Report, [Addressing the Labor Shortage in Massachusetts: Engaging Untapped Talent](#), 2023
- Massachusetts Business Roundtable, [Tapping Untapped Talent: How Foreign-Educated Immigrants Can Strengthen the Massachusetts Economy](#), 2023
- U.S. Department of Labor, [Bridging the Gap for New Americans](#), 2024



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Emmanuel Owusu
emmanuel@africanbn.org

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Amy Grunder

Director of State Government Affairs

MIRA Coalition





Lauren Jones

Secretary of Labor & Workforce Development

Commonwealth of Massachusetts





Ember Skye Kane-Lee

Research Manager of Economic & Public Policy Research

UMass Amherst



Hiring Skilled Immigrants: Recommendations for Massachusetts

Ember Skye Kane-Lee, Research Manager
June 12th, 2024

UMassAmherst

Donahue Institute
Economic and
Public Policy Research

UMass Donahue Institute (UMDI)

- Our mission is to advance equity and social justice, foster healthy communities, and support inclusive economies that alleviate poverty and promote opportunity. In collaboration with partner organizations and clients, we execute our mission through research, education and training, capacity building, and direct services to strengthen our collective impact.
- **Economic and Public Policy Research (EPPR)**
- Provides unbiased consulting research on economic, demographic, and other public policy issues. EPPR specializes in:
 - Economic impact and economic development
 - Economic, demographic, housing, industry and workforce issues
 - Population estimates and projections
 - Public policy
 - MassBenchmarks, Population Estimates, Massachusetts State Data Center

African Bridge Network (ABN)

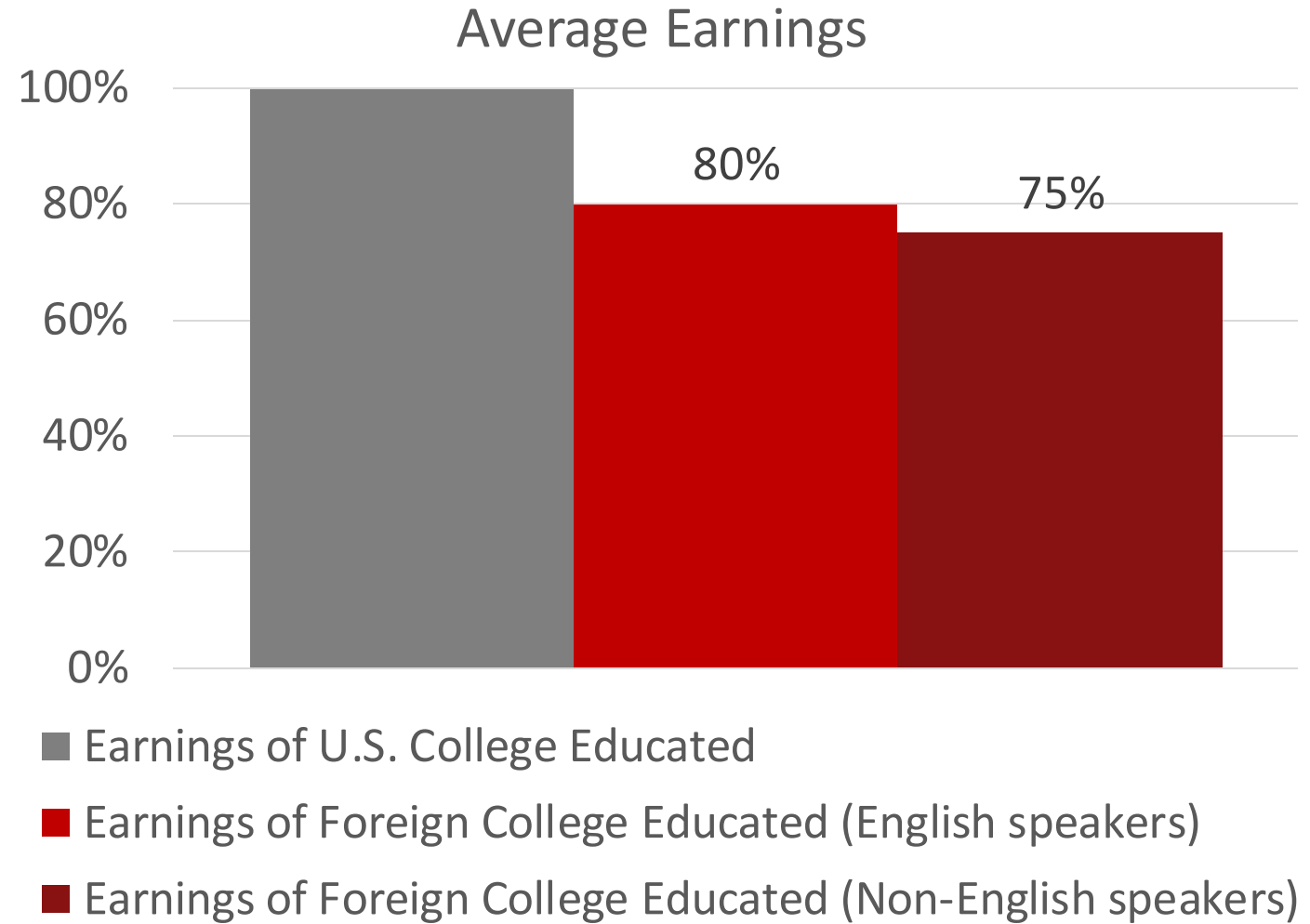
- Worked with UMDI to create a report on the challenges, barriers, and opportunities for skilled immigrants in the state and nation.
- Skilled immigrants are those who are foreign-born residents with a foreign bachelor's degree or higher.
- ABN works with foreign-educated immigrants to build community, develop their networking abilities, provide mentorship and help with their career search.

