



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2018

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AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Created in 2016, the Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force (Task Force) is a consortium of stakeholders that seek to leverage the skills that foreign-trained professionals bring to the United States in order to meet local job market demand.

Skilled immigrants are those who have acquired extensive education and/or occupational experience abroad. Many come to Maryland ready to work, offering great benefits to local industry, including global skills, multilingualism, workplace diversity, and cultural knowledge.

Prior to securing employment in their professional fields, skilled immigrants too often experience significant challenges including limited English language proficiency, costly credential evaluations of their foreign degrees, complex licensing and recertification processes, lack of professional networks, and lack of knowledge on alternative career pathways.

The Task Force consists of representatives from the Maryland Department of Human Services, the Maryland Department of Labor, community colleges, refugee resettlement agencies, American Job Centers, the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, and other immigrant-serving organizations. A full list of Task Force organizational members can be found on page 4 and 5.

The Task Force believes that the State of Maryland can lead the way in creating a win-win environment in which immigrants secure jobs matching their professional and educational backgrounds while helping the business community more readily meet its workforce needs.

This report covers year two of the Task Force, from July 2017 through June 2018.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Skilled Immigrant Task Force collaborates across organizations to advance workforce system accessibility and career opportunities for foreign-trained individuals in Maryland.

SKILLED IMMIGRANT DEFINITION

A work-authorized foreign-born and foreign-trained worker with at least (2) years of formal or informal education, training, or on the job experience that has led to special skills, training, knowledge, and/or abilities for certain types of work.

GOVERNANCE

The Task Force was co-sponsored by two state agencies: the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Maryland Department of Labor (Labor).

DHS is Maryland's primary social service provider, serving more than one million residents annually. Through its 24 local departments of social services and other social programs, DHS aggressively pursues opportunities to assist people in economic need, provides preventive services, and protects vulnerable children and adults. Within DHS' Family Investment Administration is the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees (MORA), which provides support and services to federally recognized refugees and other humanitarian immigrants including asylees, certified Victims of Trafficking, Special Immigrant Visa holders from Iraq and Afghanistan, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and certain Amerasians.

MORA has helped more than 40,000 refugees and eligible humanitarian immigrants make Maryland their home through a statewide network of public and private organizations. MORA provides transitional cash assistance, employment services, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, vocational training, health case management, and other supportive services. MORA partners assist individuals to become independent, contributing members to the national and local economy through a number of transitional services aimed at helping individuals achieve social and economic self-sufficiency. For more information, visit MORA's website at <http://dhs.maryland.gov/maryland-office-for-refugees-and-asylees/>.

Labor is Maryland's workforce development agency. It supports the economic stability of the state by providing businesses, the workforce, and the consuming public with high-quality, customer-focused regulatory, employment, and training services. Divisions within Labor consist of Occupational and Professional Licensing, Unemployment Insurance, Labor and Industry, the Maryland Racing Commission, and the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL).

DWDAL oversees the state's adult education programming (family literacy, GED preparation, and English as a Second Language) and the American Job Centers (AJCs). DWDAL is responsible for implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in Maryland. WIOA was signed into law on July 22, 2014 and took effect July 1, 2015. It addresses the needs of both businesses and jobseekers and establishes a workforce system that relies on strong, cross-sector partnerships. The Maryland WIOA State Plan is available here: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/wioa.shtml>.

MORA and DWDAL are co-leads of the Task Force, sharing responsibility for overall governance, including developing strategy, facilitating meetings, inviting partners, and overseeing workgroups.

MEMBERSHIP

The Task Force is a robust network of multi-sector stakeholders, including service providers, educators, and both the public and private sector. Second-year membership included representation from the following local, state, and national organizations:

- Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation
- Baltimore City Community College
- Baltimore City's Mayor's Office of Employment Development
- Baltimore City's Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs

- Chesapeake College
- Community College of Baltimore County
- Department of Human Services (State of Maryland)
- Department of Labor (State of Maryland)
- Ethiopian Community Development Council
- Howard Community College
- Howard County Library System
- Howard County Office of Workforce Development
- Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (State of Maryland)
- Governor's Workforce Development Board (State of Maryland)
- International Rescue Committee
- Latino Economic Development Council
- Literacy Council of Montgomery County
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
- Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area
- Montgomery College
- Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
- Montgomery County Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center
- Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships
- Prince George's Community College
- Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation
- Prince George's County Department of Social Services
- Telamon Salisbury American Job Center
- Upwardly Global
- Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland (Latino Health Initiative)
- WorkSource Montgomery (American Job Center in Montgomery County)
- World Education Services Global Talent Bridge

STRUCTURE

At monthly meetings, stakeholder organizations build relationships, share ideas, and discuss best practices. These meetings primarily take place at DWDAL in Baltimore, Maryland.

