



Institute on
Immigrant Integration
Research and Policy

POLICY BRIEF

Economic Integration of Foreign-Born New Yorkers

Lessons Learned and Policy Implications

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Executive Summary

The nation is facing a workforce crisis. With shrinking birth rates and an aging population¹, there are pervasive workforce shortages in many sectors.² Foreign-born residents represent a pool of workers who can offset population loss and fill some of the gaps in workforce needs. Additionally, the economic integration of foreign-born New Yorkers is a critical pathway to social, civic, and political integration. Yet, many barriers significantly hinder the ability to harness the potential of immigrant workers and curtail the opportunity structures afforded to immigrant New Yorkers.

In this brief, we present five cases adapted from real-life situations. Each case illustrates the conditions that obstruct the ability to leverage the economic contributions and facilitate the economic integration of thousands of immigrants in New York State. These conditions are unique to the immigrant experience and can be addressed through policy and practice interventions.³ We corroborate the cases using experts' testimonies, offered at forums and events convened by the Institute on Immigrant Integration Research & Policy in 2023-2024.⁴ The brief discusses problems facing immigrant New Yorkers which include the inability to reach and serve the population with resources and information; limited capacity to address fiscal constraints at the micro, meso, and macro levels; policies and regulations that limit eligibility and exclude populations from benefits and protections; protectionism, prejudice and lack of awareness; and system fragmentation, lack of sufficient coordination and integration of services. The brief also offers policy and practice recommendations which include expanding access to accelerators of immigrant economic integration such as scaling culturally and linguistically sensitive workforce development, and providing greater access to capital, social, physical, and mental health services, credentialing and licensing, in-state tuition and state aid, English language learning, and labor protections. Expanding community and employer education to facilitate social cohesion and skill-based recruitment as well as strengthening cross-sector partnerships that bridge gaps in serving this population are recommendations that emerged from the experts.

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- 1 [Center for Disease Control \(2024\). Vital Statistics Rapid Release: Births: Provisional Data for 2023, Report No.35.](#) See also: [Sabelhaus, J. \(2022\). Will Population Aging Push Us over a Fiscal Cliff? Economic Policy in a More Uncertain World, 128-55.](#)
 - 2 [Ernst, E., & Feist, L. \(2024\). Tomorrow at Work: The Age of Shortages. Intereconomics, 59\(3\), 125-131.](#)
 - 3 We use narrative discourse analyses to reveal the “[social meaning](#)” and depict the entire context of a policy problem and its underlying solutions ([Fischer, 2003](#)). “The narrative represents the policy situation and offers a view of what has to be done and what the expected consequences will be” ([Fischer, 2003, 161](#)). Using discourse analysis allowed us to explore the co-construction of meaning and realities by experts and speakers, some of whom experienced the problems first-hand as immigrants themselves. We created the cases as illustrations of the typical conditions described by these informants and examined their positioning of these realities within the socio-historical and cultural context. We employed thematic analysis ([Creswell & Poth, 2018](#)) and structural analysis ([Riessman, 2008](#)) to analyze the data which were compiled as transcripts and recordings of the various engagements with these experts. Themes are identified using thematic analysis and thematic contents are explored as constructed and articulated within the narrative structure.
 - 4 The Institute held 7 webinars; 1 large conference, 7 podcasts, and produced 10 research briefs, and commissioned 2 syntheses of practice.

The Pursuit of Economic Integration in New York State

Although humans have always been immigrating in pursuit of more favorable living conditions, the magnitude of immigration has increased exponentially compared to historical trends. Violence, persecution, political conflicts, wars, climate-induced disasters, economic degradation, and poverty are common driving forces for why people move across international borders. While there is often a distinction between economic refugees and political/social refugees in public discourse and policy remedies -with the latter receiving increased empathy and attention- many immigrants share a similar experience of desperation, a sense of being forced to relinquish home, and a deep sense of uprootedness.⁵ Leaving behind the familiar, sailing to the unknown, navigating uncharted waters, and setting anchor in a distant land are undeniably consequential for many immigrants. Table 1 shows New Yorkers by nativity status in 2021 by region.

Despite feelings of loss and a heightened sense of displacement, migration is almost universally followed by an immediate and urgent effort to rebuild stable and peaceful lives.⁶ Neutralizing the psychological impacts of the outsider/alien status, cultivating a sense of belonging, creating an economically self-sufficient life, and becoming an active and full member of the receiving society is a complex process. The success of this process mandates a proactive engagement of immigrants themselves, communities that receive them, and public institutions whose mission is to serve and protect everyone regardless of their background.

The economic integration of foreign-born New Yorkers is shaped by the productive assets immigrants bring, their social identities, and the context of resettlement. In all regions of NYS, foreign-born residents who are college degree holders experience higher poverty rates than their native-born counterparts. Having lower educational levels may equalize the playing field. However, a lack of English proficiency contributes to increased poverty and unemployment. Moreover, the intersection of race and gender with nativity status may adversely affect economic outcomes. Some regions in New York State can provide more favorable economic conditions to foreign-born New Yorkers than other regions.⁷

5 [Chancellor John King, Welcoming Remarks at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State](#) (15:40)

6 [Nasser Jaber, Between Stewardship and Laissez-Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#). (14:57)

7 Institute on Immigrant Integration Research & Policy. [Data Gateway](#).

Table 1: New York State Residents by Nativity Status, 2021⁸

Region	Native	Foreign-born	Grand Total
Capital Region	619,371 91.46%	57,824 8.54%	677,195 100.00%
Central New York	430,603 93.30%	30,914 6.70%	461,517 100.00%
Finger Lakes	671,504 92.34%	55,674 7.66%	727,178 100.00%
Long Island	1,400,343 76.82%	422,506 23.18%	1,822,849 100.00%
Mid-Hudson	1,133,156 78.14%	317,057 21.86%	1,450,213 100.00%
Mohawk	260,698 93.34%	18,610 6.66%	279,308 100.00%
New York City	3,134,129 58.11%	2,259,049 41.89%	5,393,178 100.00%
North Country	232,476 96.06%	9,543 3.94%	242,019 100.00%
Southern Tier	354,357 94.15%	22,003 5.85%	376,360 100.00%
Western New York	801,620 93.60%	54,802 6.40%	856,422 100.00%
Grand Total	9,038,257 73.56%	3,247,982 26.44%	12,286,239 100.00%

In the next section, we explore five cases where foreign-born New Yorkers face specific challenges related to their immigration experience. We discuss the problems and present policy and practice recommendations that practitioners and researchers offered at different forums and events held at the Institute.

⁸ American Community Survey, U.S. Census, One Year Data, 2021.