Methodological Approach

- Content analysis- 39 journal articles and reports
 - Small body of research on this issue
 - Focused on U.S. skilled immigrant experience
- Three in-depth interviews with organizations that hire skilled immigrants
- Two focus groups with employers who currently hire or are interested in hiring skilled immigrants
 - Nine participants

Brain Waste

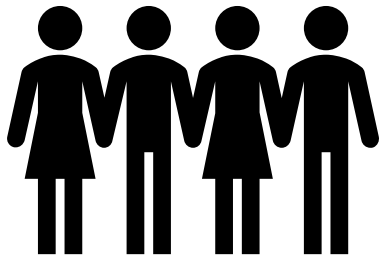
College-educated immigrants sometimes work in positions that require less than their level of educational attainment; that is, they are underutilized, experiencing **“Brain Waste”**.



Source: “Tapping Untapped Talent: How Foreign Educated Immigrants can Strengthen the Massachusetts Economy”

Barriers

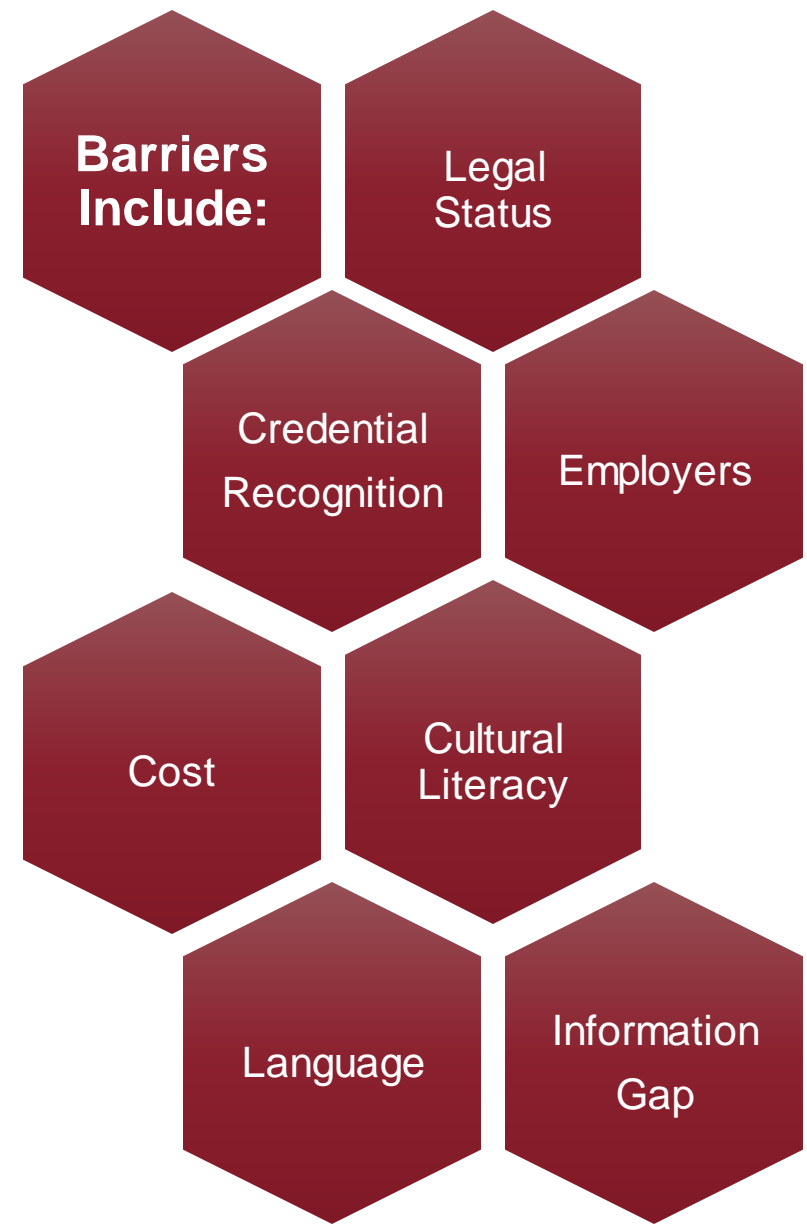
- Highly educated immigrants face obstacles in finding fulfilling work and careers.
- These barriers keep immigrants out of the fields they were trained for.



240,000

Foreign college educated immigrants in Massachusetts. Most have some graduate experience.

