



One Ohio, Many Stories

Strategies for Helping New Ohioans
Integrate, Contribute and Become
a Thriving Part of Ohio's Success

Ohio

Opportunities for
New Americans

Introduction



Governor John R. Kasich signs an executive order creating the Office of Opportunities for New Americans.

"As we have become one of the nation's top job creators, our businesses increasingly need a robust pipeline of hard-working people. The Buckeye State is a great, welcoming place to work and raise a family, and whether you are from Indiana or India, New England or Old England, we want you in Ohio."

– **Governor John R. Kasich,**
May 15, 2018, as he created the
Office of Opportunities for
New Americans

Ohio has a rich history of welcoming immigrants from all parts of the world. They are an integral part of Ohio's economic success and key to our industrial and commercial strength. Ohio was the United States' first frontier, and cities across the state have been shaped by the hard work and ingenuity of diverse immigrant groups that settled here. Today, new immigrants are finding a home in Ohio and making contributions to the cities that were enriched by earlier generations.

French fur traders were the early European immigrants to colonize Ohio, followed soon by traders from Great Britain. Marietta, the first settlement by the Ohio Company of Associates in the Northwest Territory, was founded in 1788 by a group of Revolutionary War veterans from New England and named for Queen Marie Antoinette of France in recognition of France's support during the war.

Throughout the 1800s, European immigrants made their home in Ohio, starting with an influx of Germans and Irish, followed by immigrants from Britain and then eastern and southern Europe. The diversity of Ohio's immigrant population contributes to Ohio's strength; as Ohio historian George W. Knepper observed, Ohio "has always been to a marked degree a salad bowl of people."

From the French fur traders who brought commerce to the frontier, to the German and Irish immigrants who helped build Ohio's transportation infrastructure, to today's Asian and Hispanic immigrants specializing in health care, agriculture and technology, all those who have immigrated have been crucial to Ohio's economic success.



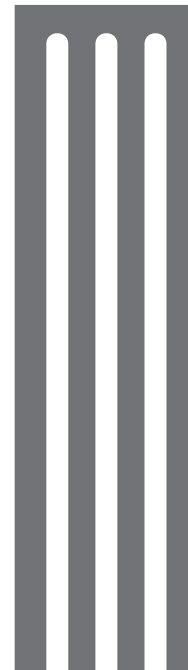
COURT HOUSE AND JAIL AT MARIETTA, OHIO, BUILT IN 1798.

This image is a reproduction of a print depicting the courthouse and jail in Marietta, built in 1798. (Image courtesy of the Ohio History Connection)

Beyond that, most of the immigrants in Ohio are of working age. A study produced by Cleveland State University's Center for Population Dynamics reports that the largest population sector of native-born Ohioans are ages 50 to 65. By comparison, the largest population of foreign-born Ohioans are ages 25 to 44. Further, the report states that Ohio's immigrants are highly educated. While 26.7 percent of native-born Ohioans have a four-year college degree or higher, 42.1 percent of foreign-born Ohioans have reached that academic level. That spread of 15.4 percentage points is the largest in the nation. This is the workforce that can help fuel Ohio's future growth, and the Office of Opportunities for New Americans was created to enhance that process.

In recognition, Governor John R. Kasich created the Office of Opportunities for New Americans with **three pillars: jobs, education and training, and growing businesses.**

GROWING BUSINESSES



Organization

The Office of Opportunities for New Americans (the Office) is housed within the Development Services Agency. The chief of the agency's Business Services Division leads the Office, which is guided by an advisory group established in an Executive Order and appointed by the governor. It is made up of people around the state invested in helping immigrants enter Ohio's workforce and succeed in Ohio's communities.

The Office focuses on three pillars: jobs, education and training, and growing businesses.