1. The Case of the Aspiring Entrepreneur

The Problem

Hopes of securing a life-sustaining full-time employment are being shattered with every passing day. After several years of destitution and of performing ad hoc jobs, this immigrant New Yorker finally realizes that setting up a small business is the best possible path out of poverty and an alternative road to self-reliance and economic self-sufficiency.⁹ The aspiring business owner searches for information about business development. It is a world she is not familiar with.¹⁰ The information on laws, regulations, and documentation that she stumbles on are difficult to comprehend with her limited knowledge of English, low financial literacy, and lack of familiarity with U.S. markets and business development protocols.¹¹ The learning curve is steep, and the task is daunting. There is no one to turn to for assistance. Capital is scarce and banking is not accessible. Credit is a foreign concept. In her native land, the financial system is significantly different.¹² With few resources and collateral assets, a loan from mainstream financial institutions is not possible or even imagined.¹³ Her cultural traditions discouraged borrowing and she did not know that having loans could help her develop a credit

9 [Nasser Jaber, *Between Stewardship and Laissez-Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship*](#) (7:28)

10 [Asha Venugopalan, *Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship*](#) (21:41)

11 [Asha Venugopalan, *Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship*](#) (22:03)

12 [Danielle Davis, *Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship*](#) (57:44 and 1:01:18)

13 [Asha Venugopalan, *Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship*](#). (2:50)

history.¹⁴ With limited social networks, the aspiring entrepreneur turns to a few friends and acquaintances from her own ethnic community to pool funds. The entrepreneur struggles to set up a business that conforms to complex regulations that she can hardly understand. The cost of mistakes is high with significant fees penalties and loss of opportunities.¹⁵ The effort to keep the business afloat amid complex challenges became unsustainable. The entrepreneur soon realizes that the business is not viable and can no longer be maintained, as it drives her deeper into debt. She recognizes that if she had developed a sound business plan with reasonable financial predictions and analysis of market viability, she would have been able to withstand challenges.¹⁶ She makes the difficult decision to close the business.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

Investing in Culturally and Linguistically Sensitive Models of Business Education and Development

The aspiring immigrant entrepreneur needs business development training and education that address the unique intersections of language, culture, and information needs many immigrants experience.¹⁷ Effective educational programs provide immigrant-centered support to improve financial literacy and knowledge of the macroeconomic and market environment.¹⁸ Culturally and linguistically appropriate mentorship provides crucial support to prospective entrepreneurs which can increase their self-efficacy and success.¹⁹ Seasoned entrepreneurs can provide role modeling as well as critical personalized business advice. These programs can also provide access to networks that increase awareness about entrepreneurial opportunities, access to information about financial and human capital, refinancing of debt, additional cash flow, entrepreneurial ideas, advice, and emotional support, as well as partnerships that can help sustain the business. An immigrant-centered incubator model can address a variety of aspiring immigrant entrepreneur's needs under one roof. Incubators provide knowledge and hands-on assistance to prospective entrepreneurs. They deepen social capital, support mental health, build community, foster the creation of partnerships,

14 [Ahyoung Kim, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (1:24:55)

15 [Danielle Davis, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (59:23, and 59:46)

16 [Danielle Davis, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (1:26:46). See also Christine Rutgers (1:29:48)

17 [Danielle Davis, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (51:03)

18 [Assembly Member Al Stirpe, Between Stewardship and Laissez-Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (29:39)

19 [Christine Rutgers, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (1:29:48)

cultivate relationships of trust, and address personal financial security.²⁰The One-Stop Shop model can effectively meet the myriad needs that aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs may have.²¹

Accessing Financial Assistance

Traditional banking is not accessible to many aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs.²² To address exclusionary policies pertaining to loan eligibility at mainstream financial institutions and advance equitable lending, alternative financing programs are critical. Community-based microloans that provide alternative lending schemas that are “character-based” have proven promising.²³ Community-based lending models also include pooling individual community members’ resources together to provide alternative sources of capital outside of traditional financial institutions.²⁴ Increasing access to community-based financing of immigrant ventures can help aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs overcome restricted access to traditional banking. Access to public emergency stabilization funds such as funds provided during the COVID pandemic is also critical to support established businesses when they face a crisis.²⁵

Promoting a System-Level Approach and Cross-Sector Partnerships

Leveraging the full potential of immigrant entrepreneurship requires “a whole of community approach.”²⁶ Comprehensive planning that includes all stakeholders is needed to incorporate not only the improvement of business management, but also local commercial and production processes (i.e., local supply chains). This would enable the productivity, growth, and sustainability of immigrant ventures.²⁷ A system-level approach to activating immigrant entrepreneurship would rely on regular needs assessments of immigrant communities that are locally specific. These needs are not static but shift over time and space.²⁸ They are affected by macroeconomic, social, and political forces.

20 See the Asian American Federation Model: [Ahyoung Kim, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (1:20:02)

21 [Asha Venugopalan, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#). (25:32)

22 [Christine Rutgers, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (1:04:03)

23 [Assembly Member Al Stirpe, Between Stewardship and Laissez-Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#), (34:50)6

24 [Asha Venugopalan, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#). (26:49)

25 [Ahyou5ng Kim, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (1:22:14)

26 [Assembly Member Al Stirpe, Between Stewardship and Laissez-Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (36:03)

27 [Carlos Figueroa, Between Stewardship and Laissez-Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (1:16:28)

28 [Ahyoung Kim, Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship](#) (1:25:20)



2. The Case of the Underemployed Professional

The Problem

Conditions in his home country are rapidly deteriorating. He is experiencing a free fall in his standard of living and is quickly sinking deep into poverty. He feels compelled to leave his home to pursue a future free of deprivation and destitution. With a degree in medicine and training as a physician, he decides that the grass will certainly be greener and brighter on the other side. After all, what could go wrong? He will be reuniting with family members who made the journey before him, and he will have their support as he resettles in a new country. He will have to improve his language skills, so he intends to enroll in classes as soon as he arrives. Shortly after he arrives at U.S. shores, he realizes that his medical credentials must be validated through a lengthy and cost-prohibitive process of taking exams, completing a U.S. residency, and obtaining a license.²⁹ Meanwhile, he must also provide for his family. So, he decides to pursue a job in the service industry, while preparing for an arduous journey.³⁰ After years of studying and completing costly exams, while working two jobs to provide a living, he starts applying to residency programs in the hope that he will finally be on the path to self-sufficiency and performing the work he is trained to do. Rejection letters start flowing in. Licensing becomes unattainable with so many hurdles to cross and barriers to shatter including

29 [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (20:30)

30 [Ken Silverman, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#)(38:02)

bias, discrimination, and professional protectionism.³¹ He resigns himself to the fact that he must be destined to a life, in which he is stripped of his talents, and deprived of the ability to leverage the skills he worked hard on mastering.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

Reforming the Credentialing and Licensing System through Policy Measures

Responsive policies that address labor market shortages in several fields including healthcare are not only a matter of economic security but a matter of national security at times of health emergencies and of advancing an inclusive workforce.³² Several states passed legislation allowing internationally-trained medical professionals to work under the supervision of a U.S.-licensed doctor for 2 years, earning a physician salary for some time, then committing to working in a rural area of high need to become fully licensed. The policy measures seek to fix the credentialing system, increase the supply of needed healthcare professionals, and address shortages in rural areas.³³ New York State is yet to pass legislative reforms to fix the credentialing systems and is losing talent to other states that provide these opportunities including neighboring New Jersey.³⁴ Legislation that provides access to recertification and credentialing, accelerates the process and removes barriers facing underemployed immigrants trained in a regulated industry. It addresses brain waste and fills gaps in the labor force through partial, transitional, or conditional recertification & credentialing while preserving the profession's integrity.³⁵ Additionally, since New Jersey has already passed legislation that allowed pathways to recertification, New York is experiencing a brain drain and falling behind with talent moving out of the state.³⁶

Since reforms have stalled at the legislative levels in allowing greater access to credentialing and licensing, the Office for New Americans has introduced the Professional Pathways program where job coaches work with individual immigrants to evaluate their skills and advise on career pathways.³⁷

31 [Ken Silverman, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers](#). (40:15; 40:49)

