



Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity

New American Task Force Progress Report & Recommendations



New American Integration

New Americans are vital in Utah's fast-growing and robust economy and most in-demand fields. New Americans, or any foreign-born individual, arrive in Utah for various reasons, such as refugees fleeing conflict, families reuniting after years of separation, parents seeking a better life for their children, students pursuing their education, or workers seeking to fill an occupation or professions. Utah's New Americans' top countries of origin include Mexico, India, Canada, El Salvador, China, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

A thriving economy includes New Americans.

Recognizing New Americans' growing demographics and important contributions to Utah, the New Americans Task Force launched in May 2022. It is a statewide effort to develop a comprehensive strategy that maximizes economic opportunities, social inclusion, and the civic potential for New American integration and helps ensure meaningful inclusion of those who have made Utah their home.

The New American Task Force is led by Go Utah's Utah Immigration Assistance Center and EDCUtah's Center for Economic Opportunity and Belonging.

The group works with key stakeholders to identify barriers to New American integration in Utah. The task force meets regularly to review challenges and opportunities and share best practices that foster the economic opportunity and inclusion of Utah's immigrant communities. A New American Task Force Integration Plan will be released annually to report on the group's priorities, recommendations, and progress.

New American Task Force Work Key Priority Areas

Economic Opportunity

Upskilling | Small Business | Foreign Credentials

Connected Communities

Welcome Hubs | Immigration Legal Services & Naturalization

Global Talent

International Students | Global Talent Recruitment

Education (K-12 & Higher Education)

Resource for Educators and Family | Access to Post-secondary Education

Government Leadership

Language Access | State Interagency Coordination

New Americans are driving Utah's population growth.

Between 2000 and 2019, the number of immigrants in Utah increased by 63.7%, and immigrants were responsible for 11.6% of the state's population growth during the same period. Immigrants account for 8.4% of Utah's population.

New Americans are punching above their weight in fast-growing industries.

New Americans represented 8.4% of Utah's population, but 10.1% of STEM workers, and 12.8% of physicians in 2019, helping to fill critical shortages in fast-growing industries.

New Americans are actively contributing to the labor force.

In Utah's workforce, immigrants are more likely to be of prime working age (25-54) than their U.S.-born neighbors allowing them to participate more actively in the labor force and contribute to the economy as taxpayers and consumers.

New Americans contribute as taxpayers and consumers.

In 2019, new Americans contributed \$1.1 billion in federal taxes and \$572.7 million in state and local taxes and held \$5.4 billion in spending power, which supports the local economy.

New Americans are creating job opportunities.

There were 14,000 immigrant-owned businesses in 2019, creating job opportunities for all Utah's workers and accounting for 8.3% of entrepreneurs in Utah.

International students are supporting jobs.

8,553 international students enrolled in Utah's colleges and universities contributed \$207.5 million to the U.S. economy and supported 2,191 jobs during the 2020-21 school year.

New American Task Force Convening Partners





Progress Summary

Since launching the New American Task Force (Task Force) in May 2022, the Center for Economic Opportunity and Belonging (CEOB), at the Economic Development Corporation of Utah (EDCUtah), and the Utah Immigration Assistance Center (The Center) at the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity (Go Utah) met with over 120 partners and stakeholders representing the public, private, and nonprofit sectors across the state.

Task Force members discussed barriers and opportunities for fostering stronger immigrant integration in Utah. Over the next six months, the Task Force convened ten meetings with an average of twelve participants at each meeting. The meetings encouraged Task Force members to share ways to build or expand upon existing strategies that promote economic growth and opportunity for Utah's New American communities while bringing national experts to share best practices to inform the recommendations. Additionally, over twenty individual or small group discussions were held across the state regarding the New Americans in Utah report and the priority areas for the New American Task Force.

In collaboration with local leaders, the CEOB, EDCUtah, and Go Utah hosted two additional meetings in Cedar City and St. George. At each meeting, more than 40 individuals attended, representing diverse sectors and community members, from local elected officials, institutes of higher education, business owners, and community members. Each community expressed gratitude for these convenings, and their participation contributed to the recommendations presented here.

Networks work at the speed of trust. The New American Task Force serves as the conduit of trust to build on the culture of welcoming throughout Utah, recognizing immigrants play an increasingly important role in sustaining a thriving economy. The following recommendations are the initial steps to deepening the networks of trust and accountability to Utah's New American communities while attempting to build strategies that meet the needs of Utah's growing economy.