In addition to monthly meetings, workgroups consisting of a small number of members are established to tackle specific issues. The workgroup structure evolved from feedback polling of members in the first year as an effort to improve the previous structure of subcommittees. Workgroups are temporary and active for a pre-determined window of time so that participants can gauge their availability based on workload at their primary organization. Deliverables and group goals are clearly outlined on a schedule that is feasible, and the groups are intentionally staffed with appropriate representation from relevant member organizations to ensure that the group can effectively accomplish their task. Workgroups are determined through group discussion during monthly Task Force meetings.

YEAR TWO IN REVIEW

OVERVIEW

In year two of the Task Force, members agreed on a set of goals and action items after vigorous feedback polling, where individual conversations with members generated ideas for moving forward. The group continued to meet monthly and focused on the agreed-upon goals, which are listed below.

Throughout the year, 11 meetings were held. Three of the regularly scheduled monthly meetings were site tours. Site tours took place at Employ Prince George's, the local workforce development agency for Prince George's County; the International Rescue Committee in Silver Spring, Maryland, a refugee resettlement agency, and Columbia Workforce Center in Howard County, the local workforce development agency in Howard County. During each site tour, participants were given a tour of the facility and provided information about clients served, services offered, referral processes, and available resources.

In addition, based on response to the feedback received, the Task Force expanded its membership through inviting additional organizations to join. The full organizational member list can be found on page 4 and 5.

GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS

In order to adhere to the mission and in accordance with the opinions of Task Force members, the following four goals were created for year two:

1. *Communication and Information Sharing*
Increase integration efforts between Maryland's workforce system and immigrant-serving organizations through the development of a minimum of three (3) events or resources.
2. *Business Engagement*
Explore and conceptualize "business engagement" opportunities that will benefit skilled immigrants and Maryland's business community through leveraging existing state resources and including two (2) Maryland employers in the work of the Task Force.
3. *Technical Assistance*
Create and deliver two (2) data-driven Technical Assistance opportunities to relevant providers in order to improve statewide service delivery to skilled immigrants.
4. *Tangible Products to Remove Barriers to Employment*
Develop a minimum of two (2) tangible tools that can be utilized by service providers or job seekers to reduce or remove barriers to employment for skilled immigrants.

Each goal listed above was connected with a menu of suggested action items. Throughout the year, the Task Force chose action items to focus efforts on, either by creating a workgroup or having DWDAL or MORA staff fulfill the task. The table below details the goals, potential action items tied to each goal,

and accomplishments. Action items in red indicate progress on that specific action item. A detailed narrative on the accomplishments can be found on page 8.