-MA Business Roundtable Report

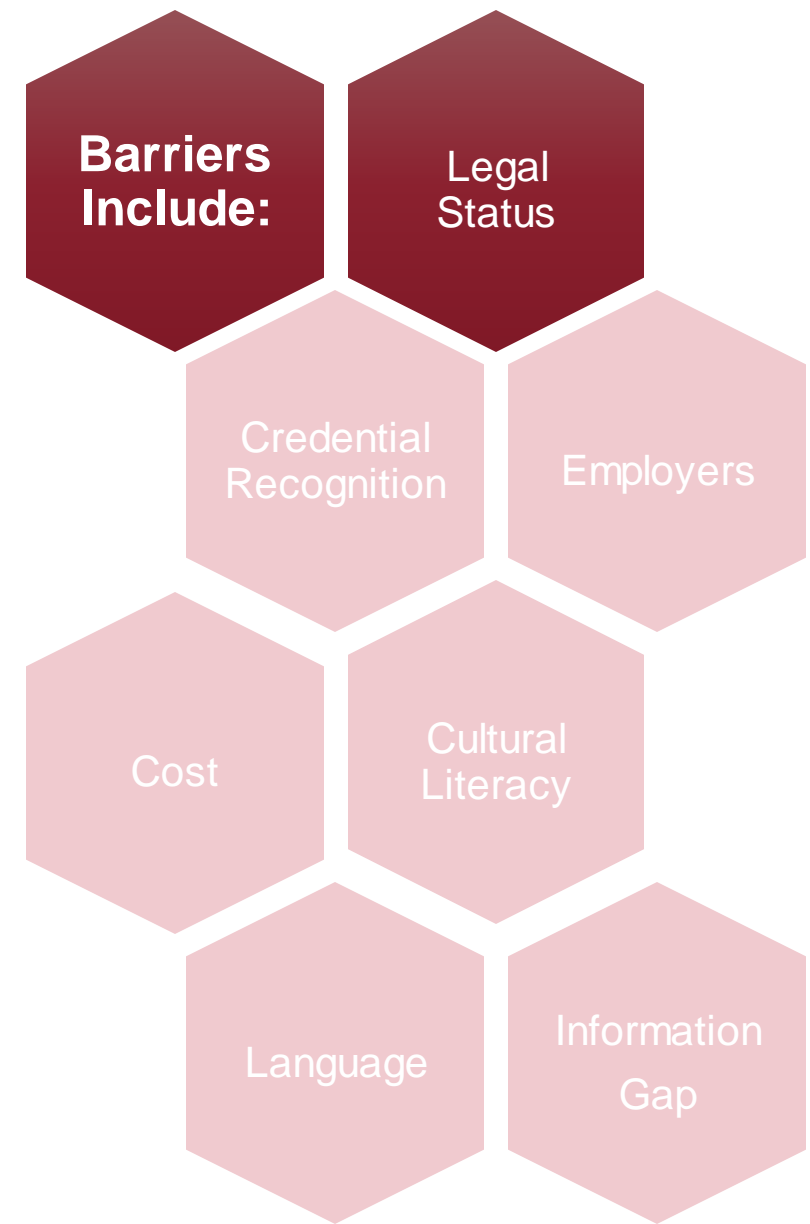


Legal Status

- Dedicated work visas are rare
- Renewal requires employer involvement

“I've had experiences where certain technicians were on edge because their working permit was expiring, and they hadn't gotten the renewal-what they were going to do? It's nerve racking for them, once you get them in, that's not the end of the story.”