The New American Task Force strategy and recommendations focus on immigrant integration at the state level, recognizing that fair and just immigration policy reform depends on bipartisan support at the federal level. The Center closely follows national immigration policy issues working with state leaders, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to evaluate the impacts and potential benefits of immigration policy reforms and initiatives to Utah constituents.

Findings & Recommendations

Using the data presented in the [New Americans in Utah](#) report, produced by the American Immigration Council, and with active participation from the Task Force subcommittee members, the Task Force identified the following barriers and opportunities to create recommendations that will foster the economic inclusion of immigrants in Utah. The recommendations have been presented and approved by the convening partners and honorary chair, Dinesh Patel.

Each recommendation area includes sections on the entities who will lead out on the recommendation, the identified strategic partners, and the best practices and research that have informed the recommendation.

1 Economic Opportunity: Promote economic mobility through upskilling, small business development, and foreign degree credentialing.

UPSKILLING

Findings

Task Force members identified the need for enhanced services and availability of English Language Acquisition (ELA) in public and business sectors to increase access to other mainstream opportunities for upskilling.

Members expressed that the most significant barrier to upskilling and navigating existing programs is the baseline of English proficiency. New Americans need stronger pathways to upskill in the workforce. English skills are vital for obtaining and advancing many types of employment, particularly in fast-growing occupations where workers interact with customers and co-workers, or enhanced digital skills are needed.

Upskilling resources within state government, and the private sectors, are limited in availability and accessibility to all work-eligible immigrants who face similar barriers to upskilling.

Recommendations

- Secure resources to fund an analysis of the existing English Language Learner (ELL) pathways available for New Americans to increase pathways for talent readiness and upskilling to expand on previous efforts led by the Refugee Services Office in 2017 and 2022 (see the [English Language Learners Pathways for Refugees](#) brief). The analysis will focus on adult education and workforce integration programs available by public, private, and nonprofit partners to immigrants across the state.
- Following the analysis, a working group will review the analysis and produce further recommendations. The group will identify public and private resources that can be used to support ELL and broader upskilling and workforce development efforts for New Americans in Utah.

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| Lead | The Center, in partnership with state agencies, is leading out on adult education and English Language Acquisition (ELA), namely the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) . |
| Best Practices & Research | <div data-bbox="561 401 841 506">  </div> <div data-bbox="932 422 1406 485"> <p>The National Immigration Forum's English At Work Program</p> </div> <div data-bbox="570 579 831 663">  </div> <div data-bbox="932 590 1390 653"> <p>National Partnership for New Americans English as a Gateway</p> </div> <div data-bbox="570 722 831 831">  </div> <div data-bbox="932 753 1390 816"> <p>National Skills Coalition Roadmap for Racial Equity & Workforce Development</p> </div> |
| SMALL BUSINESS | |
| Findings | <p>Government and state agencies must coordinate with ethnic chambers and local small business service providers. The New American Task Force met with numerous small business service providers serving New Americans. A consistent theme in this workgroup area was the need for more coordination and outreach to ensure New American business owners are represented in government and state-led initiatives supporting Utah business owners.</p> <p>Additionally, trust and relationship building between mainstream and New American service organizations is critical; thus, creating collaboration opportunities is desired.</p> |
| Recommendation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a New American Entrepreneurship convening as part of the One Utah Summit or other well-aligned regional events. The gathering would be hosted in partnership with existing small business development efforts and provide a dedicated, supportive space to bring together New American business owners to share, learn, and celebrate immigrant entrepreneurs and their contributions to Utah's business community. • Work with existing events to reduce barriers to accessing existing resources for New Americans (i.e., scholarships to small business conferences) |
| Lead | Go Utah will identify resources and a well-aligned event hosted in partnership with the Utah Chambers of Commerce and regional economic development agencies. |

Best Practices & Research



Small Business Administration Immigrant Entrepreneurship Summit



Investing in Minority Entrepreneurs: An Economic Imperative for the U.S.



Immigrants as Entrepreneurs

FOREIGN CREDENTIALS

Findings

With the passage of **SB16**, the Department of Commerce created the Office of Professional Licensing Review (OPLR) and made additional investments to reduce barriers to licensing for professionals, including those with foreign credentials. The support needed for foreign credentialed individuals is nuanced and complex, which requires additional efforts to assist internationally trained professionals in utilizing their skills and education in Utah.