Upon its creation, the immediate priority for the Office was to understand the current situation, to hear the stories of Ohio's immigrants, to identify the barriers they have overcome and to identify ways to ease the transition into Ohio communities and workforce. Working with the Ohio Welcoming Initiatives Network, known as OWIN, and other partners, the Office organized a series of listening sessions. The sessions were as follows:

- Dayton, two sessions in conjunction with Welcome Dayton.
- Akron, with the International Institute of Akron.
- Cleveland, two sessions with Global Cleveland.
- Cincinnati, with Cincinnati Compass.
- Toledo, with Welcome Toledo-Lucas County.
- Columbus, two sessions with US Together.
- Youngstown, with the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber.
- Resettlement agencies across the state.
- Ethnic community organizations.
- One-on-one meetings with immigrant-owned businesses.



The New American Advisory Committee members are:

- Nadir Abdi, Columbus
- George Charchar, Toledo
- Mo Dioun, Columbus
- Mari Galindo, Cleveland
- Nadia Kasvin, Columbus
- Yonathan Kebede, Dayton
- Lucy M. Marquez, Westerville
- Guisselle Mendoza McDonald, Toledo
- Frederick Odame, Cincinnati
- Sudarshan Pyakurel, Columbus
- Helen Qin, Cleveland
- Sangita M. Vora, Cincinnati

These sessions provided a base of information about issues today's immigrants face and areas where the state can play a greater role in helping them integrate into life in Ohio. We also heard stories of their enterprising endeavors and how they overcame obstacles to become successful members of their communities. We uncovered issues where our state team was able to help immigrants navigate government to address the issues hindering their success.

In conjunction with the listening sessions, we have held dozens of one-on-one and small group discussions with representatives of ethnic groups, businesspeople and individuals across the state. We found that some business owners and professionals felt more comfortable speaking with us one-on-one or in a place familiar to them rather than in group settings. These meetings have rounded out our understanding of the story of immigrants in Ohio and helped us zero in on specific issues and recommendations for action.



Advisory Committee member Nadia Kasvin speaks at a Columbus listening session.

Immigrants make up a small proportion of Ohio’s population, but they are a key part of the workforce that will keep the state’s economic engine running now and in the future.

The Office works closely with other state offices and agencies, including the Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation, the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Education, the Department of Commerce, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Job and Family Services. These agencies have provided key employees – “navigators” – who bring their agencies’ expertise to our efforts and who are committed to helping immigrants navigate the system of state government that is new and different to them. The Office also has benefited from input from the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission and the Ohio New African Immigrants Commission.



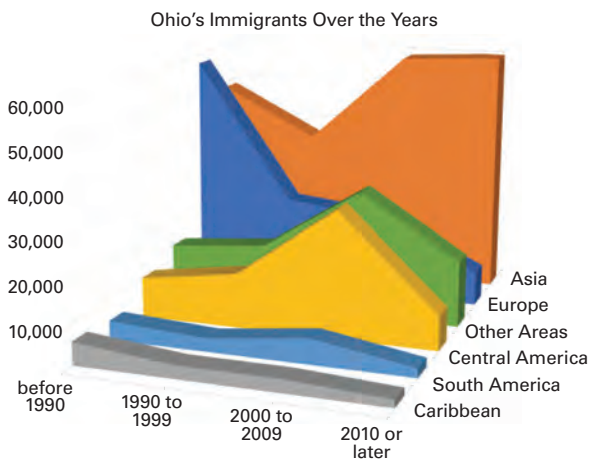
Members of the African Professionals Network in Cincinnati meet with representatives of the Office of Opportunities for New Americans.

History

Ohio has always been a welcoming state, attracting immigrants from various regions of the world.

The Ohio History Connection details the migration patterns that have shaped the diversity of today's Ohio. Native Americans were the first to settle in the area that is now Ohio. The first Europeans to arrive are believed to be French fur traders, and France controlled what is now Ohio until the 1740s when British traders also arrived.

The number of settlements grew after the passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787. Marietta was the first, founded in 1788.



As Ohio grew, the patterns of immigration to the state mirrored those of the rest of the country. From 1785 to 1850, the new Ohioans primarily came from Germany and Ireland. Germans, in particular, had a big influence in Ohio, helping to found Lancaster in 1800 and settling in Cincinnati beginning in the 1830s in what is now Over-the-Rhine. These early immigrants helped improve Ohio's economy by opening the frontier with the construction of canals and railroads. Their influence remains today, not only in the industry in Cincinnati, but in the communities, festivals, places of worship, all evident in subsequent generations.