-Employer in Healthcare

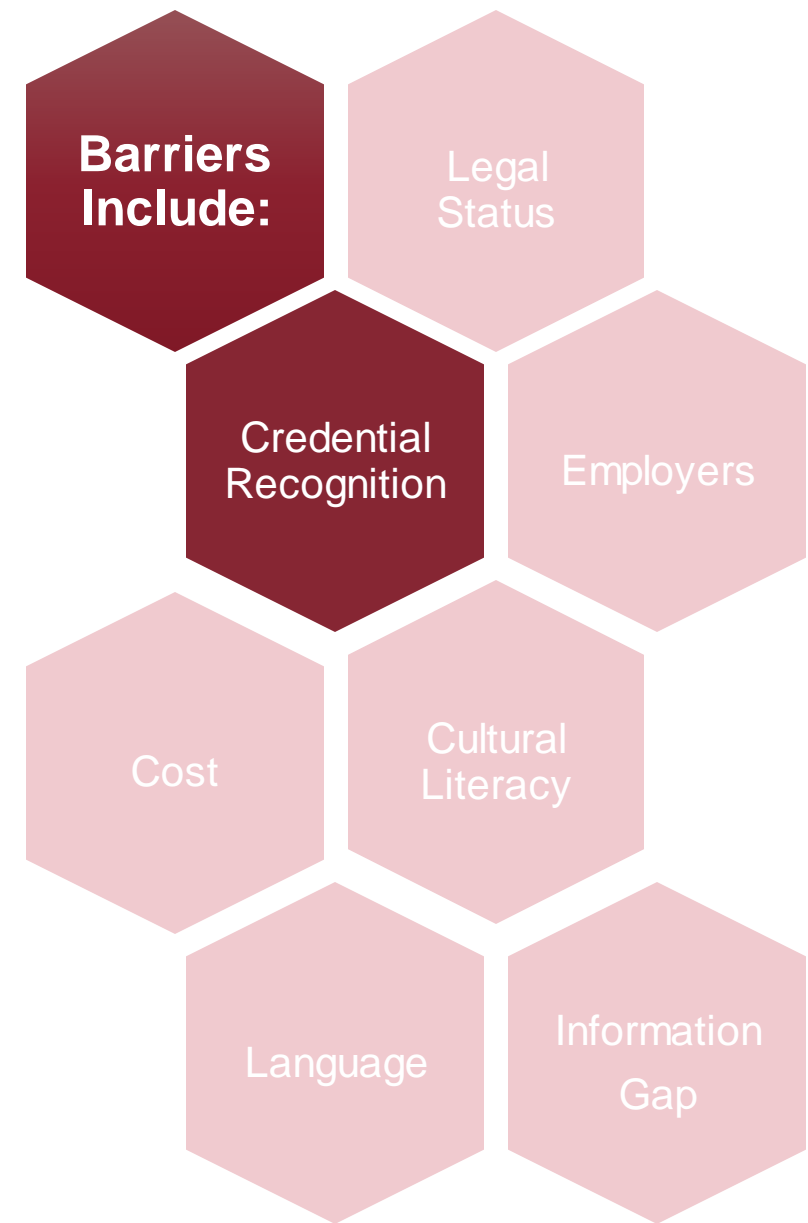


Credential Recognition

- Over a third of college educated immigrants had issues with employers not recognizing foreign experience or credentials.
- Varied licensing requirements for professions in the U.S.

“They (skilled immigrants) don't even necessarily get the opportunity to interview sometimes... you see a resume with everything not here in the United States, and you get put in a pile that doesn't get looked at after.”

– Workforce Development Professional



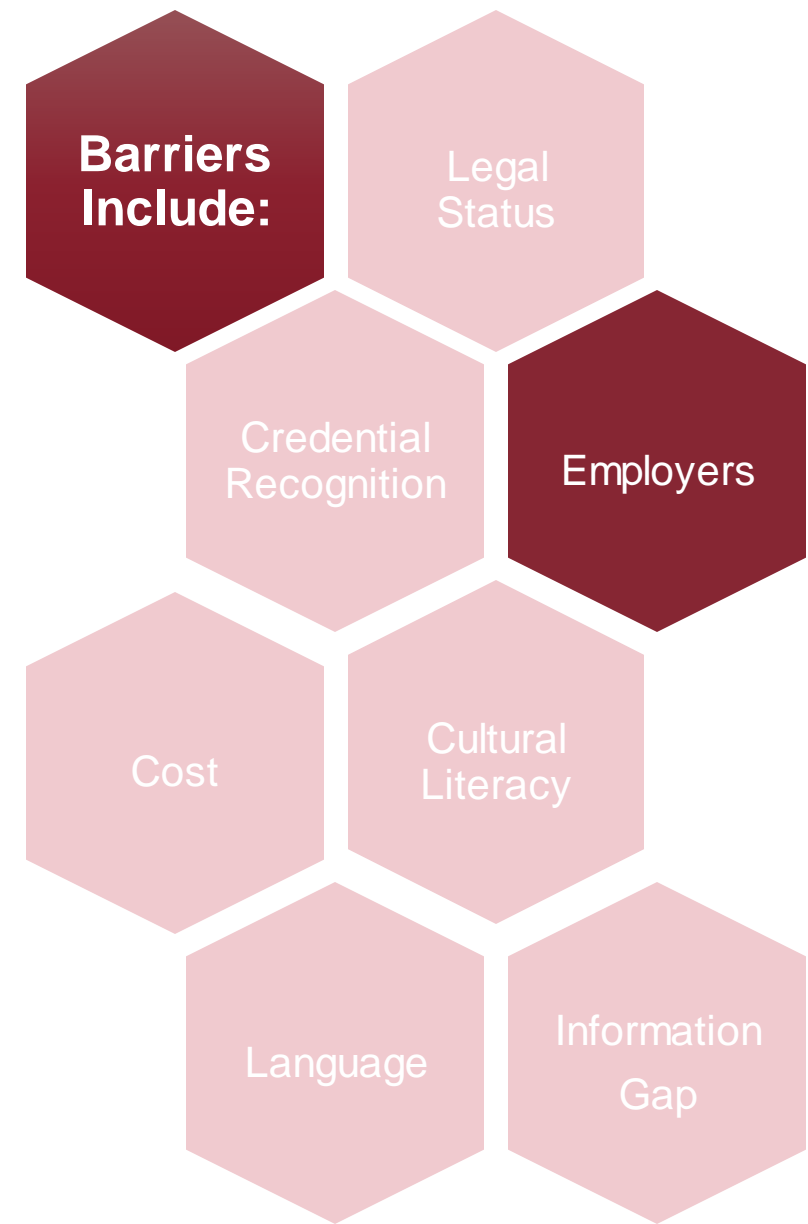
Employers

- Application process is confusing for immigrant applicants.
- Employers may be wary of the validity of foreign credentials.
- Fail to recognize existing immigrant employees with advanced skillsets.

“People can say “I don't understand if this person is qualified or not” or “I feel like it's a risk to hire this person.”