Recommendation

- The Unified Economic Opportunity Commission approved a formal recommendation to allocate resources for staffing to assist foreign credentialed individuals. The recommendation also creates a fund to help with the evaluations of foreign credentials through a vetted, contracted vendor and creates a board of subject matter experts to guide policy and licensing decisions.
- Support the development and administration of a statewide survey, available in multiple languages of Utah's foreign-born population, to assess the barriers. This survey would assess foreign degree licensing, credentialing opportunities and specific sectors to customize support moving forward.

Lead

- The CEOB at EDCUtah, The Center at Go Utah, in partnership with the Department of Commerce (DOC), are leading the foreign credential survey.
- DOC is implementing the recommendations for staffing, the licensure fund, and the advisory board.

Best Practices & Research

- [Welcome Back Center for internationally trained medical professionals](#)
- [Michigan Licensing Guides](#)

2

Connected Communities: Promote the strategies that foster a culture of belonging across sectors and communities.

WELCOME HUB

Findings

Overwhelmingly, New American service providers are well-networked throughout the Central Wasatch Front, mainly concentrated in Salt Lake County. Through statewide engagement with New American Task Force members, public and private sector leaders expressed communities with growing New Americans would like assistance with strategies to foster integration and welcoming and belonging initiatives that promote inclusivity and highlight the contributions of immigrants in their communities.

Recommendation

- Expand the [Welcoming & Belonging Community Cohort](#) pilot in 2023 by adding The Utah Immigration Assistance Center at Go Utah as a partner to work alongside CEOB and Welcoming America. The expansion will include extending communities in the first cohort for another 12 months of capacity building and enrolling three new communities.
- Launch the Rural Engagement Project to conduct focus groups and convenings with government agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and community members to better understand rural communities' needs as it relates to immigrant integration. Using private resources for this initiative, each region participating in the project will receive a data report and recommendations on strategies to build plans for New American integration.
- Collaborate with the My Hometown initiative and other community engagement events led by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to support existing community-led efforts.

Lead

- The CEOB, The Center, in partnership with Welcoming America, will lead the Welcoming & Belonging Cohort expansion.
- The Center is leading the Rural Engagement Project and working closely with interagency partners, stakeholders, and local government associations.

Best Practices & Research



[Welcoming America Rural Engagement Model](#)



[Gateways for Growth](#)

IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES & NATURALIZATION

Findings

Immigration Legal Services are concentrated in Salt Lake County, with additional limited resources available in Utah, Summit, Cache, and Grand Counties. As a result, this significantly impacts individuals seeking legal assistance and representation to maintain their lawful permanent residency, file petitions for work authorization and family reunification, or apply for asylum outside of those areas. The lack of access to legal and educational resources increases barriers to naturalization for the over 50,000 individuals in Utah that are eligible for citizenship.

Naturalization is a win-win strategy with economic benefits that are well documented, including increasing annual household earnings, employment growth, and homeownership. Naturalized immigrants have higher levels of educational attainment, more vital language skills, and more work experience leading to job stability and growth.

Recommendation

- Work with the legislature to secure a one-time appropriation to launch a statewide Citizenship Initiative to build capacity and services in areas outside of the Wasatch Front.

The state legislature made an initial investment of \$100,000 to promote naturalization in 2019. This recommendation would build upon that initial investment to further expand resources.

- Launch a Mayor's Council for Citizenship to build momentum for the importance of naturalization in communities around the state. Ensure strategic outreach to various stakeholders providing immigration legal services around the state and with universities.
- Create a resource map for immigration legal service and citizenship preparation assistance providers around the state.

Lead

The Center, with support from CEOB and rural community partners.

Best Practices & Research



Cities and Counties for Citizenship



The Economic Value of Citizenship for Immigrants in the United States

3

Global Talent: Promote resources to individuals and businesses to identify immigration pathways to recruit and retain international talent.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Findings

Several New American Task Force members include institutes of higher education and those representing international student programs, recognizing that international students are part of the fabric of many of our communities and contribute to our workforce and innovation. Some universities have dedicated programs to support international students accessing post-graduation continuing education opportunities with Utah employers; however, that effort is limited in resources to serve the close to 10,000 international students in the state. Utah businesses need to be better-versed and confident in the opportunities to recruit international students as a talent pipeline.

Recommendation

- Produce a report utilizing Pew Research data to better understand international student talent in Utah's workforce modeling from Global Detroit's International Student Talent in the Michigan Workforce [report](#).
- Host a series of employer and international student networking gatherings to connect Utah companies with international students and graduates to fill critical talent gaps. These gatherings will partner with universities and colleges to provide workshops, networking events, and other career-building offerings in close coordination with [Study Utah](#) member universities. The groups will support Utah employers with training and resources on immigration regulation, the hiring process, and other topics that will help to attract and retain top talent.

