



INTEGRATING IMMIGRANT TALENT



ABOUT US



**WE PROMOTE INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH
THROUGH IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION.**

- The Welcoming Center (TWC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia.
- We work to open doors of economic opportunity for immigrants of all education and skill levels and build immigrants' individual and collective agency to address barriers to integration and well-being.

TWC was founded by an Irish immigrant in 2003, when she realized the need for a place where newcomers could find resources and information to effectively restart their lives in the US. She founded TWC as a response to her own experience: even as a native English speaker and highly educated physical therapist, she struggled to find a way to restart her career in this country. Our mission now focuses on creating pathways to economic growth and strengthening communities by welcoming immigrants as neighbors and leaders.

OUR PROGRAMMING



WORK READINESS



CONTEXTUALIZED ENGLISH AND DIGITAL SKILLS



ENTREPRENEURSHIP



COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP



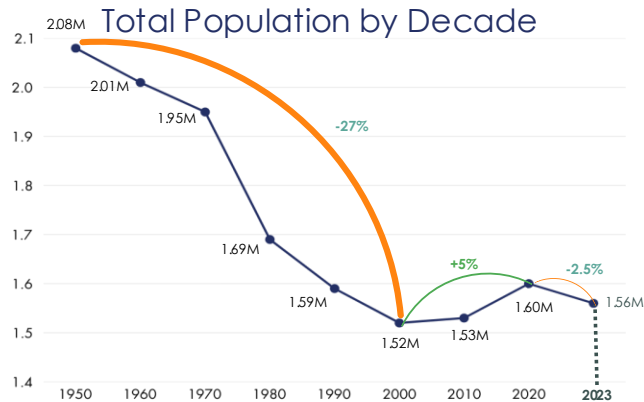
Our work is supported by four strategic pillars that promote immigrant economic integration. We do this through several program areas including workforce development, language learning, small business development, and leadership training. Today, we'll be focusing on how we support companies meet their talent needs.

The Workforce Engine

Immigration is the Future of Work

For context around our work, let's first discuss why immigration is essential to boosting our local economy and meeting workforce needs.

Philadelphia Population Data



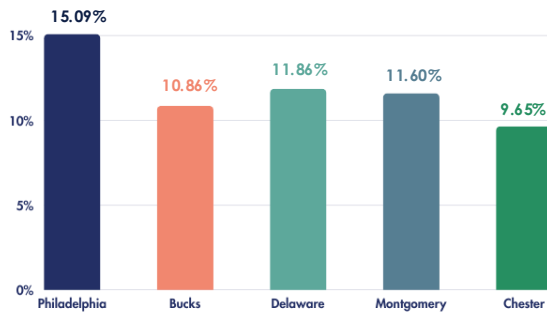
U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey. Provided by the Center of Rural Pennsylvania

The story of Philadelphia's population is similar to so many large US Cities in the past century. While the post-war population boomed in this country, more than half of all US large cities saw serious population decline starting in the 1950s, which had a major impact on business viability.

Philadelphia began to reverse this trend and increase population starting in the 2000s. While some of this was fueled by younger people and empty nesters returning to the city, the primary reason for this growth was immigration—we became a city known for the availability of jobs, and in general, a welcoming environment to newcomers. This is also the time that The Welcoming Center started and local efforts to attract foreign-born persons grew. Without immigrants, Philadelphia and the surrounding counties would still be in a population decline.

Foreign-Born Share of the Total Population

Philadelphia and Suburban Counties, 2023



Note: Chester County rate is from ACS 5-year estimates (2023).
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates (2022).
Table S01. Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Populations.

