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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

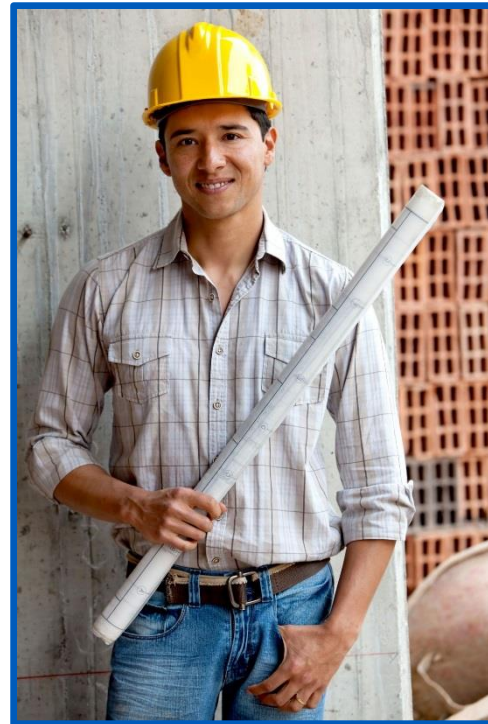


Understanding the landscape



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



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...

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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.

*Photo for illustration purposes. Story is a composite character.
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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)

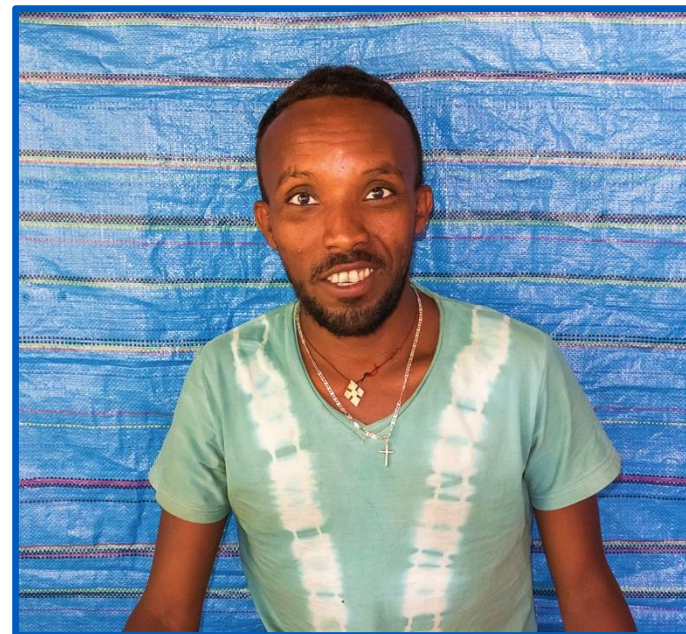
Sources: US Department of Homeland Security; US Department of Education National Reporting System.



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.
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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.
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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

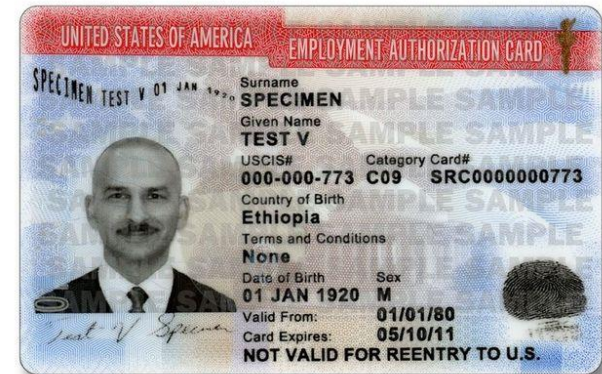


Image credit: US Citizenship and Immigration Services



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

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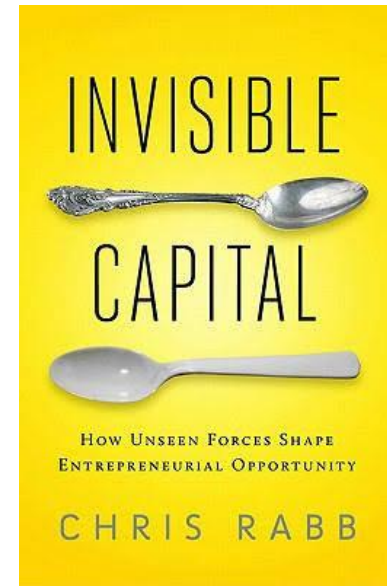


Finding a job: Assets and barriers



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)



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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



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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

www.nationalskillscoalition.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.