Padmini Roy-Dixon (left) talks with Advisory Committee member Mo Dioun at a Columbus listening session.

Other groups also had a significant impact on Ohio's development. For instance, immigrants from Wales made their way from Pennsylvania to Ohio during this period, with many settling in present-day Licking County.

Migration patterns changed somewhat from 1850 to the early 1900s. German and Irish immigrants continued to settle in Ohio, but immigration from eastern and southern Europe began to increase. The new Ohioans of this period came from Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia and from Italy. Many of the eastern European migrants made their home along Lake Erie, particularly in Cleveland, where they worked in factories. An Ohio Memory article notes the influence of immigrants on the city's growth: "Cleveland offers astonishing examples of the impact of turn-of-the-century immigration on Ohio: in 1900, 75% of the city's population was either foreign-born or first-generation descendants of foreign-born." Italians also settled in Cleveland in such numbers that two neighborhoods became known as Big Italy and Little Italy. Many Slavic immigrants continued to arrive in the United States and Ohio through the 1940s, '50s and '60s, fleeing war-torn Europe and Cold War communism.

Ohio communities and workforce also were shaped by the Great Migration, beginning in 1910 and continuing through World War II. As many as 500,000 African Americans moved from the South to the North during the 1910s and 1920s to find work and better lives. During that time and into the 1940s, thousands of African Americans settled in Cleveland, Youngstown, Toledo, Akron and other cities. In 1920, African Americans made up just 3 percent of the state's population; it now stands at 12 percent.



Columbus now has ethnic restaurants from more than 40 nationalities, and more are being added all the time. In 2010, Bethia Woolf and Andy Dehus launched Columbus Food Adventures, in part because of the city's immigrant groups. Immigrants represent 9 percent of the city's total population, and Columbus Food Adventures guides people to try new places, such as nationally recognized Mo Mo Ghar, owned by Phuntso Lama. A Nepalese immigrant, Lama says Mo Mo is almost like a national dish in Nepal. She is happy that the tastes she brought from her native land are so popular in her new home. Lama has more than 15 employees, and the success of her first restaurant led her to open a second location.

Today, immigrants continue to find new lives in Ohio, and new groups are making their way here. The top countries of origin today are India, Mexico, China, Germany and Canada. South and Central American immigration surged beginning in the 1960s, and distinct Latino communities grew in Columbus and elsewhere. A sizable population of Somalis have fled violence in their homeland beginning in the 1990s and are making new lives in central Ohio. More than 100,000 immigrants from India live in Ohio, and about half of them have moved here since 2010.

New ethnic groups tend to settle together in one area at first. We heard evidence that the greatest integration in neighborhoods and throughout communities comes with the next generation. Children of immigrants often share in the heritage, but not the language of their parents, and many move from the neighborhoods where their parents settled. While integration of a new ethnic group often takes time, Ohioans have demonstrated their welcoming nature by supporting the businesses started by immigrants, sharing in each others' cultural festivals and celebrations, and hiring people of different backgrounds into the workplaces.



In Toledo, we met with Bahaa Hariri, whose family emigrated from Lebanon and opened a small market in the 1980s. The business has now passed to the next generation and has been such a success that the family has moved it twice to bigger and bigger locations. In the current location, they have added a restaurant, called Sidon, to the market operation. Now, the proprietor is on the lookout for qualified workers to participate in his business success.

The result is a melting pot in which ethnic groups retain parts of their culture and community but also become part of Ohio's social fabric. An Ohio History Connection article states, "the great strength of Ohio's ethnic history is that no one group grew to dominate the cultural landscape."

The same is true in Ohio today. More than one immigrant shared this idea with us: "Our homeland was the best to be from; our country here is the best to be at."

Awareness

As immigrants make Ohio their home, the state is helping them along the way. They are learning English at dozens of state-sponsored sites, they're finding jobs and training through state resources, and they're opening new businesses with the help of Ohio's trained business advisors.