32 [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers](#). (33:52)

33 [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers](#). (19:09)

34 [NY State Senate Bill 2023-S5964 \(nysenate.gov\)](#). See also [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers](#). (21:34)

35 [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers](#). (18:14)

36 [Cynthia Nayeli Carvajal, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State](#). (52:51)

37 [Laura Gonzales Murphy, Advancing Economic Integration: Equitable Employment and Workforce Development at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State](#). (1:37:45)

Investing in Bridging Programs

Bridging programs provide information on pathways to credentialing and licensing, skills assessments, language proficiency, mentoring, and training that enable underemployed workers including healthcare workers with foreign-obtained degrees to pursue practicing in their fields. These on-ramp systems are critical to accelerating the integration process.³⁸ These programs transition healthcare-trained workers into the field by placing them within healthcare facilities and facilitating their pathways. They are associated with increased wages and an enhanced likelihood of securing skills-aligned employment.³⁹ Similarly, work-based learning including internships and apprenticeships can open doors to full-time jobs commensurate with workers' experiences.⁴⁰

*Raising Employers' Awareness of "Skills-Based Hiring Versus Pedigree-Hiring."*⁴¹

Immigrant workers often "show up" differently from native-born workers and they are often misunderstood. Employers' cultural fluency is needed to eliminate bias and uncertainty and better appreciate the value that immigrant workers bring. Also, there is a need to raise awareness of employers about foreign-born workers may "show up differently" in the workplace but how people interact and express themselves have little to do with the skills they bring to their work.⁴² When employees deepen their cultural fluency, they can value the immigrant talent pool and make informed hiring decisions.⁴³ Additionally, model programs including Global Talent Bridge Programs work to match employees with businesses.⁴⁴ Policies that provide incentives for businesses to hire immigrant workers can go a long way to leverage this pool of talent.⁴⁵

38 [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (32:37)

39 [Ken Silverman, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (41:18)

40 [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (31:58)

41 [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (30:34)

42 [Jina Krause-Vilmar, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#)(29:28)

43 [Mirvet Al Bassam, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (1:02:29)

44 [Paul Feltman, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (52:57)

45 [Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, Keynote: Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (54:36)

Enhancing Soft Skills to Complement the Technical Skills of Immigrant Professionals

In addition to increasing the cultural fluency of employers, it is critical to work with immigrant employees to enhance their cultural understanding of their new environments and acquire soft skills that are key for them to avoid being misunderstood or undervalued by prospective employers.⁴⁶

Investing in Immigrant-Tailored Workforce Development Models

Immigrant-centered workforce development programs provide the gold standard as they seek to holistically address the needs of the workers. They provide personalized coaching, English language learning, and career services, as well as wraparound services to address social determinants that hinder professional development. They also help prospective immigrant workers build and expand their professional networks, using a one-stop shop model.⁴⁷

Group mentoring created specifically for immigrant women to increase their field-specific English skills, strengthen confidence, build networks and social capital, and connect them with job placement was found to be effective in advancing workforce development goals. The group mentoring model focused on immigrant women with no experience in the U.S. workforce and sought to address both systemic and individual-level barriers. The industry-based mentoring provided career-related services including interviewing skills and job search strategies. Mentors received coaching, skill development, and knowledge about specific barriers the mentees face. Having a program coordinator and carefully assessing mentors' backgrounds ensured the success of the program.⁴⁸

Culturally relevant pathways to professional development are another model that has proven effective. A local partnership demonstrated that multi-lingual educators (specifically Latina early childhood educators) benefit from spaces that incorporate their culture in the classroom, provide support for mental health, and adopt an asset-based approach to professional growth.⁴⁹ The model enhanced equitable pathways for Latina educators. Emotionally Responsive Practices are hailed as productive

46 [Mirvet Al Bassam, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (1:04:03)

47 [Mirvet Al Bassam, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (1:04:03) See also [Bob Doyle, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (1:09:34)

48 [Arielle Kandel and Racquel Sevilla, Advancing Economic Integration: Equitable Employment and Workforce Development at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (9:33)

49 [Margaret Blachly, Alberta Conteh, Karen Chatfield, and Cristina Medellin-Paz, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:42:32)

approaches to addressing trauma and providing support for immigrant educators and children of immigrants.⁵⁰

Considering Mutual Recognition of International Agreements

Governments across borders have entered into mutual agreements to remove the need for skills assessments and avoid individual bias. For instance, the European Union's Professional Qualifications Directive recognized foreign degrees for 230,000+ health professionals, as well as thousands of teachers, physiotherapists, and electricians. These mutual recognition agreements inspire confidence in the standards of training healthcare providers and remove the harmful impacts of protectionism.⁵¹

Advancing an Integrated Cohesive and Coordinated Human Resource Strategy

There is a critical need for an integrated human resource strategy that identifies a vision of a unified system that includes domestic and internationally trained workers. The elements of this strategy include a specific and timed, yet flexible, implementation plan that is informed by (a) disaggregated data; (b) evaluation and monitoring; (c) assessment of training and English language learning needs; (d) assessment of qualifications and career readiness; (e) bridging and support system; (f) ethics courses; and (g) pathways to re-certification.⁵² The strategy shifts the paradigm, to create a system that accommodates both domestically and internationally trained workers in an equitable, fair, impartial, and transparent manner.⁵³

50 [Margaret Blachly, Alberta Conteh, Karen Chatfield, and Cristina Medellin-Paz, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:29:39)

51 [Ken Silverman, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (42:48)

52 [Naomi Alboim, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (1:18:42)

53 [Naomi Alboim, Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (1:16:01)



3. The Case of the Immigrant Student

The Problem

Ingrained in this immigrant is a love of learning and a conviction that only through education can one achieve success. She naturally seeks higher education to enhance her employment opportunities. “Informational, situational, procedural, and environmental” barriers make her journey insurmountable. She does not know where to turn for guidance and where to start. Information on how to apply, access tuition assistance, pay for application fees, meet formal English requirements, and complete a personal statement is inaccessible to her. A system that provides outreach, awareness, and support does not exist in her area.⁵⁴ Exams to verify formal English language proficiency are not held in the town where she resides, and she needs to cover travel and accommodation expenses to complete those exams. These are expenses that are beyond her limited financial means. Obtaining documentation on her previous education and credentials completed in her native country is difficult and costly.⁵⁵ The competing demands of family responsibilities and the expectations that she provides financial contributions to the sustenance of her household compound the difficulties. Challenges mount and drive home the message that this path is out of reach. Informed by university officials that she must pay out-of-state tuition because she did not attend high school in New

54 [Vera Eccarius-Kelly, *Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State*, \(18:07\)](#)

55 [Vera Eccarius-Kelly, *Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State*, \(18:43\)](#)

York State for two years and does not have a GED from New York further intensified the message of the outsider status. Interactions with school officials are not helpful and evoke feelings of despair. She soon abandons her quest for higher education.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

Strengthen the Ecosystem of Higher Education Access for Immigrant Students

Recruitment and retention of immigrant students to higher education systems face significant challenges.⁵⁶ System-level thinking and system approaches to the challenges of “informational, procedural, situational, and environmental” barriers are needed. System approaches ensure consistent and statewide education of immigrant prospective students and the institutions that serve them. Education and awareness about existing needs, strategies and opportunities need to permeate the entire system. Coordination, communication/dissemination of information across stakeholders avoid duplication of efforts and ensure consistent sharing of data.⁵⁷