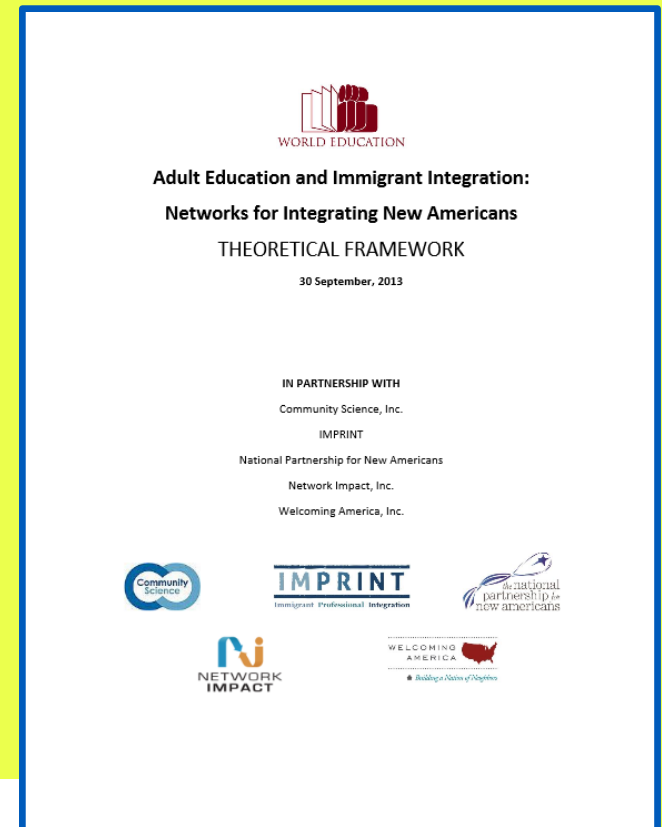
<http://tinyurl.com/ESOLtoolkit>

Resource:

Understanding Immigrant Integration

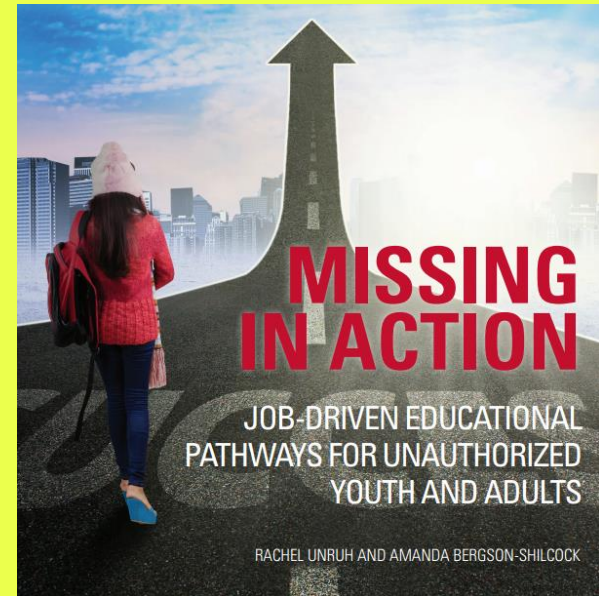
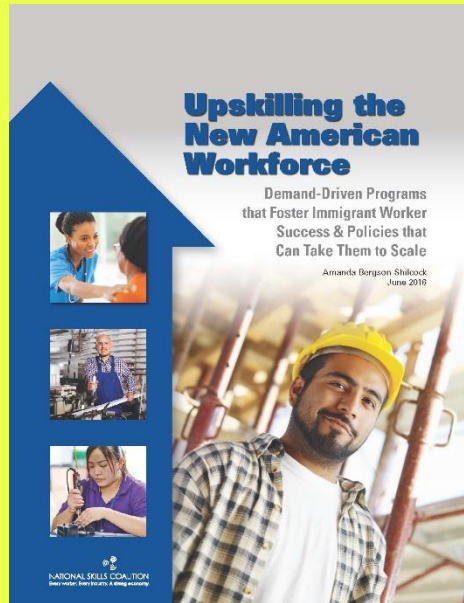
- **Networks for Integrating New Americans** was a 3-year federal technical assistance initiative
- Five **local networks** comprised of nonprofits, libraries, and other community partners participated

Read the Theoretical Framework:
<http://tinyurl.com/NetworkNewAmer>



Resource:

Workforce Models & Skills Policy



[www.nationalskillscoalition.org/
federal-policy/immigration](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/federal-policy/immigration)

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