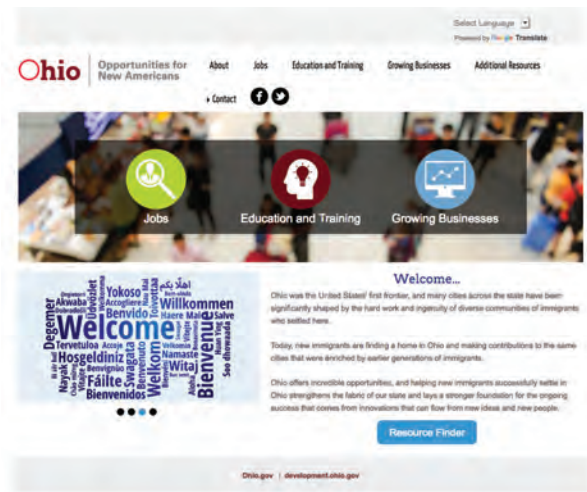
With all the resources the state offers, the No. 1 thing we heard during our listening sessions is that people don't know about these resources. And if they don't know about them, they can't benefit from them. Increasing awareness of existing state services must be a top priority to increase the speed of acclimation.

Those who do know about the state resources often find success. In Columbus, for instance, a family from Argentina got their start in business with a food truck called Barroluco. They developed the business plan with the help of Ohio's Small Business Development Center at Columbus State Community College, and they were able to receive the advice in their native language. In the fall of 2018, they turned that success into a brick-and-mortar restaurant downtown. "We're here because of the Small Business Development Center," owner Omar D'Angelo said.

Through our listening sessions and outreach efforts, the Office of Opportunities for New Americans has identified ways to reach more immigrants to increase awareness of the services the state offers to Ohioans every day. The call to action in all of our materials and presentations is to encourage people to go to the website – **NewAmericans.Ohio.gov**.



A new American speaks at the Cleveland listening session.



The website covers information about how to find a job, how to access English language courses, how to enroll in education and training programs, and how to find no-cost or inexpensive services to start a business. This clearinghouse of information can be translated into more than 100 languages using Google Translate. Other state agencies also have translation available on their websites and through other services, including by telephone. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles offers knowledge tests in multiple languages. Importantly, visitors to *OhioMeansJobs.com* can translate the thousands of job postings using Google Translate.

The Office continues to improve existing information on the website and add relevant content as it becomes available. We have a robust website to welcome new Ohioans, and a key task going forward will be to make new arrivals aware of its existence.

In addition, we are reaching out to immigrants where they are. For example, we have produced a brochure that is given to new citizens at naturalization ceremonies in the U.S. District Court in Columbus. The language was approved by the chief judge, and the card was produced as a pilot. We now will seek to distribute it in the rest of the state's federal districts. The card outlines the three pillars the Office is focused on and directs new citizens to the *NewAmericans.Ohio.gov* website for details. We also have a second card for more general use. We are making the card available to places and organizations that frequently serve immigrants. Again, the card encourages people to go to the website.

Immigrants have mobile phones. They use them to stay in touch with their country of origin, to get information about their current location, to stay connected to people and information, and to access resources that can help them with acclimation. Immigrants may enter Ohio from different routes, but what they have in common is mobile communications. We are making greater use of social media to raise awareness of services available in the state. You can find the Office on Twitter @newohioans and on Facebook with the hashtag #NewOhioans.

One video we shared on Twitter and on the website tells the story of a successful immigrant businessman whom we connected with assistance in bidding on government contracts. “Founding a business in the U.S. was my dream. I found my dream in Ohio,” said Anees Alnaseri, who opened his machine shop in Cleveland after emigrating from Iraq. Now, he’s working to expand his business.



Anees Alnaseri talks about his tool and die business in Willoughby.