Immigrant students should not be “an afterthought”.⁵⁸ Training and advocacy at institutions of higher education are critical to providing information about how to support immigrant students and how to set up support systems that address their unique needs. The information must be streamlined and translated into multiple languages. Removing application fees/other hidden fees (i.e. student fees, exam fees, etc.),⁵⁹ and allowing flexibility in admission policies would lower the barriers to enrollment. Providing academic and non-academic support allows academic integration, as well as social inclusion within the campus and the community. Holistic approaches that support students beyond enrollment and address basic needs have proven to have a significant impact on academic success and achievement.⁶⁰ An effective ecosystem for immigrant students needs to address access issues related to financial, legal, mental health, cultural, and language barriers and needs to provide access to alternative educational pathways.⁶¹

56 [Paola Martinez, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (4:15)

57 [Caroline Rakus-Wojciechowski, Tamara Alsace, Cecilia M. Espinosa, Tatyana Kleyn and Farah Said, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:08:39)

58 [President Havidan Rodriguez, Welcoming Remarks at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:19:55)

59 [Tsveta Dobrova, Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (32:39)

60 [Tsveta Dobrova, Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (35:46)

61 [Caroline Rakus-Wojciechowski, Tamara Alsace, Cecilia M. Espinosa, Tatyana Kleyn and Farah Said, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:03:51)

Partnering with immigrant-serving community-based organizations is also critical to building trust with community members, collaborating effectively on providing outreach and educational workshops in the community to prospective students, advancing financial literacy, illuminating academic expectations, and creating support systems that address the unique needs of these students.⁶² These services can provide accessible linguistically and culturally competent information about available benefits (for example the child tax credit) that many do not access because of the lack of knowledge of their existence.⁶³

The recruitment and retention of immigrant students to higher educational institutions do not only “unlock possibilities and opportunities” for the immigrant student but have significant impacts on all students. Tackling world problems requires “diverse global perspectives’ that immigrants bring. Immigrant students bring international perspectives to research, teaching, and service, and promote the nurturing of an engaged global citizenry, and the “global common good.”⁶⁴

Expanding Eligibility for In-State Tuition and State Aid

Immigrant-conscious institutional policies that remove barriers facing immigrant students in admission and assistance are critical. Providing in-state tuition and state aid for all students regardless of length of residency or documentation status facilitates recruitment and retention.⁶⁵

Providing Funding to Address Resource Gaps and Strengthen the Ecosystem

Higher education institutions often lack the resources to integrate immigrant students.⁶⁶ State policies can play an instrumental role in filling the resource gap to allow higher education institutions to defray the costs of non-academic support services, application fees, etc. State policies can also foster collaborations and system-wide cooperation among community and institutional partners to enhance outreach and increase enrollments.⁶⁷

62 [Vera Eccarius-Kelly, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (22:56)

63 [Caroline Rakus-Wojciechowski, Tamara Alsace, Cecilia M. Espinosa, Tatyana Kleyn and Farah Said, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#)(1:47:51)

64 [President Havidan Rodriguez, Welcoming Remarks at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:19:55)

65 [Cynthia Nayeli Carvajal, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (50:06)

66 [Paola Martinez, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#)(4:15)

67 [Tsveta Dobрева, Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (40:19)



4. The Case of the Refugee Seeker

The Problem

After being forcibly displaced from their home country and witnessing unimaginable horrors and violence, this immigrant lands on New York State's shores amid foreign tongues they cannot understand, and different cultural norms they cannot comprehend. They are transported to rural New York where they are quickly connected to English learning programs and while supported financially and logistically for the first few months, they are told they must quickly find their footing in their new community and become independent and economically self-sufficient.⁶⁸ The pressure to provide for their families pushes them to accept the first job identified for them. After all, they had no formal schooling in their home country and no access to vocational training in the refugee camp where they spent five years waiting to settle in their adopted country. They never had an opportunity to learn skills that are marketable in a formal economy. They work many hours to sustain a living for themselves and their families. Juggling work hours and family makes it difficult for them to seek services for pre-migration trauma and physical health conditions they are experiencing. The lack of time and resources and the obligation to provide care for their children prohibit them from participating in programs that would enhance their work skills and their English

⁶⁸ [Furkan Yilmaz, Advancing Economic Integration: Equitable Employment and Workforce Development at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (39:21)

language proficiency.⁶⁹ Opportunity doors are closed. They live below the poverty line, earning less than they need to sustain a decent living for themselves and their large family. They take on a second job to increase their wages. Their physical and mental health deteriorate to the point where they are unable to maintain the same level of work and productivity. They do not know who to turn to address their pressing health issues. With limited English proficiency and the disconnection from systems of support that were initially available, they did not know how to seek help. Their health conditions deteriorate, and they are no longer able to sustain work. They are forced to rely on public assistance. They have escaped violence and conflicts, but they are now destined for a life living on the margins. The reality of being a refugee shatters dreams of freedom from the violence of poverty.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

Extending the Length of Services for Refugees after their arrival

The pressures to immediately become self-reliant and economically self-sufficient as well as to be able to pay back debt incurred in the resettlement journey are detrimental to the refugee seeker. Without extended support that sets refugees up for success in their new countries, they are destined to live in poverty and rely on public assistance.⁷⁰ Avenues of extended support are needed to ensure that the already precarious conditions of the refugee seeker do not deteriorate even further.

Strengthening Alternative Pathways to traditional resettlement Services through Community and Individual Sponsorship of Refugees

Every Campus a Refugee is a national award-winning program where institutions of higher education serve as resettlement hubs and are transforming the field of resettlement. The program inspired the creation of Welcome Corps on Campus, and community sponsorship such as the Sponsor Circle Program. It enabled everyday Americans and institutions of higher education to directly engage through sponsorship of refugee students through the U.S Refugee Admissions program. Universities are well set up to provide holistic resettlement services and spaces and can significantly accelerate the resettlement process.⁷¹ Expanding these programs creates a sustainable infrastructure to provide holistic integration support services.⁷² They not only advance the mission and values of inclusion, but they represent a thoughtful and well-developed approach to resettlement that is not rooted in an emergency and crisis mindset. A campus catalyst

69 [Furkan Yilmaz, *Advancing Economic Integration: Equitable Employment and Workforce Development at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State*](#). (38:15)

70 [Senator Sean Ryan, *Between Stewardship and Laissez Faire: The Future of Immigrant Entrepreneurship*](#). (36:54)

71 [Diya Abdo, *The Role of Higher Education Institutions in the Integration of Immigrants*](#). (16:53)

72 [Nele Feldmann and Aubrey Grant, *Creating Welcoming Communities: The Role of Governance at the Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State*](#). (40:14)

fund is a grant program that incentivizes Universities' participation in Welcome Corps on Campus.⁷³ Several universities and colleges in New York State are participating in Welcome Corps on Campus including SUNY Delhi and the University at Albany. Each has welcomed female single students to their campuses and will support their journey through their undergraduate studies.