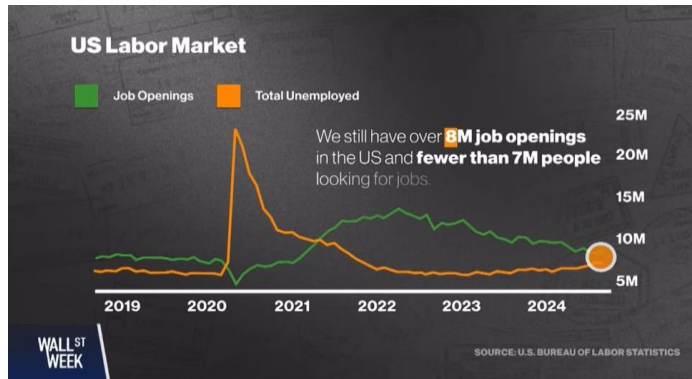
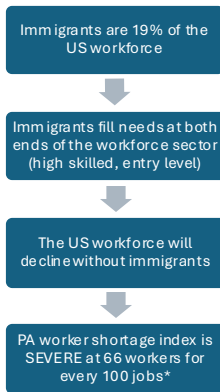


Data story: What are those population numbers?

Foreign-born population is between 10 and 15 percent of the region's population.

Even in these shares of the population immigrants are increasingly having an impact on their community.

Immigrants Fuel Business and Local Economy



“Our legal immigration system has been an engine for growth for decades.” - former National Economic Council Director Brian Deese

Data Source: US Chamber of Commerce

The Pennsylvania labor market is similar to the overall market in the country where there are still more open jobs than there are people to fill them. and the forecasts show that, without immigration, the US workforce will be in full decline in about ten years.

Immigrants are the fastest growing population who can fill labor shortages along the entire workforce spectrum.



This data is just a snap shot of a larger immigration report recently published by TWC. If you're interested in learning more about the impact of immigrants in our region, please visit our website to view the full report.

Find the full report: <https://welcomingcenter.org/our-publications/>

Brain Waste

Skilled immigrants end up in survival jobs—representing a highly untapped labor pool.

27%

Of immigrant college graduates working part-time were doing so involuntarily (compared to 14% US-born)

25%

Of highly-skilled immigrants experience skill underutilization (compared to 18% US-born)

+2M

Highly-skilled immigrants experience underemployment or unemployment



Our region depends on immigrants for community and workforce stability, but immigrants lack pathways to participate fully. They often face barriers that prevent them from matching their skills to in-demand jobs. At the same time that immigrants are increasingly making up a greater percentage of the working population, we are seeing a significant rate of brain waste. "Brain waste" refers to highly skilled or educated individuals, who are unable to fully utilize their skills in the workplace due to barriers. This underutilization not only harms the individuals but also represents a loss of human capital for employers and local communities.

You can see here some recent data points that illustrate how so many immigrants often end up stuck in jobs like ridesharing or hospitality. In fact, at TWC, over 60% of individuals that we work with have a bachelor's degree or higher, but a majority of them are stuck in jobs that require only a HS degree or lower.

Employers have a strong opportunity to intentionally support immigrant talent in order to access an increasing share of the workforce population and gain a competitive advantage

Barriers to Immigrants Entering Labor Force

- ♥ English proficiency
- ♥ Access to career guidance and professional networks
- ♥ Transferring experience & education to US, formally and informally
- ♥ Work culture integration
- ♥ Bias and discrimination



Why does brain waste occur and how can we mitigate it? These are the barriers that immigrants and employers face collectively that keep immigrants from contributing at their full potential—not because of lack of skill or motivation, but because of how systems are set up.

English language proficiency is by far the most significant barrier for immigrants. English classes across the country typically have long waitlists and cannot meet the demand. Moreover, many English classes are geared towards two ends of the spectrum: survival level, conversational English or academic level English. More English classes are needed that are geared towards meeting people's everyday goals, such as employment.

Social capital and a lack of a professional network here is a significant barrier for immigrants. Immigrants with a strongly integrated local community find employment quickly, and others without social ties can find it incredibly difficult to find work.