Goals	Potential Action Items	Accomplishments
<p>Goal #1: <i>Communication and Information Sharing</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a resource guide comprised of relevant contact and programmatic information to include and be used by the workforce system and immigrant-serving organizations. 2. Prepare and deliver a presentation or series to the Task Force reflecting the resources and processes at Maryland's American Job Centers. 3. Prepare and deliver a presentation or series to the Task Force reflecting the resources and processes at Maryland's resettlement agencies. 4. Create and distribute a "second survey" to assess the capacity of immigrant-serving organizations. 	<p>Resource guide created through workgroup, which was disseminated to partners and published to Labor's website.</p> <p>Task Force members took a site tour of a refugee resettlement agency.</p>
<p>Goal #2: <i>Business Engagement</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify two (2) champion employers in Maryland who consistently hire skilled immigrants and invite them to serve on the Task Force. 2. Engage resettlement agency staff in the work of Labor's WIOA Business Services workgroups for the purposes of sharing best practices and increasing business connections. 	<p>Task Force began work on business engagement through World Education Services' Skilled Immigrant Integration Program</p>
<p>Goal #3: <i>Technical Assistance</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilizing the results of the Capacity Building Workforce System Survey, develop a meaningful TA training that will be administered to the American Job Centers by Labor. 2. Utilizing the results of the "second survey" to assess capacity of immigrant-serving organizations, develop a meaningful TA training that will be administered to immigrant-serving organizations by MORA. 3. Utilizing the results of the Capacity Building Workforce System Survey, develop and facilitate cross-training sessions between local area AJC and resettlement agency staff. 4. Prepare or contribute to a breakout session for the third WIOA convening on cultural competency or language access that reflects best practices. 	<p>Task Force members presented at the State of Maryland's Third WIOA Convening as well as other conferences.</p>
<p>Goal #4: <i>Tangible Products to Remove Barriers to Employment</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define "barrier elimination" in the context of skilled immigrant jobseekers. 2. Reformat the resource guide created under Goal #1 into a useable tool for immigrant job seekers and distribute copies to relevant organizations statewide. 3. Create resource guides or toolkits regarding licensing and career pathway information for specific fields in Maryland. 4. Finalize and disseminate the financial literacy guide created by the relevant first-year subcommittee. 	<p>Engineering licensing and career pathway guide in progress.</p> <p>Financial Education guide finalized, disseminated to partners, and published to Labor's website.</p>

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Many of the accomplishments of the Task Force's second year were related to specific actions tied to the four goals. A detailed discussion of the accomplishments listed in the table on page 7 can be found below.

Communication and Information Sharing

Within the Communication and Information Strategy goal, the Task Force decided to work on the first action item, the creation of a resource guide comprised of relevant contact and programmatic information to be used by the workforce system and immigrant-serving organizations. The Resource Guide workgroup met regularly for several months to compile a list of local and state resources for staff who serve New Americans. After incorporating additional feedback from Task Force members, the Resource Guide was finalized, disseminated to partners, and published to Labor's website. The Resource Guide can be found on the website at:

<http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/skilledimmigrant.shtml>.

In addition, one of the site tours was at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Silver Spring, Maryland. The IRC is one of three resettlement agencies in Maryland and has two offices, one in Silver Spring and one in Baltimore City. During the site tour, Task Force members were given information about available services as well as the resettlement process. Through this site tour, Task Force members became better informed of the resources and processes at one of Maryland's refugee resettlement agencies.

Business Engagement

For the Business Engagement goal, the Task Force ended up choosing a different action item than either of the ones originally identified at the beginning of year two. This was in large part due to Maryland's inclusion in the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) through World Education Services (WES) Global Talent Bridge. WES Global Talent Bridge, along with other organizations, provided customized training, coaching, and technical assistance over a 12-month span to advance concrete initiatives and build sustainable networks to advance local skilled immigrant integration efforts.

At the end of year two, the Task Force formed a workgroup to specifically focus on business engagement. Rather than focus on the action items detailed in the table above, the Task Force decided to create a one-page document highlighting international talent in Maryland with technical assistance from WES Global Talent Bridge and Upwardly Global. A workgroup was formed to think through what information and data should be present and what language to use. Through the technical assistance provision, the workgroup was able to see example documents from other communities. Through the process of creating the document, it was clear that Task Force member organizations used different approaches to engaging businesses. While the document did not get finalized in year two, understanding that there were different approaches to business engagement was a valuable discovery. This discovery allowed DWDAL and MORA to better understand the differences amongst Task Force members and use this information to inform future business engagement efforts.

Technical Assistance

Within the Technical Assistance goal, Task Force members were able to engage in several technical assistance opportunities. The action item completed within this goal was to prepare and contribute to a session for the third WIOA convening on cultural competency or language access. Labor held its third convening regarding the implementation of WIOA in January 2018 with a focus on nondiscrimination. The Task Force was able to contribute to this important event by providing multiple presentations related to services for New Americans, including best practices in oral interpretation, information about program eligibility and work authorization documents, and English Language Acquisition and Integrated Education and Training. Materials from the event can be found on Labor's WIOA website at: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/wioa.shtml>.