Strengthening the Adult English Language Learning System

English language learning is a gateway to social, economic, and political integration in U.S. society. It is integral to the ability of immigrants to contribute to the cultural and economic prosperity of the state. Full participation in society is hindered when immigrants cannot speak the English language.⁷⁴ The benefits of proficiency in the English language transcend economic outcomes and the ability to be gainfully employed in a job aligned with one's skills. It is linked to academic success, social engagement, and emotional support.⁷⁵

When compared to the K-12 English language learning system, adult English language learning is less regulated and more fragmented. There is a wide range of program structures and designs with varying levels of quality across the State. It is also severely underfunded. The adult English language learning programs show no societal commitment and is placed on the backburner of policy priorities. Funding models are inflexible and insufficient. Eligibility requirements for participating in these programs are often restrictive and reporting requirements are stringent. The cyclical nature of funding interrupts continuity and fails to accommodate program growth and resource shortfall. These impediments do not reflect the high demand for these programs.⁷⁶

A substantial increase in financial investments is warranted to address these stark disparities in this system when contrasted with the K-12 system. Despite significant investments made by the Office of New Americans in the network of providers of English language learning programs, major shortages exist.⁷⁷ There is a need for more investments in capacity building through pedagogical and professional development of teachers, increased bilingual language programs, and in inclusive policies that are informed by the voices of teachers and stakeholders who are on the frontline of addressing the problems. Similarly, investing in removing logistical barriers of transportation and childcare as well as conflicting priorities of work and family is critical

73 [Nele Feldmann and Aubrey Grant, Creating Welcoming Communities: The Role of Governance at the Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:31:15)

74 [Hattie Quarnstrom-Figueroa, Research Findings: English Language Learning Policies and Programs.](#) (5:57)

75 [Beth Clark-Gareca, Mina Lee, Sawsan Werfelli, and Ala Marciuc, Research Findings: English Language Learning Policies and Programs.](#) (15:59)

76 [Beth Clark-Gareca, Mina Lee, Sawsan Werfelli, and Ala Marciuc, Research Findings: English Language Learning Policies and Programs.](#) (41:37, 43:05, 43:48, 45:03)

77 [Laura Gonzales Murphy, Advancing Economic Integration: Equitable Employment and Workforce Development at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#)(1:21)

to the ability to participate in the program.⁷⁸ Fully funded or subsidized employers-sponsored and workplace-based English language learning programs are best practices that avoid disruption of work and advance the goal of professional growth.⁷⁹

Investing in Sector-Specific English Language Learning and Work-Based programs Aligned with Skills

Engaging the refugee seeker (and other immigrants) in workforce development opportunities offered at community colleges and nonprofit organizations is critical. Best practices include programs that adopt a holistic strategy in which immigrants can receive fiscal support to cover tuition, access wrap-around services that address social challenges, develop skills that are in demand by the labor market, and find support in securing a “Decent Job” that utilizes their skills.⁸⁰ Public investments in these programs also typically would require partnerships with industry, and corporate employers to facilitate job placements.

There is a great need to recognize that these aspiring learners must work and earn a living while advancing their growth and development. Hence, there is an increased demand for sector-specific work-based learning programs (including internships and apprenticeships) that include contextualized English language learning. These provide appropriate structures for a population straddled with several impediments to thriving in their adopted country.⁸¹

Creating Sustainable Mechanisms for Addressing Social Determinants of Health

Foreign-born New Yorkers are disproportionately affected by the social determinants of health.⁸² They are overburdened by the demands of securing a stable and self-sufficient life for themselves and their families, but they are also overwhelmed by social determinants that interfere with their ability to access physical and mental healthcare. These include socio-economic factors (education, job status, family and social support, income, community safety, immigration status), the physical environment (housing accessibility, food insecurity, access to legal assistance, the concentration of poverty), health behaviors, and the healthcare system.⁸³ The immigration experience itself can be

78 [Beth Clark-Gareca, Mina Lee, Sawsan Werfelli, and Ala Marciuc, Research Findings: English Language Learning Policies and Programs.](#) (56:44, 58:48, 59:52, 1:02:46, 56:18)

79 [Beth Clark-Gareca, Mina Lee, Sawsan Werfelli, and Ala Marciuc, Research Findings: English Language Learning Policies and Programs.](#) (1:04:27)

80 [Joaquin Sanchez Gomes. Credentialing & Licensing of Foreign-Obtained Degrees & Workforce Development for Foreign-Born New Yorkers.](#) (13:31)

81 [Hattie Quarnstrom-Figueroa, Research Findings: English Language Learning Policies and Programs](#) (7:00)

82 [Jeanette Altarriba and Rukhsana Ahmed. Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (22:06)

83 [Nicole Saint-Louis and Amanda Sisselman-Borgia, Research Findings: Programs & Practices Addressing Social Determinants of Health & Healthcare Access.](#) (23:13)

an adverse social determinant of health.^{84 85}

Interventions that have proven effective in addressing the adverse social determinants of health include (a) mandating interpretation and translation services, and cultural sensitivity training to address linguistic and cultural barriers; (b) legal assistance to address immigration and legal issues; (c) insurance coverage, enrollment assistance, mobile health clinics and community health workers to address healthcare access; (d) food assistance programs, and mobile food trucks to address food insecurity; (e) workforce development, career readiness and job placement programs, and small business development support to address employment access; (f) anti-discrimination policies and training and community anti-racism initiatives to address social exclusions and discrimination; (g) support groups, cultural celebrations and community centers to address lack of support; and (h) accessible public transportation options, ride share programs and transportation assistance programs to address access to transportation.⁸⁶

There is a greater recognition of the need to address non-health-related needs that impact health outcomes adversely. Providing financial reimbursements through Medicare to offset costs of housing, food insecurity, etc. is an example of such evolution. Replicating and scaling up these measures will go a long way to address social determinants of health.

Enforcing Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards

The association of poor communication and lack of cultural and linguistic competency with poor health outcomes is well documented in the empirical literature. Poor health outcomes include “lack of access to preventive care, delays and misunderstanding of treatment, errors in diagnosis, costly and unnecessary diagnostic tests, difficulty obtaining informed consent, malpractice, negligence, legal liabilities, poor decision-making, and increased costs”.⁸⁷

The healthcare systems can serve as a social determinant of adverse health outcomes when they lack compliance with culturally and linguistically appropriate standards (CLAS) and fail to provide language and cultural access to services.⁸⁸ Despite the existence of frameworks to ensure language and cultural access in healthcare facilities,

84 [Nicole Saint-Louis and Amanda Sisselman-Borgia, Research Findings: Programs & Practices Addressing Social Determinants of Health & Healthcare Access.](#) (32:15)

85 [Jeanette Altarriba and Rukhsana Ahmed. Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (22:14)

86 [Nicole Saint-Louis and Amanda Sisselman-Borgia, Research Findings: Programs & Practices Addressing Social Determinants of Health & Healthcare Access.](#) (28:25)

87 [Jeanette Altarriba and Rukhsana Ahmed. Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (24:09)

88 [Jeanette Altarriba and Rukhsana Ahmed. Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (27:34)

there is a disconnect between policy and practice.⁸⁹ Strengthening the enforcement of CLAS, integrating the healthcare system with other systems of social services, monitoring metrics of quality across immigrant groups, and transparently reporting these outcomes are recommendations offered to address disparities in health outcomes related to social determinants of health.⁹⁰

Strengthening Community Education

Lack of awareness in many immigrant communities about available resources and their right to language access to healthcare intensifies challenges. There is a need for community education to empower communities to access services they are entitled to, regardless of documentation status. Healthcare information is complex without the added layers of linguistic and cultural barriers and educating immigrant patients to advocate for themselves and demand language access is critical to overcoming barriers.⁹¹

Monitoring and Evaluating Immigrant Integration Outcomes: Collecting and Analyzing Disaggregated Data