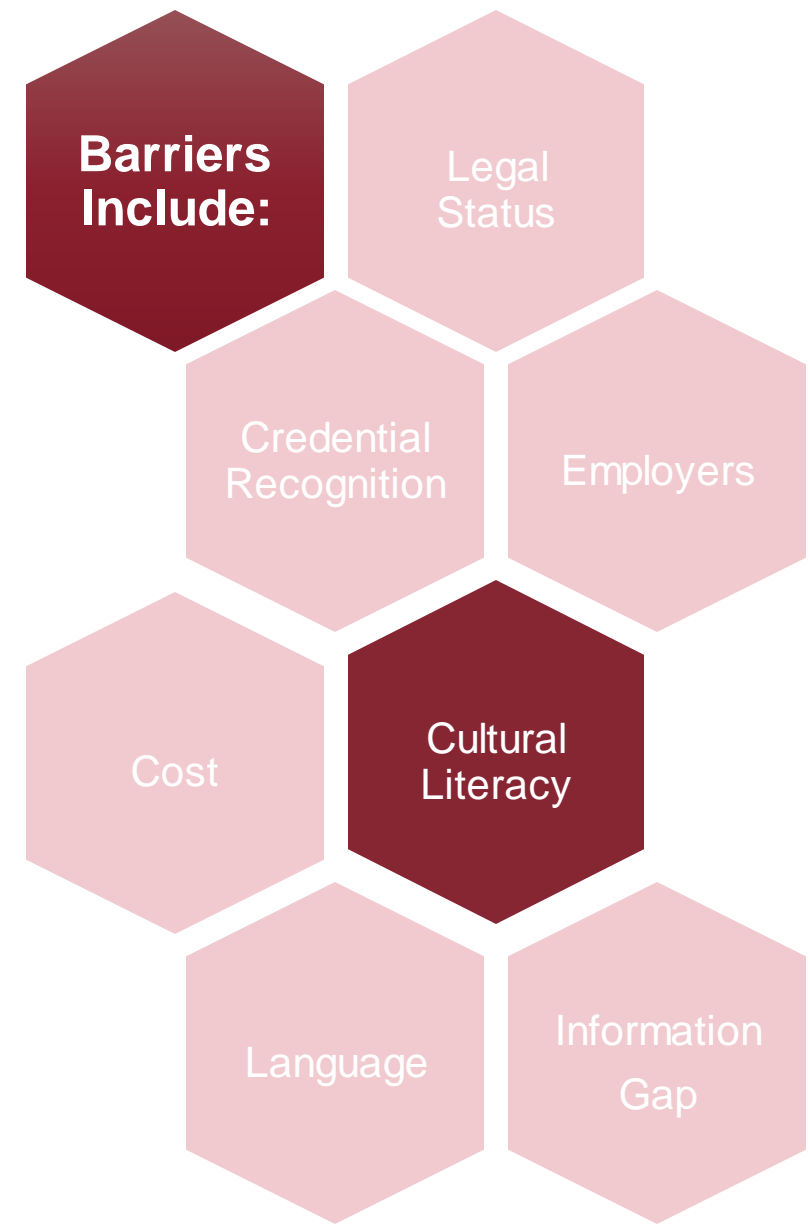
... There is fear around hiring someone who has an accent and whose credentials they don't understand.”

–Adult Education Professional



Cultural Literacy

- Hiring practices in the U.S. differ from other countries.
- Immigrants may have different body language, may avoid “bragging” about their skillsets, include the wrong information on resumes.

