Helping Rural Immigrant Families Earn a Better Living

Webinar for Aspen Institute
CSG Rural Family Economic Success Project
August 18, 2016
Today’s Workshop

- **Understanding the landscape**: How does federal immigration policy affect who arrives in rural communities?
- **Finding a job**: What are immigrant workers’ assets and barriers?
- **Becoming American**: How immigrant integration policy can facilitate connections between immigrant and US-born community members
Understanding the landscape
A Growing Segment of Americans…

• Immigrants represent 13% of the US population and 17% of the US workforce

• In many areas, population would be shrinking if not for immigration

www.nationalskillscoalition.org
Immigrants in the US: A Quick Snapshot

• The US is home to more than 42 million immigrants

• Of those, approximately 11 million (1 out of 4) are undocumented

Photo credit: Hongqi Zhang, copyright 123rf.com
What Brings People to the US?

• Pull factors
• Push factors

Now, let’s look at a few examples…

Photo credit: Victor Kuznetsov, copyright 123rf.com
Meet Marta

Marta was an accountant in Mexico before moving to the United States. She waited nine years for her family-based immigration visa to become available. She arrived with a green card and significant work experience, but her English skills are minimal.
The Other Martas

- Two-thirds of new US immigrants arrive on family-based visas.

- In 2014-15, nearly 90,000 immigrants with foreign degrees were served in federally funded English language classes under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)


www.nationalskillscoalition.org
Meet Adonay

Adonay survived numerous threats and violent attacks before deciding that his activism made him too much of a target to stay in East Africa.

After a four-year stay in a refugee camp, Adonay was cleared to resettle in the United States as a refugee. He is now working to pay back the cost of his ticket to the US.

Photo for illustration purposes.
Story is a composite character.
Photo credit: mark52, copyright 123rf.com
The Other Adonays

- Each year, the US admits approximately 70,000 refugees.
- Refugees are given one- or two-year work permits, and are eligible to apply for permanent resident ("green card") status in the future.
- Refugees are eligible for limited supportive services funded through the US Office of Refugee Resettlement and provided by nonprofits.
- Refugees are responsible for repaying their "travel loan" (cost of airline ticket to the US).
Meet Mario

Mario is 22 years old. He came to the US from Honduras when he was 14. He briefly attended high school, but had to leave to find work. A friend has recently convinced him it’s time to go back and earn his high-school equivalency. His spoken English is strong, but he struggles to read or write in any language.

Photo for illustration purposes. Story is a composite character.
Photo credit: AmanalImages Inc., copyright 123rf.com

www.nationalskillscoalition.org
The Other Marios

• There are an estimated 1.4 million young adults in the US who arrived before the age of 16 and are currently without status

• These individuals are often referred to as the Dreamers

• Though Dreamers come from all over the world, they are disproportionately likely to be from Latin America

• All young people – regardless of immigration status -- have the legal right to attend K-12 schools, but access to other educational opportunities is not guaranteed
Solving the Undocumented Puzzle

Four federal approaches:

• DREAM Act – *not passed by Congress*; may be reintroduced in the future

• Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (original 2012 DACA) – *currently in effect*

• Expanded 2014 DACA – *on hold due to Supreme Court ruling*

• New Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) – *on hold due to Supreme Court ruling*
What DACA Means for Individuals

• Protection from deportation

• Ability to obtain a Social Security card and temporary work permit

• Ability to apply for a driver’s license

Image credit: US Citizenship and Immigration Services
DAPA: Who Would be Affected?

This Program is Not Yet in Effect

DAPA = Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents

- In other words: undocumented immigrant parents of US citizen children or green-card-holder children
- Includes temporary work permit and protection from deportation
- Eligibility requirements do not include education component

Photo credit: Flickr user Michael Fleshman. Used by permission under a Creative Commons license.
Finding a job: Assets and barriers
Assets

• Entrepreneurialism (not just in business)
• Foreign education
• Bilingualism/multilingualism
• Determination/survival skills
• Experience with mobile technology
Barriers

- Limited English skills (48% of immigrant workers age 16+)
- Limited formal education
- Lack of transportation/driver licenses
- Immigration status
- Difficulties transferring foreign credentials

Photo credit: Steve Lovegrove, copyright 123rf.com
Becoming American
What is Immigrant Integration?

- A dynamic, **two-way process** in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant and cohesive communities. As an **intentional effort**, integration engages and transforms all community members, reaping shared benefits and creating a new whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. --Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees

- There are **three pillars** of immigrant integration: linguistic, civic, and economic. -- *White House Interagency Task Force*
Communities Can Facilitate Immigrant Integration

- **Intentionality** (on-ramps for immigrants into “mainstream” programs)
- **Inclusion** (review of processes to identify potential unintended barriers for immigrants)
- **Exchange** (deliberate, structured opportunities for old and new community members to learn from each other)
Integration Pays Dividends

• The US has a **stronger correlation** between skills and wages than other OECD countries

• Learning English (and other skills) **pays off** for immigrants

• Increased earnings have **positive spillover effect** for local tax revenue

---

Photo credit: Danny Hooks, copyright 123rf.com

www.nationalskillscoalition.org
Resource: WE Global Network

- The **Welcoming Economies (WE) Global Network** is comprised of 20+ regional economic development initiatives working to tap into opportunities created by immigrants

- Members are located in 10 Midwest/Rust Belt states

- Annual conference will be held in October 2016

[www.weglobalnetwork.org](http://www.weglobalnetwork.org)
Resource: Classroom Toolkit

- *An Instructors’ Toolkit for Building Bridges Across Communities* consists of mid-level, adaptable ESOL and ABE classroom activities that aim to foster dialogue across cultures and build lasting connections, especially among immigrants and US-born residents.

- Draws on resources developed by Welcoming America and *The Change Agent* magazine from World Education. Published in 2015.

http://tinyurl.com/ESOLtoolkit

www.nationalskillscoalition.org
Resource: Understanding Immigrant Integration

• **Networks for Integrating New Americans** was a 3-year federal technical assistance initiative

• Five **local networks** comprised of nonprofits, libraries, and other community partners participated

Read the Theoretical Framework: http://tinyurl.com/NetworkNewAmer
Resource:
Workforce Models & Skills Policy

www.nationalskillscoalition.org/
federal-policy/immigration
Stay Connected

• Visit our website.
• Sign up for our member email list.
• Follow us on:

www.nationalskillscoalition.org
Contact

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
Senior Policy Analyst
215-285-2860
amandabs@nationalskillscoalition.org