There is a lack of understanding when it comes to immigrants understanding how they can transfer their education and experience to the US. This goes beyond understanding when and if it is useful to have their foreign degrees evaluated and re-

credentialed, but also in many informal aspects: understanding how to re-enter their careers in the US and how to sell their experience and skillset in the US context. Just as important is the unintentional but common unconscious bias hiring staff in overweighting their concerns around foreign education and experience being somehow less than their US equivalent and underweighting the innovation and fresh perspectives that having staff with global experience can bring.

This closely ties into the next point, which is immigrants need to adapt to the cultural norms and practices of the US. Things that may seem obvious to native born folks, understanding expectations, communication styles, and unspoken norms, take time and education for folks to integrate into.

Finally, it's important to name bias and discrimination as underlying forces that compound all of these barriers. Even when immigrants have the skills, credentials, and language ability, they often face lowered expectations, increased scrutiny, or assumptions about "fit" that their U.S.-born peers do not. These biases shape hiring decisions, promotion pathways, and workplace inclusion, and they contribute directly to brain waste by filtering talent out before it ever has the chance to be fully recognized. Addressing immigrant integration, therefore, requires not only preparing immigrants to navigate systems, but also for employers to make a business case for the importance in changing practices to be more equitable, inclusive, and responsive to global talent.

The International Professionals Program (IPP)

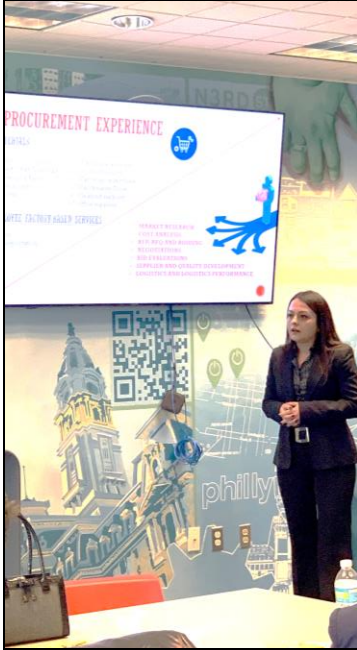
- Combines job readiness classroom learning (8 weeks) with individualized coaching.
- Multilingual professionals with international degrees and experience across healthcare, IT, business, engineering, finance, and more.
- Participants receive intensive training in U.S. workplace culture, communication, job search strategies, professional norms and more by industry experts.



The International Professionals Program combats brain waste and supports immigrants in re-entering their professional fields.

- The welcoming center's IPP is designed to support highly skilled immigrant professionals who arrive in the U.S. with advanced degrees and experience and who are facing unemployment or underemployment to re enter the workforce in their professional field and contribute their expertise to our local workforce.
- IPP combines job readiness classroom learning with individualized coaching. Weekly classes 2 times per week / 8 weeks / hybrid model / have both online and in-person classes.
- Curriculum: offers subjects on resume and cover letter writing, researching employers and applying for jobs, interviewing successfully, and building a professional network.
- We have volunteer industry experts, who come and support the classes
- Our philosophy is that career reentry is not simply about securing a job, but also giving back the professionals their identity, dignity, agency and sense of community.
- We also try to different methods to open paths for our participants to gain employment. We have other post-training workshops, attend job/hiring fairs, and offer fellowship and internship opportunities, which is another feature that we

- offer our partners as a option to support
- Fellowships and internships are another way that our employer partners can get involved and access our talent: these are 3 month, project- base commitments to host one of our participants either as a fellow (paid) or intern (unpaid).
- Our participants are pre-screened, work-ready with no need of sponsorship (example: green cards), and high English level.
- We have recently expanded our services to Chester, Montgomery and Delaware counties as well.