Measuring progress toward addressing adverse social determinants of health and health outcomes entails collecting and analyzing data that is disaggregated by group and ethnicity as well as by languages spoken. The NYS Department of Health developed a toolkit that guides healthcare facilities to improve data collection that is disaggregated by ethnicity, race, and language, and address the gap in understanding healthcare outcomes, trends, and patterns in immigrant populations.⁹² The Institute on Immigrant Integration Research & Policy has developed a “Data Gateway” that tracks the state of integration for immigrant New Yorkers in New York State.⁹³

Expanding Access to Mental Healthcare

There are financial, cultural, and linguistic barriers to accessing mental healthcare for many members of immigrant communities. Many cannot afford services due to financial constraints. Culturally and linguistically competent mental healthcare is not readily available and when available, there is fear of the stigma associated with seeking mental

89 [Wilma Alvarado-Little, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Immigrant Integration Opportunities in New York State](#) (31:58)

90 [Jeanette Altarriba and Rukhsana Ahmed, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (30:31)

91 [Wilma Alvarado-Little, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Immigrant Integration Opportunities in New York State](#) (1:10:32)

92 [Wilma Alvarado-Little, Julia Vinagolu-Baur, and Amanda Vrsalović, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Immigrant Integration Opportunities in New York State.](#) (1:04:55)

93 [Jisang Kim, Advancing Economic Integration: Equitable Employment and Workforce Development at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#)(1:07:08)

healthcare, lack of information or misinformation.⁹⁴ Several innovative approaches to increasing access are discussed including a web-based application that provides in-language, culturally adapted mental health resources for parents of children⁹⁵; and a directory of providers which includes contact information for culturally and linguistically competent mental health providers.⁹⁶

Addressing the Resource Gap in Rural Communities

Rural communities often face challenges of inaccessible transportation, a lack of access to healthy food, substandard housing, a lack of culturally and linguistically competent providers, and a lack of resources. Immigrants in rural areas face significant challenges as they settle in their new homes. There is a need to strengthen the organizational ecosystem that serves immigrants in these areas and address shortages of resources that help communities thrive.⁹⁷ There is also a need to support data collection and analysis of immigrants' demographics and the state of immigrant access to healthcare in rural New York.⁹⁸

94 [Andrew Sta. Ana, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (48:20)

95 [Yaena Song Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:19:54)

96 [Andrew Sta. Ana, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (57:15)

97 [Wilma Alvarado-Little, Julia Vinagolu-Baur and Amanda Vrsalović, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Immigrant Integration Opportunities in New York State.](#) (11:30)

98 [Wilma Alvarado-Little, Julia Vinagolu-Baur and Amanda Vrsalović, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Immigrant Integration Opportunities in New York State.](#) (14:19)



5. The Case of the Excluded Immigrant

The Problem

All doors to living a life of dignity and peace are closing. Safety for himself and his family becomes a rare commodity in a land where many have resorted to survival for the fittest behaviors that destroyed community life and transformed life as he knew it. He makes the difficult decision that many have made before him to migrate where a promise of a better life awaits. After a difficult and dangerous journey, he crosses the border with his family and is soon transported to New York City. Hopes of a life where they can restore their sense of humanity abound. Soon after, they witness the plight of those who came before him. Comrades who made a similar journey are now stuck in limbo. Their claims of asylum are rejected, and they become unauthorized to work. They live in the shadows, vulnerable to exploitation and wage theft, and unable to access life-enhancing services and safety net entitlements that would alleviate the deprivations of poverty.⁹⁹ Accessing legal assistance that promises adjustments is an unattainable channel because of fear for self and family and the danger of detention and deportation. A dream of a future that allows them to grow and reach their full human potential is out of reach. The road back to their native land has been blocked. A return migration would mean leaving the families they built behind. Every excursion into public space is fraught with the danger of being humiliated, arrested, deported,

⁹⁹ [Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, Keynote: Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (40:04)

and leaving family behind. Institutions designed to protect and serve are perceived with distrust and viewed as threats to his family unity and survival. He resigns himself to work as a street vendor; a precarious job that exposes him to a life in the shadows and the potential for violating regulations that he is unaware of.¹⁰⁰ A life in the shadows, fraught with humiliation and exploitation is a life they have never envisioned when they escaped a crisis in their homeland.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

Fixing the Immigration System

Recent migrant crossings of the Southern border revealed a serious breakdown of the system. It revealed an absence of a sustainable infrastructure that is rooted in planning and coordination among federal, state, and local stakeholders.¹⁰¹ Recent events have proven that the capacity for asylum adjudication is very limited. The employment authorization backlog creates a burden on local resources and deprives the state of benefiting from the economic contributions of newcomers. The declaration of a “state of emergency” by the City of New York has led to a suspension of regulations and provided for unilateral actions by the executive branch. It also allowed for emergency procurement of costly private contracts to companies that are not qualified or positioned to serve a vulnerable population. Implementation is haphazard and written regulations and policies are nonexistent. With the suspension of protections of the law under an emergency, there is no pressure to comply with standards or basic New York State regulations and individual rights become easy to violate.¹⁰² The reliance on experienced professionals who are versed in asylum matters, as well as the engagement of legal services is critical to protecting the principles of democracy and non-discrimination.¹⁰³

Long-term planning and preparedness are absent even though recent events of asylum seekers’ arrival at the border are not different from historical trends. Hence, fixing the system at the federal, state, and local levels is imperative to prepare for future events. Shutting the borders is not a realistic long-term or humane strategy since it translates into a death sentence for many. Creating additional pathways for people to escape violence and persecution is needed.¹⁰⁴

100 [Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, Keynote: Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (52:52)

101 [Rey Koslowski, Welcoming Communities and the Role of Governance at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:14:47)

102 [Lauren DesRosiers, Welcoming Communities and the Role of Governance at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (21:43)

103 [Lauren DesRosiers, Welcoming Communities and the Role of Governance at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (25:05)

104 [Lauren DesRosiers, Welcoming Communities and the Role of Governance at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:44:04)

Earned legalization for the millions of immigrants who are excluded from economic and social life is needed.¹⁰⁵ The current federal immigration system costs billions of dollars each year that are spent on deportation and detentions and incurs insurmountable human costs yet provides no economic gain. There is a need to create a humane, organized, and effective system and avoid ineffective enforcement measures, that separate families and inspire fear, anxiety, and danger. A broken system increases vulnerability for everyone and saps resources unnecessarily. It also does not reflect the shared values we hold as Americans or represent effective governance.¹⁰⁶ There is a need for comprehensive immigration system reform at the federal level and a path to citizenship to address the exclusions of millions of New York Workers.¹⁰⁷

Providing State-Level Work Authorization and Labor Protections

Expanding work authorization for foreign-born New Yorkers who are in a transitional status can provide labor protections that shield them from exploitation and wage theft. A more expeditious work authorization provided by state legislation (in the absence of federal timely action) can relieve the burden on localities of supporting new arrivals who are seeking asylum and leverage their capacity to contribute to filling workforce gaps.¹⁰⁸

Expanding Funding for Legal and Other Services for Immigrants without Documented Status

Expanding legal services funding from its current levels would ensure that every individual who needs legal counsel and representation receives it.¹⁰⁹ Funding in this policy area is currently driven by ideological considerations, rather than need.¹¹⁰ Immigrants without documentation cannot afford physical or mental healthcare because they fear getting deported and because they lack financial resources. Yet, they are at high risk of chronic disease and poor mental health.¹¹¹ Expanding safety net entitlements to this population will alleviate its specific vulnerabilities.