Next Steps to Increase Awareness:

- Reach out to people who attended the listening sessions and others we’ve met with as well as social service organizations to promote the website, NewAmericans.Ohio.gov. Update them as new information and best practices are added to the site.
- Reach out to new Ohioans at their point of arrival, which may be different for each person. Get information to them about available resources as they visit libraries, schools, universities, consulates, airports, social service agencies, government offices, business development centers and other places that come into contact with immigrants.
- Keep the website current and easy to understand, while ensuring that it includes all the materials produced for new Americans and provided in our presentations and community connections.
- Meet with employers and resettlement groups to facilitate workplace connections and increase awareness.

Workforce

Ohio witnessed the most improved business climate in the nation, creating more than 560,000 new private-sector jobs since the start of 2011 and bringing unemployment rates down to pre-recession levels. Recruiting employers to Ohio and encouraging growth of existing businesses has gone hand in hand with helping job-creating businesses find a stable, ready workforce to meet the demands of 21st century business and industry.

Competition for Workforce

Ohio is not alone in working to build a skilled and qualified workforce. Executives consistently list a qualified workforce as one of the top five attributes of attractive destinations to build and grow their companies. And Ohio is not alone in recognizing the high value of immigrants to achieve that workforce. The National Skills Coalition recognizes Ohio along with a half-dozen other states and more than 90 communities that have instituted immigrant initiatives to welcome and incorporate immigrant residents.

Immigrants Want to Work

Work provides the income for basic needs: food, clothing, housing. It provides security, and when a person has a suitable job, they have the confidence and the connection to contribute to their community. A job is the start of everything. Immigrants leave the comfort of everything they have known to go to a foreign place, motivated by the opportunity to create a better life, get a better education for their children and make a better future. It all starts with a job.

At listening sessions around the state, new Ohioans spoke about their commitment to do what it takes to advance in this country, for themselves and their children. The common denominators: They seek English proficiency and a job.

Ohio is committed to develop the workforce that business and industry need. Since 2010, the state has identified Ohio's most in-demand jobs by surveying the business community to understand the skills and positions they need and the jobs that are projected to grow. This information is available online at *OhioMeansJobs.com* so people planning job or career growth can make an informed decision.

OhioMeansJobs.com

Whether an immigrant is looking for a job or a better job, the first stop should be Ohio's Online Career Center. The *OhioMeansJobs.com* website provides a "front door" for workers looking for a job and companies looking for workers. Through the site, Ohioans can access more than 100,000 jobs on any given day, match with their skills and apply. And it's all online. The website is powered by *Monster.com*, the global online employment solution that has been a leading "job board" for more than 20 years. And now it has come to work for Ohio. Potential employees can build a resume through the site, provide information and credentials for existing skills and get helpful tips for getting the right job. The site translates into 103 languages.

"I made myself a waitress for five years because I knew I needed customer service skills. I put myself in the situation to learn the skill."

– A woman at the Columbus listening session

The results of identifying the jobs in the highest demand by employers also are used to prioritize funding for workforce and education programs. The state of Ohio has developed robust education from primary and secondary education through vocational training, higher education and training to enhance skills to keep existing employees up-to-date.

Immigrants to the United States are 9.2 percent more likely to hold an advanced degree than native-born Americans, according to New American Economy at newamericaneconomy.org/locations/ohio. Immigrants also are more likely to have less than a high school education. Uniquely, this provides opportunities for immigrants to fill critical shortages at both ends of the skill spectrum.

First, on the less-skilled end of the spectrum, an immigrant or refugee is more likely to make less than \$25,000, according to census data, thus affecting the poverty figures for newcomers. A series of studies show most immigrants are hard-working, family-oriented and want to grow their skills. Since 2012, Ohio has created more paths to skills attainment than ever before, and Ohio continues to work to strengthen educational opportunities for a stronger workforce.

Completing High School Credentials

Thanks to new reforms, more Ohioans will have the opportunity to earn high school equivalency certification. Previously, Ohio provided only one testing company's computer-based platform for adults looking to receive their equivalency certificate. This posed a challenge for those seeking an alternative format, such as a written exam.

The newest immigrants worry their accent and limited proficiency in English stands in the way of understanding, effective communication, and ultimately whether they will get a job. At the outreach events, we heard from some of the newest Ohioans that they prefer to be in contact through mail, email or text, rather than speaking or talking on the phone. Whether a lack of proficiency or a lack of confidence, they think it hinders both their understanding and acceptance by the listener.