In addition, DWDAL and MORA staff jointly presented about immigrant integration in the workforce at the Adult Education and Family Literacy Services Leadership Conference in September 2017 and the Welfare Advocates Conference in November 2017. DWDAL staff presented twice at the Maryland Association for Adult, Community and Continuing Education (MAACCE) conference in spring 2018. One presentation focused on language access and the other shared information about the Task Force.

Tangible Products to Remove Barriers to Employment

The Task Force made significant progress on two action items within this goal. First, the Task Force decided to focus on creating a career pathways/professional licensing guide. This work was informed by technical assistance provided through the WES Global Talent Bridge's SIIP from both WES Global Talent Bridge and the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians. A workgroup convened to decide on the profession that the guide would focus on, and decided to choose engineering. Then, the group discussed the elements to include in the guide, wrote the various sections, and provided edits throughout the process. DWDAL staff worked closely with the Maryland Board for Professional Engineers to ensure accuracy and relevancy of content. Completion of the guide took place in year three of the Task Force.

Second, a workgroup was formed to explore challenges revolving around immigrant access to and understanding of available financial resources in the state. The workgroup decided to create a Financial Education and Services Guide to distribute to organizations that work with immigrants (ethnic community-based organizations, non-profits, refugee resettlement agencies, local departments of social services, etc.). The resource guide includes information on basic banking, financial education providers, loans, scholarships, and fraud. Additionally, a list of organizations by local workforce area is included so individuals can access services at a nearby location. This workgroup grew out of a subcommittee that formed in the first year of the Task Force, and in the second year, the guide was finalized, disseminated to partners, and published to Labor's website. The guide can be found online at: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/skilledimmigrant.shtml>.

RELATED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In addition to the accomplishments directly related to the goals of the Task Force in its second year, members recognized that continuing to convene as a group of stakeholders who traditionally did not communicate was an incredible success. Through convening regularly, organizations became better acquainted with the work of other organizations, paving the way to increased client referrals for needed services and stronger partnerships. One example of such partnership was the decision of a refugee

resettlement agency to co-locate some of its staff part-time at a local American Job Center in an effort to better serve refugees and immigrants and help them access services at the American Job Center.

The Task Force has also greatly strengthened the working relationship of DWDAL and MORA, and by extension, has kept a focus on the needs of New Americans. One example of this partnership is that MORA staff began participating in DWDAL's policy process. In particular, MORA was involved in the revision of DWDAL's Assessment Policy and contributed to the change in testing requirements for Limited English Proficient individuals. In addition, all Task Force members were informed of relevant DWDAL policy drafts and provided the opportunity to give feedback during public comment periods. DWDAL and MORA staff participate in the Office of New Americans network, led by the Pew Charitable Trusts, and also regularly discuss how their programs can collaborate when faced with employer needs.

DWDAL instituted a Language Access Plan (LAP) in January 2018. DWDAL prepared a LAP in accordance with Section 188 of WIOA (nondiscrimination), Maryland law, and Labor's Office of Fair Practices draft LEP Plan. The LAP outlines how DWDAL, including its adult education providers and AJC network, as well as Labor's Division of Unemployment Insurance will provide equitable access to those with limited English. Task Force members were also able to provide input for the LAP prior to it taking effect.

DWDAL also took steps to improve language assistance within the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE), the state's primary website for job seekers and businesses. The MWE system can now be translated into 18 languages. Additionally, questions about English proficiency and primary languages are now asked of all job seekers registering on the MWE, helping Labor staff better understand the language needs of its customers. For its adult education or English as a Second Language students, DWDAL also ensured that the common intake form was translated into multiple languages.

One of the barriers to employment for immigrants identified by the Task Force was occupational licensing. In response, the group will contribute to Maryland's work as part of a national *Occupational Licensing Policy Learning Consortium*. Labor applied to and was accepted to this opportunity from The Council of State Governments, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. Participation will include representation from MORA and Labor on Maryland's consortium core team and from DWDAL on Maryland's consortium home team. The consortium began in fall 2017 and will continue through fall 2019.

LOOKING AHEAD TO YEAR THREE

Several projects began in year two will continue on to year three, such as the finalization and dissemination of the engineering career pathways guide. In addition, Maryland will continue its work with the Occupational Licensing Policy Learning Consortium and the Office of New Americans State Network.