105 [Tsveta Dobrova, Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State](#) (40:19)

106 [Lauren DesRosiers, Welcoming Communities and the Role of Governance at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State](#), (25:00))

107 [Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest, Welcoming Remarks at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State](#), (32:15)

108 [Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, Keynote: Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State](#), (50:17)

109 [Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, Keynote: Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State](#), (45:27)

110 [Abdullah Al-Helal, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Immigrant Integration Opportunities in New York State](#), (35:47)

111 [Abdullah Al-Helal, Facilitating Health Equity and Meeting Needs of New Americans at Leveraging Immigrant Integration Opportunities in New York State](#), (40:04)

Replicating Inclusive Models of Integration in the Workforce

The NYS Office for Children & Family Services' offers a model of inclusion in its Early Childhood Education System, which does not impose barriers related to immigration status, and thus provides a solution to the labor force shortages in this sector of the education field. The system leverages the available pool of workers regardless of immigration status. A Social Security Number is not required to serve as a lead teacher in the classroom.¹¹² This model can be considered in other sectors of the economy that experience severe shortages of workers.

Labor shortages in the educational field call for reforming policies that prevent undocumented students from pursuing careers in education. Creating educators' pipeline programs for all education students regardless of immigration status is recommended. These programs would provide a sustainable solution to labor shortages in the educational field.¹¹³

Conclusion

New York has always been a 'beacon of hope and opportunity' for immigrants. Immigrant New Yorkers bring "diversity, innovation, and a relentless drive to succeed."¹¹⁴ Inclusive governance is critical to making the outsider, an insider and erasing conditions that negatively shape socio-economic outcomes. Considering that immigrant integration takes place in local communities, the responsibilities, and obligations of state and local governments in integration efforts cannot be overstated. Integration requires enacting responsive policies and practices, mobilizing and coordinating resources across sectors, putting in place effective plans and response mechanisms to address needs, bringing stakeholders together, and incorporating immigrant considerations and perspectives into decision-making. Shifting the rhetoric from burden and costs to growth and opportunity is integral to respecting the humanity and dignity of newcomers.¹¹⁵ Advancing immigrants' access to physical and mental healthcare promotes equity and human rights protections.¹¹⁶

112 [Caroline Rakus-Wojciechowski, Tamara Alsace, Cecilia M. Espinosa, Tatyana Kleyn and Farah Said, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:47:51)

113 [Margaret Blachly, Alberta Conteh, Karen Chatfield, and Cristina Medellin-Paz, Re-Envisioning Educational Access and Quality for Immigrant Students at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (1:41:24)

114 [Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest, Welcoming Remarks at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (32:19)

115 [Steven Choi, Research Findings: Programs and Practices Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Healthcare Access.](#) (14:44)

116 [Nicole Saint-Louis and Amanda Sisselman-Borgia, Research Findings: Programs & Practices Addressing Social Determinants of Health & Healthcare Access.](#) (28:19)

Public officials can educate the public about the value that immigrants bring. The contributions that immigrants make and their impacts on communities are often overshadowed by myths; dispelling these myths with facts and data is crucial.¹¹⁷ “Responsible policies” support every resident of our community.¹¹⁸ Additionally, higher education plays a critical role in “easing access” to skills and resources including supporting access to language proficiency, academic preparation, career readiness, social integration, and civic engagement.¹¹⁹

In this brief, we presented five cases where foreign-born New Yorkers face challenges related to their immigration experience. The cases clearly illustrate the unique barriers facing this population; a population that requires proactive outreach with culturally and linguistically appropriate information; dedication of resources to address social determinants of well-being and success; consistent investments in activating talents and leveraging skills; and the creation of a coordinated and integrated system that is governed by inclusionary policies and practices and recognizes that this pool of workers has the potential to close the gaps in workforce needs. For example, replicating the model of leveraging the bilingual skills of undocumented immigrants as teachers’ assistants can increase the capacity for English language learning desperately needed in the secondary school system in New York State. Similarly, in the healthcare system and in the childcare and elder care systems where severe shortages threaten to derail economic development and reduce workers’ productivity and well-being, workers excluded from the formal economy represent a solid pool of workers who can be effectively tapped to bridge those gaps.

Appendix A describes challenges in the workforce development and educational systems and Appendix B below summarizes the policy and practice recommendations that speakers offered at several webinars and events held at the Institute to examine the economic integration of immigrant New Yorkers.

117 [Trustee Marcos Crespo, Welcoming Remarks at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (11:38)

118 [Trustee Marcos Crespo, Welcoming Remarks at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (12:12)

119 [Chancellor John King, Welcoming Remarks at Leveraging Opportunities for Immigrant Integration in New York State.](#) (17:27)



APPENDIX

Appendix A: Barriers in the Workforce Development and Educational System

1

Inability to reach and serve the population with resources and information.

(1) Lack of adequate access to opportunities and resources because of fear, insecurity, lack of knowledge about options and services, difficulty in navigating the system, and lack of professional connections; (2) inability of providers to adequately and proactively reach immigrant population to establish and sustain trust and recruit to services; and (3) inability to provide at scale culturally and linguistically-appropriate services that meet the unique needs of the population.

2

Limited capacity to address fiscal constraints at the micro, meso, and macro levels

(1) Pressures to engage in survival jobs, become economically self-sufficient, and provide for family which create a poverty of time, an inability to access English learning, workforce development, and to balance competing priorities; (2) lack of resources to support basic needs; (3) restrictions on funding for provision of support services and case management that address non-workforce development needs and offer economic stability; and (4) service providers' workforce instability, difficulty in maintaining consistent staffing and reliance on volunteers amid uncertainty in securing funding renewal.

3

Policies and regulation that limit eligibility and populations

(1) Restrictive regulations that limit eligibility to higher education, and workforce development services; (2) credential verification challenges for many who cannot access transcripts and documentation from home countries and must invest scarce time and resources to obtain re-credentialing and licensing.

4

Protectionism, prejudice and lack of awareness

(1) Bias against workers who are internationally trained and are foreign-born in many professions, lack of awareness, cultural competency, and cultural humility that hinder the ability to secure employment commensurate with skills and experience; and (2) lack of standardized assessments by employers of prior credentials and inequality in assigning value to credentials depending on country of origin.

5

System fragmentation, lack of sufficient coordination and integration of services

(1) Complexity in navigating a fragmented system that lacks coordination and integration; i.e., inefficiencies and ineffectiveness created by the proliferation of providers who create dependence and competition but are often unable to sustain levels of services beyond the life of a grant; and (2) lack of sufficient employer engagement for job placement.