Participant Profile : Berna

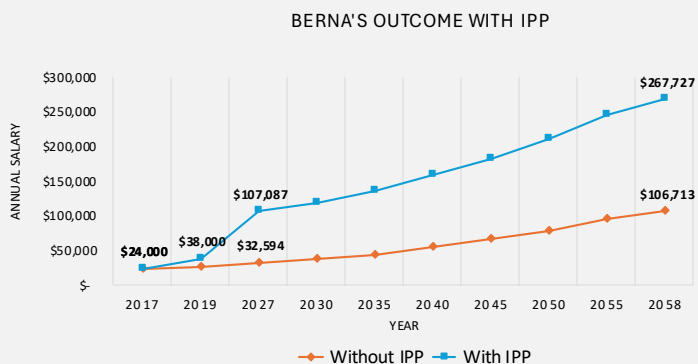
- Country: *Turkey*
- Field: *Procurement Specialist*
- Education: *BA in Econometrics*
 - Work Experience: 6 years
- Job After IPP: *Procurement Technician*
 - Employer: *City of Philadelphia*



Berna Altok is a procurement specialist from Turkey. She came here all alone without any connections. Drove Uber for a long time. Joined IPP and then had to go back to Turkey because of a family member's health issues. She returned and rejoined IPP and finished the program. She interviewed for a fellowship with the City of Philadelphia procurement department. This picture is of her giving a presentation to other fellows and employers of the project she worked on during the fellowship. After the fellowship, she applied for a permanent position, and took a certification exam and is now permanently employed.



Berna's Career Pathway



	Without IPP	With IPP
Year 0 (2017)	\$24,000	\$24,000
Year 2 (2019)	\$25,908	\$38,000
Year 10 (2027)	\$32,593	\$107,087
10 years total	\$252,948	\$626,995

From the time of correction (which is the 2 years after IPP 2019) and higher growth rate (10.4%), we estimate that IPP participants will earn \$374,046.55 more in wages than non-IPP participants within a 10-year time frame.

Berna's success story did not end with her first job with the City. Her talent and drive were quickly recognized and after one year she was promoted. She continued to work, learn, attend conferences, volunteer and received merit-based raises which doubled her starting salary. In 2024 she was recruited by a former supervisor to work on a long-term project revamping the entire procurement system for the City. She is now on the team that is taking the new system from research and design to testing and implementation. The trajectory of her career, should she stay with the City, shows how she could retire with an income more than 11 times that of her gateway job. These data show the value of a small amount of intervention at the beginning when a person first arrives can have a huge return in investment just in salary alone. The added benefit is her stability, her increasing ability to contribute to the economy, and the leadership and skills she has brought to her field. Immigrants show fierce loyalty and determination to companies that invest and trust in them, as evidenced by Berna's long tenure and advancement at the City. Another benefit—in 2022 Berna became a citizen and in 2023 she got married.

Berna had a pre-IPP wage of \$24,000 per year. Within two years of program

completion, Berna realized a one-time jump to a wage more commensurate with her education. That is, a correction in underemployment. The average wage of Berna following this jump is \$38,000.

We therefore assume the long-term wage growth for IPP participants to be the blended **10.4%** growth rate over 10 years as a master degree holder.

In the absence of IPP, we assume that immigrants would continue to compete in the high school labor market, with a **3.4%** growth rate over 10 years from the average starting salary. *(which is also the rate growth after 10 years participating in IPP)*

From the one time correction (which is the 2 years)and higher growth rate, we estimate that IPP participants will earn **\$374,046.55** more in wages than non-IPP participants within a 10-year time frame.

Meet our IPP Job Seekers!



**FINANCIAL SERVICES
BUSINESS OPERATIONS
HEALTHCARE AND HUMAN SERVICES
ENGINEERING**



Experienced & Work Authorized



If you're interested in considering our job seekers for employment, please visit our website and reach out to our staff! We have ready-to-work professionals in financial services, business operations, healthcare and human services, engineering, IT, and architecture.

Meet our Job Seekers: <https://welcomingcenter.org/meet-our-ipp-job-seekers/>

Case Study: Hanwha Philly Shipyard Partnership

- 150 hours tailored pre-apprenticeship training for Hanwha's Welding & Shipbuilding Apprenticeship
- Contextualized English, test prep, workplace professionalism, OSHA 10, CPR/AED
- 88% Ramsay Mechanical Aptitude Test pass rate (vs 41% general pop.)
- On-site ESL class for current workers



The Hanwha Philly Shipyard is a concrete example of what happens when employers address barriers intentionally with the support of organizations like The Welcoming Center. Hanwha, one of the largest shipbuilders in the US, has increasing skilled-labor demands to meet its growing production of ships.