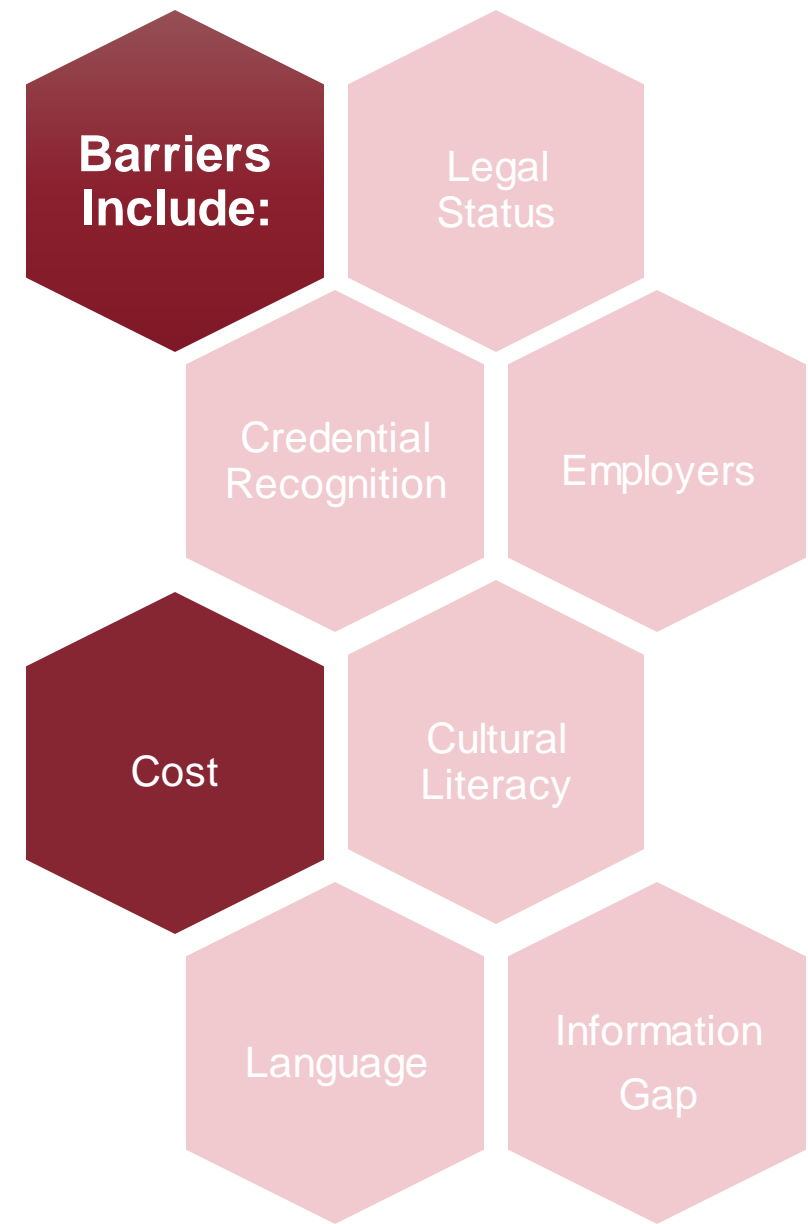


Cost

- Credentialling services, ESOL courses, certificate programs and licensing exams can be expensive.
- Free programs often have a waitlist.
- Temporary jobs sometimes have better pay or benefits than starting jobs in an immigrant's preferred field.

“...Because many of them (skilled immigrants) already work in two or three jobs, they cannot just stop working to shadow a program.”

–Adult Education Professional

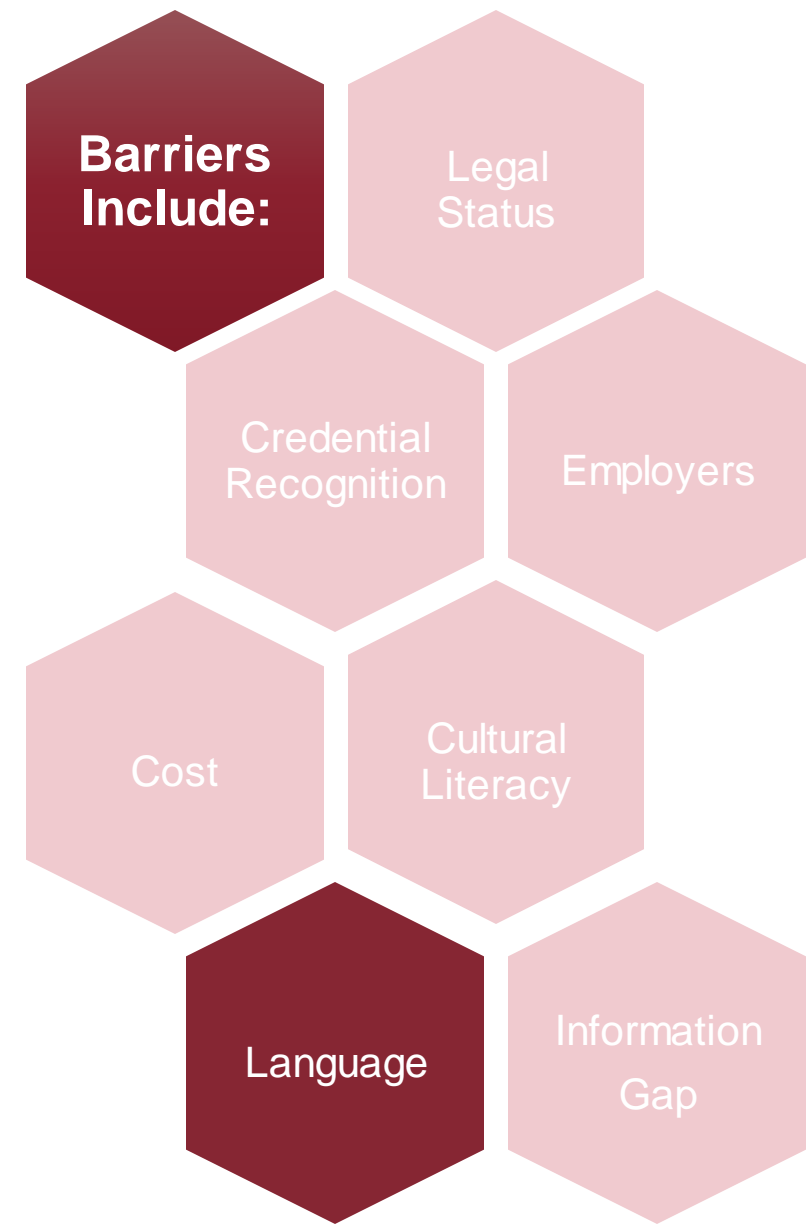


Language Barriers

- A study of college-educated immigrants in healthcare found they had higher levels of English proficiency than the general immigrant population, but gaps remain.
- Technical English language training, including field specific jargon, is rare.