Appendix B: Policy & Practice Recommendations

1. The Case of the Aspiring Entrepreneur

- Investing in Culturally and Linguistically Sensitive Models of Business Education and Development
- Accessing Financial Assistance
- Promoting a System-Level Approach and Cross-Sector Partnerships

2. The Case of the Underemployed Professional

- Reforming the Credentialing and Licensing System through Policy Measures
- Investing in Bridging Programs
- Raising Employers' Awareness of "Skills-Based Hiring Versus Pedigree-Hiring."
- Enhancing Soft Skills to Complement the Technical Skills of Immigrant Professionals
- Investing in Immigrant-Tailored Workforce Development Models
- Considering Mutual Recognition of International Agreements
- Advancing an Integrated Cohesive and Coordinated Human Resource Strategy

3. The Case of the Immigrant Student

- Strengthen the Ecosystem of Higher Education Access for Immigrant Students
- Expanding Eligibility for In-State Tuition and State Aid
- Providing Funding to Address Resource Gaps and Strengthen the Ecosystem

4. The Case of the Refugee Seeker

- Extending the Length of Services for Refugees after their arrival
- Strengthening Alternative Pathways to traditional resettlement Services through Community and Individual Sponsorship of Refugees
- Strengthening the Adult English Language Learning System
- Investing in Sector-Specific English Language Learning and Work-Based programs Aligned with Skills
- Creating Sustainable Mechanisms for Addressing Social Determinants of Health
- Enforcing Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards
- Strengthening Community Education
- Monitoring and Evaluating Immigrant Integration Outcomes: Collecting and Analyzing Disaggregated Data
- Expanding Access to Mental Healthcare
- Addressing the Resource Gap in Rural Communities

5. The Case of the Excluded Immigrant

- Fixing the Immigration System
- Providing State-Level Work Authorization and Labor Protections
- Expanding Funding for Legal and Other Services for Immigrants without Documented Status
- Replicating Inclusive Models of Integration in the Workforce

Appendix C: List of Speakers at III-RP Events

- Diya Abdo, Lincoln Financial Professor, English and Creative Writing, Guilford College, Founder & Executive Director, Every Campus a Refuge
- Rukhsana Ahmed, Associate Professor of Communications & Research Associate, Center for the Elimination of Minority Health Disparities, University at Albany, State University of New York
- Mirvet Al-Bassam, Lead Job Coach, International Institute of Buffalo
- Naomi Alboim, Senior Policy Fellow, Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration, Toronto Metropolitan University
- Abdullah-Al Helal, Research Assistant, School of Social Work, Morgan State University
- Tamara Alsace, Associate Investigator, City University of New York Initiative on Immigration and Education (CUNY-IIE)
- Jeanette Altarriba, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences and Professor and Collins Fellow, Psychology, University at Albany, State University of New York
- Wilma Alvarado-Little, Director, Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention, and Associate Commissioner, New York State Department of Health
- Margaret Blachly, Advisor and Instructor, Early Childhood Special Education and Bilingual Programs, Bank Street Graduate College of Education
- Cynthia Nayeli Carvajal, Director, Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs, City University of New
- Karen Chatfield, Associate Director, National Center for Children in Poverty, Bank Street Graduate College of Education
- Steven Choi, Former Executive Director, the New York Immigration Coalition
- Beth Clark-Gareca, Associate Professor and Director, Teaching English to

Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) K-12, Binghamton University, State University of New York

- Alberta Conteh, Director, Bank Street Head Start, Bank Street Graduate College of Education
- Trustee Marcos Crespo, Trustee, State University of New York
- Lauren DesRosiers, Senior Staff Attorney, Adjunct Professor, Albany Law School
- Danielle Davis, Director, BIPOC Business Growth, The Capital Region Chamber
- Tsveta Dobрева, Immigrant Integration Fellow, Institute on Immigrant Integration Research and Policy
- Bob Doyle, Assistant Director, Grants and Special Programs, International Institute of Buffalo
- Vera Eccarius-Kelly, Professor, Department of Political Science & International Relations, Siena College
- Beroro T. Efekoro, Albany County Legislator, District 7
- Cecilia M. Espinosa, Associate Professor, Early Childhood/Childhood Education, Lehman College, City University of New York
- Nele Feldmann, Associate Director, Welcome Corps on Campus, Community Sponsorship Hub
- Paul Feltman, Deputy Executive Director for Global Talent Policy and Programs, World Education Services
- Carlos Flores Figueroa, Vice President, Business Development, Center for Economic Growth (CEG)
- Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest, Assemblymember, District 57, New York State Assembly
- Joaquin Sanchez Gomes, Immigrant Integration Fellow, Institute on Immigrant Integration Research and Policy
- Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, Executive Director, New York State Office for New Americans
- Aubrey Grant, Program Manager, Practice and Research, Community Sponsorship Hub
- Nasser Jaber, Chef, Entrepreneur, and Founder, The Migrant Kitchen and The Migrant Kitchen Initiative
- Arielle Kandel, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, New Women New Yorkers

- Jisang Kim, Senior Research Associate, Center for Women in Government & Civil Society, University at Albany, State University of New York
- Ahyoung Kim, Director, Economic Empowerment, Asian American Federation
- Chancellor John. B King Jr. State University of New York
- Tatyana Kleyn, Professor, Bilingual Education & Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), The City College of New York, City University of New York
- Rey Koslowski, Professor of Political Science & Director, Master of International Affairs Program, University at Albany, State University of New York
- Jina Krause-Vilmar, President and CEO at Upwardly Global
- Mina Lee, Assistant Professor, Social Work, Binghamton University, State University of New York]
- Ala Marciuc, Doctoral Candidate, Teaching, Learning, and Educational Leadership, Binghamton University, State University of New York
- Paola Martinez, Director of Strategic Program Development and Special Initiatives, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York
- Cristina Medellin-Paz, Associate Director, Straus Center for Young Children and Families, Bank Street College of Education
- Hattie Quarnstrom-Figueroa, Director of Operations, New York State Office of New Americans
- Caroline Rakus-Wojciechowski, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, MapWorks Learning CUNY Initiative on Immigration in Education (CUNY-IIE)
- Havidán Rodríguez, President, University at Albany, State University of New York
- Kristine Rudgers, Small Business Advisor, America's Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)
- Senator Sean Ryan, Senator, Senate District 61, New York State Senate
- Farah Said, Project Researcher, City University of New York Initiative on Immigration and Education (CUNY-IIE)
- Andrew Saint Ana, Deputy Director of Research, Asian American Federation
- Nicole Saint-Louis, Associate Professor & Director, Undergraduate Social Work Program, Social Work, Lehman College, City University of New York
- Ali Schaeffing, Assistant Professor of Geography, and Director, Service Learning & Community Engagement, Russell Sage College

- Racquel Sevilla, Director of Program Development, Planning, and Evaluation, WES Global Talent Bridge
- Ken Silverman, Immigrant Integration Fellow, Institute on Immigrant Integration Research and Policy
- Amanda Sisselman-Borgia, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Lehman College, City University of New York
- Yaena Song, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Section for Health Equity, NYU Grossman School of Medicine, New York University
- Assemblymember Al Stirpe, Assemblymember, District 127, New York State Assembly
- Lauren G. Van Sluytman, Assistant Dean & Professor, School of Social Work, Morgan State University
- Asha Venugopalan, Immigrant Integration Fellow, Institute on Immigrant Integration Research and Policy
- Julia Vinagolu-Baur, Health Program Coordinator I, Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention, New York State Department of Health
- Amanda Vrsalović, Senior Health Program Coordinator, Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention, New York State Department of Health
- Sawsan Werfelli, Assistant Professor, Social Work, Binghamton University, State University of New York
- Catherine Willis, Every Campus a Refuge Coordinator, Hudson Valley Community College, SUNY
- Furkan Yilmaz, Program Assistant, State University of New York & City University of New York South East Asia Consortium

About the Authors



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**Institute on
Immigrant Integration
Research and Policy**

The Institute on Immigrant Integration Research and Policy seeks to advance the economic, social, and political integration of foreign-born New Yorkers and to promote responsive policies and practices.

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