Table 3: Company Programs Targeting Highly Skilled Immigrants

Company	Program Name	Description	Source
Microsoft	Bridge Program	Cultural/technical mentoring for new immigrant hires	Microsoft Diversity Report
Google	Legal Support Network	Visa/immigration assistance, family relocation	Google Careers Portal
IBM	Global Skills Program	Language training, technical certification	IBM Annual DEI Report
Intel	Integration Network	Professional mentorship, cultural adaptation	Intel Diversity Initiatives
Cisco	New Horizons	Language training, certification support	Cisco Career Blog
Deloitte	Global Advantage	Cross-cultural training, immigration support	Deloitte Careers
Accenture	Cultural Navigator	Mentoring, language support, visa assistance	Accenture Inclusion Report
KPMG	Global Mobility	Relocation support, cultural integration	KPMG Careers Portal
Amazon	Global Talent Initiative	Training and relocation for immigrant hires	Amazon Jobs
PwC	Navigate Program	Immigration/legal support, cross-cultural mentoring	PwC Careers
Salesforce	Immigrant Inclusion Program	Cultural mentoring, professional development	Salesforce Equality Report
Meta (Facebook)	Welcome Network	Relocation assistance, visa/legal support	Meta Careers

Source: Alfred Marcus (University of Minnesota), "Immigration and Competitive Advantage: An Integration of the Resource-Based View, Institutional Theory, and Threshold Dynamics."

Companies across the country are recognizing the imperative to develop workforce programs targeting immigrants.

Table 4: Company Programs Targeting Lower Skilled Immigrants

Company	Program Name	Description	Source
Tyson Foods	Upward Academy	Free ESL (English as Second Language) classes, financial literacy, and career pathways for plant workers	Tyson Foods Upward Academy
Walmart	Live Better U	GED completion and ESL programs for entry-level associates	Walmart Live Better U
Hilton	Thrive@Hilton	Basic skills training, mentorship, and ESL support for hospitality workers	Hilton Careers
McDonald's	Archways to Opportunity	ESL and high school diploma programs for frontline workers	McDonald's Archways Program
Amazon	Career Choice	Tuition assistance and ESL training for warehouse associates	Amazon Career Choice
Marriott	Pathways Program	Job training and English skills for entry-level hospitality staff	Marriott Serve 360 Report
Home Depot	Workforce Development Initiative	On-the-job training and language assistance for warehouse and retail workers	Home Depot Corporate Responsibility
JBS USA	Hometown Strong	Community-based ESL classes and skill training for plant workers	JBS USA Hometown Strong
Cargill	Skill Up	Training in workplace safety and basic language skills for agricultural workers	Cargill Corporate Responsibility
Sodexo	Start with Sodexo	Workplace integration programs for janitorial and food service employees	Sodexo Careers

Source: Alfred Marcus (University of Minnesota), "Immigration and Competitive Advantage: An Integration of the Resource-Based View, Institutional Theory, and Threshold Dynamics."

This includes programs along the talent spectrum from "high-skilled" advance roles to entry level roles.



TWC's Workforce Solutions

Employer Challenges

- ◆ Hard-to-fill roles
- ◆ Retention and upskilling
- ◆ Limited capacity for individualized support

TWC's Solutions

- Industry-Responsive Programming**
- ◆ Company needs assessment and tailored programming
 - ◆ Recruitment of work-ready candidates for specific roles
 - ◆ Role-aligned training and contextualized ESOL
 - ◆ Onboarding and retention support

Employer Benefits

- ◆ Reduced hiring risk with pre-screened, trained candidates
- ◆ Higher retention and support beyond day one
- ◆ Access to new talent pools

Now you may be thinking, that is all well for a Fortune 500 company to be able to invest in these types of programs, but what about small and mid size firms? What if the talent acquisition and HR team consists of just me or a small team? Well, that is where organizations like Lincoln Literacy and The Welcoming Center come in.