Lead

The CEOB and UIAC lead the study in partnership with Global Detroit and will work closely with Study Utah and other university partners to host convenings.

Best Practices & Research



Global Detroit's Global Talent Retention Initiative



Global Entrepreneur in Residence (Global EIR)

GLOBAL TALENT RECRUITMENT

Findings

Utah businesses are requesting technical assistance recruiting talent from existing immigrants and international employment visa pathways. With the fast-changing immigration laws allowing special programs like STEM initiatives, employment authorization for healthcare workers and childcare providers, this is more difficult. As of 2019, immigrants made up almost one-fourth, or 23.1%, of all STEM workers in the country and 10% in Utah.

Recommendation

- Host quarterly business engagement and briefing opportunities to educate Utah businesses on the various global talent pathways for immigrants and internationally skilled employment-visa pathways.
- Partner with economic development agencies to increase Utah's competitiveness to attract foreign-born workers, including federal immigration policy issues and other international global talent recruitment efforts (i.e.: Canada).

Lead

Host quarterly business engagement and briefing opportunities to educate Utah

Best Practices & Research



Global Talent Chamber Network



Colorado's Global Talent Task Force



4



Education: Promote the inclusion of immigrant families from early childhood education to accessing higher education.

RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS AND FAMILY

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| <p>Findings</p> | <p>As Utah’s immigrant population increases beyond the Salt Lake County area, the support of Utah school districts and the education community to engage with educators and parents is needed. The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) invested resources to prepare educators for serving English Language Learners (ELL) through platforms and tools for administrators and teachers. To expand upon this effort, bringing additional resources to assist schools and communities would help build capacity in these areas.</p> <p>A topic repeatedly brought up in this and other subcommittee groups of the Task Force is resources for undocumented families. While resources are limited to support undocumented immigrants in the other subcategories, the support of parents with school-age children is an area to consider for further investment.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workgroup of service providers to work with the USBE on a statewide resource database for educators, community services providers, students, and parents on newcomer tools and resources to welcome immigrant students. Develop a marketing plan to ensure it reaches the targeted stakeholders. |
| <p>Lead</p> | <p>The USBE, in partnership with CEOB, will work on the resource websites. The Center will support this.</p> |
| <p>Best Practices & Research</p> | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Building Welcoming Schools - A Guide for K-12 Educators and After-School Providers</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Newcomer Toolkit- the U.S. Department of Education</p> </div> </div> |

ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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| <p>Findings</p> | <p>There are opportunities for better outreach to New American communities regarding postsecondary education, especially to mixed-status family households and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or Dreamers.</p> |
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| <p>Recommendations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) to increase New American student enrollment in programs, including concurrent enrollment and Career and Technical Education pathways. • Support the Utah System of Higher Education's Simplified Admissions Taskforce efforts aimed at creating a state-common application that would, as part of its initiative, streamline the HB 144 process, reducing barriers for students to receive the Utah non-resident tuition waiver. • Support community-driven efforts to reduce barriers to in-state tuition for immigrant visa holders. |
| <p>Lead</p> | <p>USHE and the statewide DACA Coalition are leading the current efforts. The Utah Immigration Assistance Center and the CEOB will partner on existing underway efforts.</p> |
| <p>Best Practices & Research</p> | <div data-bbox="565 835 828 949">  <p>NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION</p> </div> <div data-bbox="932 873 1282 907"> <p>The Roadmap for Racial Equity</p> </div> <div data-bbox="565 1037 821 1129">  <p>MPI MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE</p> </div> <div data-bbox="932 1033 1315 1138"> <p>Diverging Pathways: Immigrant's Legal Status and Access to Postsecondary Credentials</p> </div> |

5 Government Leadership: Promote interagency coordination on issues related to New Americans in state and federal government.

The Utah Immigration Assistance Center will lead out on hosting quarterly interagency meetings with state government to present on the progress of the New Americans Task Force, solicit feedback and incorporate additional recommendations on state and federal government policies and practices that facilitate immigrant integration. The Center will also work with interagency partners on existing language access initiatives in state government.



For more information on the New American Task Force, please contact Natalie El-Deiry, Director of Immigration & New American Integration, at natalieeldeiry@utah.gov or business.utah.gov/immigration.



**Governor's Office of
Economic Opportunity**

World Trade Center at City Creek

60 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE, SUITE 300
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84111-1004

801 538 8680
business.utah.gov