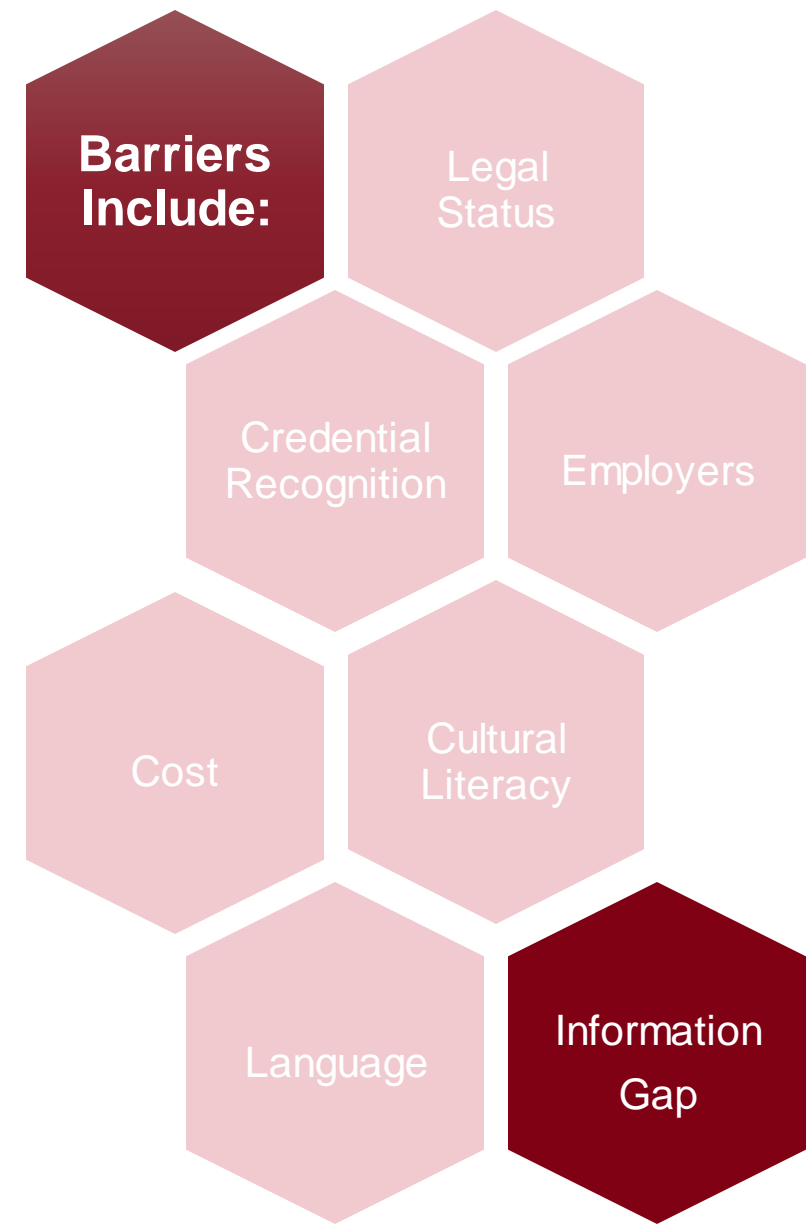
“I (had) two candidates. Very good candidates for an entry level position. They were both from (the same country). But one of them spoke a little better than the other. So, I leaned towards the one that spoke better.”

- Employer in Healthcare



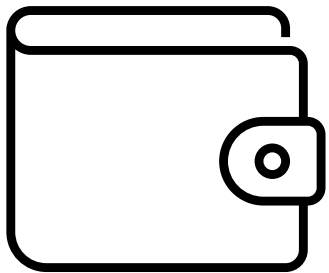
Information Gap

- Each barrier is a knowledge gap.
- Skilled immigrants lack knowledge of workplace practices, hiring norms, and opportunities.
- Employers lack knowledge of foreign credentials, are unaware of the existence/value of skilled immigrants.



Interventions

- Research found a consistent set of interventions.
- These interventions are focused on identifying issues ahead of time and on providing resources/ongoing support to immigrants.



\$2.3 billion

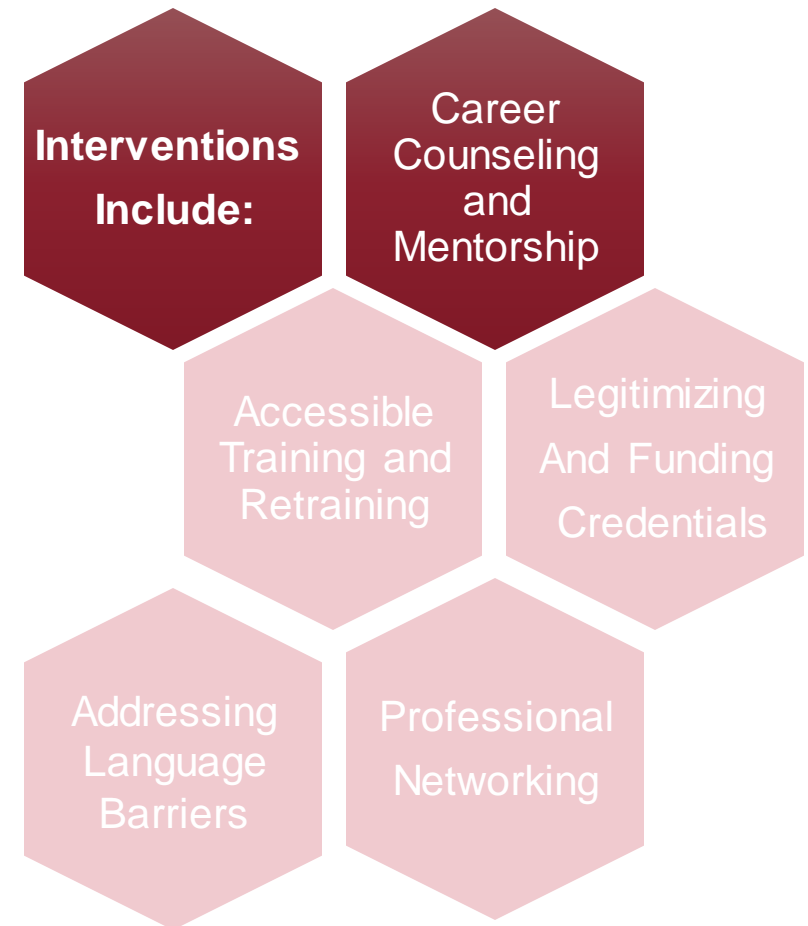
Additional spending power contribution to the state economy by foreign-born immigrants, if employed at the same rate as domestic workers.
-MA Business Roundtable Report, 2023



