



Employment and Business Ownership

AN IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION BRIEF

Fall 2008

A PUBLICATION OF MUNICIPAL ACTION FOR IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

The growth of immigrant populations brings new challenges to cities across the nation. At the local level, governments work with non-government organizations and the private sector to develop new partnerships and strategies to address the workforce and employment issues in their communities. Some features of these programs and initiatives include: job training and placement, small business development, English-language training, and civic education.

For immigrants, gaining employment is a meaningful step towards successful community integration. It is important for cities across the country to work to improve access to employment for their new residents so that they are better able to use the skills and experience they bring to the United States. These programs and efforts are some examples of how immigrants can become an important component of our workforce and the US economy.

For more examples, visit the City Practices database, online at www.nlc.org → ABOUT CITIES → CITY PRACTICE RESOURCES.

Herndon Dulles Chamber of Commerce's ESOL Initiative

City: **Herndon, Virginia**

Population: 21,655

For more information, contact: Suzanne Fulton or Anne Marie Ames,
Communications Managers
(571) 323-5307

The Herndon Dulles Chamber of Commerce's partnership with the Northern Virginia Community College and the Fairfax County Public Schools Continuing Education Department provides ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs for English teachers and for newcomers working in the construction and landscaping industries. These programs are funded through a combination of a workforce training grant from the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants, a local community foundation, and contributions from Chamber members. Classes are structured specifically for construction and landscaping workers, which meet twice a week for five to six weeks. The Chamber also plans to develop new curricula to assist workers in the hospitality, restaurant, and healthcare industries. One of the lessons learned from these programs is that developing strong partnerships with area community colleges, schools, and community-based organizations to design relevant curricula and gain confidence of the newcomers is an important component of immigrant integration.

Zarem Golde Technical Institute

City: **Skokie, Illinois**

Population: 69,731

For more information, contact: Arthur Eldar, Director
(847) 324-5588
www.zg-ort.org

The Zarem-Golde Technical Institute's primary mission is to educate and find employment for its graduates, 30 per cent of whom are immigrants or refugees. The Institute works closely with local employers to assess their workforce needs, designs its curricula and course offerings to match those needs and industry trends, and works with employers for them to hire its graduates. It gauges market needs by consulting with a very active advisory board comprised of area business leaders. Finding jobs for its graduates is the Institute's top priority. In addition to being a vocational school, the Institute is an integral part of the local community. It partners with the community by addressing issues, such as immigrant high school dropouts and immigrants with a weak command of English. The Institute believes that the students should be proficient in English in order to benefit from their vocational classes. For non-native English speakers, the study program consists of 8 months of intensive English-only immersion classes and 6-9 months of technical-vocational training. The program also includes volunteering activities to help students learn more about the culture and civic participation.

Refugee Women's Network Micro-Enterprise Program

County: **Decatur County, Georgia**

For more information, contact: BryAnn Chen, Executive Director
(404) 299-0180
www.riwn.org/programs/microenterprise

The Refugee Women's Network (RWN) in Decatur County, Georgia, launched its micro-enterprise program in 2001 based on requests from refugee and immigrant women who wanted help in starting their own businesses. Its mission is to empower immigrant and refugee women with the skills necessary to start or expand their small businesses. RWN offers a business training course on starting an entrepreneurship and conducts community outreach to attract participants. They also offer financial and technical assistance, as well as moral support for the participants. In 2005, RWN started a micro-loan program for program graduates. To assist with the application process, which includes submission of a business plan, the organization refers participants with limited English skills to other agencies for intensive English instruction. In recent years, RWN entered into a partnership with a local bank for recipients interested in securing a larger loan. There is no requirement for legal status, although certain grants do require the status of refugees to be approved.

Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning

City: **Denver, Colorado**

Population: 554,636

For more information, contact: Chris Tombari,
Employment Training Manager
(303) 863-0188
www.springinstitute.org

The Spring Institute's Workstyles program is a non-profit, pre-employment, competence-based training program for new immigrants and refugees which provides a two-week intensive course for individuals with limited English skills. Topics of the training include American employment culture, developing resumes, completing employment applications, interview training, communication and problem solving skills. The Spring Institute is the coordinating agency of the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative (SIRFI) of The Colorado Trust and a Technical Assistance Service Provider (ELT/TA) for the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Jumpstart Fund

City: **Seattle, Washington**

Population: 563,374

For more information, contact: Greg Hope, Executive Director
(206) 323-3152
www.jumpstartfund.org

Started in 2003, the Jumpstart Fund is run by the Refugee Resettlement Office and provides refugees and asylum seekers with business counseling and education and micro-loans to help newcomers start or expand their small businesses. In addition to business counseling and education, the Fund also offers referrals to specialized agencies, technical assistance and networking opportunities with other immigrants. The micro-loan program provides fixed-interest loans of \$500 - \$10,000 repayable up to five years and has distributed over \$450,000 to immigrants in the Puget Sound area. The Refugee Resettlement Office provides English classes, resettlement assistance, job development programs, and general social services.