At The Welcoming Center, our workforce solutions are built around employer realities—hard-to-fill roles, retention challenges, and limited capacity for individualized support. Our industry-based pathways start with employer needs. We conduct company needs assessments, identify clear skill benchmarks, and design responsive programming around those benchmarks. We reduce hiring risk by pre-screening and preparing candidates. We align training to real roles, not generic job readiness. And we stay engaged after hire to support onboarding and retention. Our goal is to work to understand your needs and figure out solutions to prepare candidates. This isn't about asking employers to lower the bar—it's about widening their view and investing in their talent acquisition systems and workforce.

Strategies for Hiring Immigrants



Build Talent Pipelines with Community Partners

- ◆ Develop referral pipelines with community partners
 - TWC has supported +2,300 immigrants find employment
- ◆ Leverage public funding to invest in workforce
 - Incumbent Worker Training & On the Job Training Funds

Create a Welcoming Environment

- ◆ Demystify work authorization requirements—many immigrants do not need sponsorship
- ◆ Trial creative solutions to language barriers
- ◆ Offer alternative paths to employment to immigrants: internships, fellowships, apprenticeships

Implement Skills-Based Hiring

- ◆ Prioritize demonstrable skills over degrees and job titles
- ◆ Recruit via multiple channels, specifically those that cater to different populations
- ◆ Take a "glass half-full" perspective on foreign experience

How can employers recruit immigrant talent? These strategies are largely applicable to just being a more attractive employer to all types of people, period.

1) -vetted candidates based on employer needs

2) –work authorization

-A common tactic is to hire around a shared language group and ensure there are supervisors and coworkers who can serve as informal interpreters.

-Some organizations will offer on-site ESL classes contextualized to the workplace, which also improves retention and opportunities for promotion.

3) Don't overweight or overvalue the quality of US education or experience and underweight or undervalue the innovation and creativity that diverse perspectives can bring to a company. A diverse workforce increases innovation in two ways. First, immigrants bring novel ideas and skills that directly affect the company's ability to produce innovations in patents, products, or processes. Second, immigrants make native workers more innovative by introducing them to new ideas and social networks. Studies show that native-born workers become less innovative when they unexpectedly lose foreign-born colleagues.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION



Talent pipeline solutions:

Customized candidate training and recruitment

Retention and upskilling support, e.g. on-site English classes

Candidate referrals



Participants training to become Certified Medical Assistants with Penn Medicine

I hope that we have made a compelling case for how immigrants are essential to our region's economy and shown that companies have demonstrated real value in investing in their immigrant talent. Regardless of the changing discourse and realities around immigration, a defining, universal truth in all competitive economies and companies is that immigrants comprise an essential component of the workforce. Companies that choose to invest in attracting and retaining immigrant talent will reap the rewards of their innovation, unique skills, and economic production. Government funding and nonprofit organizations are here to support, but it is essential for HR leaders to make a conscious strategic decision and lead with clarity around the economic impact immigrants can bring to their companies.

How can you take the next step to capitalize on the potential and unique ROI that immigrants bring? There's no one right way to engage, but we hope you consider reaching out to TWC and start with an exploratory conversation on how we can best meet your needs and goals together. For example, another recent partner of ours, Penn Medicine and The Skills Initiative, worked with us to develop an ongoing, cohort based pool of immigrants with prior healthcare experience to become certified as Medical Assistants and gain employment at Penn Medicine, allowing them to fill in-demand roles with individuals who are extremely qualified. Doctors, RNs, etc.



ENGAGING IMMIGRANT TALENT

Partner with us!

Volunteer opportunities:

Karen Cervera | IPP Program Manager
karen@welcomingcenter.org

Referral/Hiring opportunities:

Ana Riccomi | Employer Partnership Coordinator
ariccomi@welcomingcenter.org



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