Career Counseling

- “labor market intermediary” to guide skilled immigrants through application and hiring processes
- Career counseling would aid retention and ease burden on employers

“You could have somebody that is very talented, hardworking, and smart and might not be able to get to the next level, because they don’t have the right mentor or the right coach to help them and elevate them to that.”
– Adult Education Professional



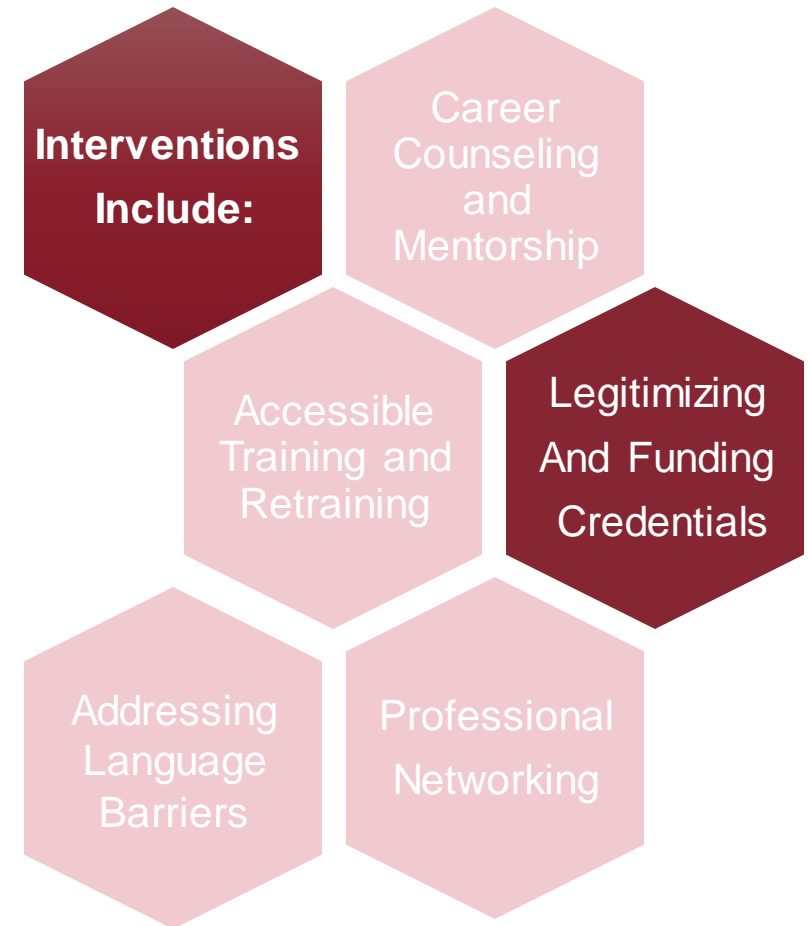
Accessible Training

- Offer low-cost/free training and retraining, with flexible scheduling
- Programs should include:
 - English for professionals
 - U.S. work culture
 - Advanced digital skills
- Partner with Community Colleges
- Welcome Back Centers (part of a national network) have started this work in select fields.



Credentials

- Funding credentialling services
- Help navigating the various kinds of credential evaluation services
- Funding to find and replace immigrant documentation
- Advocate for credentialling standardization and streamlining.



Addressing Language Barriers

- Advocate for funding new and expanded English language programs.
- Advanced English, oriented to specific career paths
- Employers can partner with existing program providers.
- Promote existing ELL/ESOL/ESL classes and grant opportunities for these classes.



Professional Networking

- Cultivate worker social support networks
- Employer supported and implemented buddy systems
- Work with organizations like African Bridge Network, connecting existing employees to programs like ABN's Mentorship program.



Recommendations for Organizational Programming



Clear Descriptions and Useful Programming



Program Branding and Advertising



Workshops and Training

Clear Descriptions and Useful Programming

- Provide in-depth programming with broad value to employers that clearly define what courses will provide.
- Program focus on professionalization, soft skills and workplace cultural norms.
- Develop checklists of transferable skills for immigrants and their employers.

Program Branding and Advertising

- Define ‘skilled immigrant’ clearly and explicitly in program descriptions.
- Collaborate with others who work with skilled immigrants.
- Connect with HR departments who can help guide programming that fits employers.

“They’re (ABN) fabulous about making sure stuff gets pushed out whenever we send it and sharing with their networks. That's what we need as employers. ...community members who are like ‘hey, just send it to me I'll get folks sent right away.’ ”
– Employer in Healthcare

Workshops and Training

- Develop field specific English proficiency workshops
- Create professionalization workshops
- Field specific detailed proficiency checks
- Develop and support mentorship

Ember Skye Kane-Lee, Research Manager
UMass Amherst Donahue Institute, Economic and Public Policy Research
ekanelee@donahue.umass.edu

University of
Massachusetts
Amherst