International Institute of Boston

City: **Boston, Massachusetts**

Population: 589,141

For more information, contact: Gohar Setigi
(617) 695-9990
www.iiboston.org

Founded in 1924, the International Institute of Boston helps immigrants and refugees successfully integrate into New England. The Institute provides immigrants with direct and practical assistance in the form of English and literacy courses, refugee resettlement services, citizenship education, economic development, employment training and placement, legal aid and social services. In 2007, 10,000 immigrants from over 130 countries received services through the Institute at its three sites in Boston, MA, Lowell, MA and Manchester, NH. The Boston location serves approximately 7,000 individuals a year.

Esperanza Unida

City: **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

Population: 596,974

For more information, contact: Robert Miranda, Executive Director
(414) 671-0251
<http://esperanzaunida.org/esparanzjm/>

Esperanza Unida, Spanish for "United Hope," is an anti-poverty program which provides short-term job training and placement to unemployed and underemployed people. Originally developed to help Milwaukee's Spanish-speaking workers, the program focuses on providing jobs that pay family-supporting wages for clients of all races in the central city. Esperanza's Training and Job Placement Business Model combines skills training with business operation education. Participants receive hands-on training in seven different business environments, such as auto mechanics, auto body, construction, customer service, and metal fabrication. The program is 60 to 70 percent self-supporting through revenues generated by its training businesses. Its job placement rate is greater than 70 percent. Between 1984 and 2003, Esperanza has helped more than 5,000 persons gain skills and certifications and improve their ability to support their families.

Business Ownership Initiative of Indiana

City: **Indianapolis, Indiana**

Population: 791,926

For more information, contact: Kathrine Rietmann
(317) 917-3266
www.nsibiz.org

The Fostering Immigrant Business Ownership (FIBO) program offered through the Business Ownership Initiative of Indiana (BOI) works with immigrants to facilitate the start and operation of new businesses. Immigrants often identify new business opportunities but starting a new

business is particularly challenging for many immigrants. Most are held back by limited English proficiency, and little knowledge of the American legal, financial, and government systems. FIBO's goal is twofold: to ensure immigrants have full access to the Business Ownership Initiative's programming and to build their acceptance of its programming. In addition to business education and English classes, BOI offers a "Business Beginnings" course in Spanish.

Carreras en Salud, Instituto Del Progreso Latino

City: **Chicago, Illinois**

Population: 2,833,321

For more information, contact: Patricia Bolivar
(773) 890-0055
www.idpl.org/idpl_carreras_en_salud.html

The Instituto Del Progreso Latino's vision is to drive the movement of immigrant integration by stimulating the economy with highly skilled and educated workers. By contributing to the development of Latino immigrants and their families through education, training, and employment, the organization fosters full participation in the community, while preserving cultural identity. Carreras en Salud, a Chicago Bilingual Healthcare Partnership, is a collaborative career pathway program established by the organization to bring limited English-proficient individuals into Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) positions. The organization has a partnership between the Instituto, Association House of Chicago, Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center (HPVEC) of Wilbur Wright College and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). The Instituto believes that the partnership is a demonstration of the impact that community-based organizations, local colleges, policy advocates, and expert researchers can have on local initiatives. The program offers students different levels at which they can enroll. Students enter and advance according to their capacity and test scores. Each level is designed to be completed in 16 weeks. In its first three years of operation, since 2005, over 700 students have enrolled in Carreras en Salud. Graduates have doubled their salaries, earning on average \$40,000 per year.

CUNY Consortium

City: **New York, New York**

Population: 8,008,287

For more information, contact: Michael Goldstein
(718) 368-5666

A consortium of four City University of New York colleges received a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to provide English language skills and job training to immigrants who are seeking employment in the retail and food industries. Through the grant, the colleges will help 240 entry-level and experienced immigrant workers. Programs include English language instruction for the retail and food industries and vocational training. The curriculum was developed by the LaGuardia Center for Immigrant Education and Training and will be administered through the consortium's Limited English Proficiency and Hispanic Workers Initiative program. The program also includes a job placement component upon completion of the skills training. The consortium partners include McDonalds, Local 338 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, and Queens Center Mall retailers. The partners will recruit approximately 1/3 of the program graduates, and another 1/3 will be placed with other food and retail establishments. One-third of the participants are already employed.

This Brief was developed by Ricardo Gambetta, Immigrant Integration Project Manager, and Jamie Durana, Immigrant Integration Project Staff Associate, National League of Cities.

City Practices Briefs contain examples from NLC's City Practices database, available at www.nlc.org. Series editors: Bruce Calvin and Larry Foxman. For more information, contact the NLC Municipal Reference Service at (202) 626-3130 or email mrs@nlc.org.