To help more adults earn high school equivalency, Ohio made additional testing options available and lowered costs, including offering a voucher for first-time test-takers to further reduce costs. In addition, to provide employers a greater level of confidence in the value of high school equivalency exams,

Ohio awards a standard state-recognized high school equivalency certificate issued by the Ohio Department of Education to those who pass the test.

Ohio has made other high school equivalency exams (HSE), besides the General Educational Development (GED) available, including the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) and Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC). Competition among testing vendors drove down costs for test-takers. It also allows test-takers the option to take the test on paper, because the GED is exclusively online.

Skills-Based Competency and Certification

Adult Ohioans 22 years and older now have the option to earn a high school diploma from their local high school along with industry credentials. Instead of measuring academic achievement through clock time or credits, adults can demonstrate competency in or mastery of a skill and receive education credit. Working with a counselor at one of 39 high school or vocational schools, adults can design a personalized path to a diploma, with certification aligned with one of Ohio's in-demand jobs. By mid-year 2018, more than 2,600 adults have taken advantage of one of these options.

OhioMeansJobs Centers

OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) Centers are located in each of Ohio's 88 counties. OMJ Centers provide a variety of employment and training services to businesses and individuals. There is no fee for service for face-to-face career counseling and exploration, skill and interest assessments, job coaching, resume-writing workshops, mock interview workshops and more. The centers also help immigrants find English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes and assist with access to high school equivalency and basic citizenship classes. OhioMeansJobs Centers can be located by following this link: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/owd/WIOA/map.stm>.

Local employers with job opportunities connect with their OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) Centers to find skilled employees or to arrange for current or potential employees to receive training for in-demand jobs. OMJ Centers in each county also have relationships with the refugee resettlement and ethnic social service organizations in their areas. Together, they can determine the needs of the employers and the employees to make the connection on hiring. Training providers can train immigrants and low-income and unemployed people on the necessary skills.

A Path to Middle-Skills Jobs

Middle-skills jobs, those requiring more than a high school diploma but not a four-year degree, are the largest segment of the U.S. economy, according to the National Skills Coalition. Ohio provides a variety of paths to achieve training and certification of skills to qualify for these positions.

Growing the capabilities of low-skilled immigrant workers is good for the entire workforce. A recent study by The American Economic Association, “Task Specialization, Immigration, and Wages,” demonstrates that immigrant employment in lower-skilled jobs is beneficial for native-born workers who advance from unskilled jobs into more skilled work.

Apprenticeships

One job opportunity is for apprenticeships that allow people to earn while they learn. Several skilled trades have internship programs that train people for jobs in the highest demand. Apprenticeships can be found at *OhioMeansJobs.com* or by going directly to *apprentice.ohio.gov*. More internship opportunities also can be found on the site. On average, apprentices who complete their program earn \$60,000 per year upon graduation.



The American Library was an exhibit at the Cleveland Public Library consisting of about 6,000 books wrapped in colorful African wax cloth by artist Yinka Shonibare, who was born in London and grew up in the United Kingdom and Nigeria. The names of first- or second-generation immigrants are stamped on the spine in recognition of their contributions to American society.

Libraries

Another option, now available to all Ohioans and helpful to immigrants seeking education and employment, is leveraging the strength of Ohio’s public library system. Ohio’s public libraries are “continuous learning centers” and provide adults with access to thousands of free online training programs to gain additional skills. Each of Ohio’s 88 counties has a formal plan for how the public libraries will work together with the local OhioMeansJobs Center. Statewide, any Ohioan with a library card has free access to online courses from software development to web development to business courses and more through *Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning*. *Lynda.com* provides hundreds of courses taught by expert teachers in software development, design, business, web development and photography. Libraries also offer resume and interview workshops, English for Speakers of Other Languages courses, high school equivalency preparation and more.

Improving Access to Child Care

Access to affordable, quality child care can be one of the biggest employment barriers for low-income parents. Immigrants who lose subsidized child care, once their family's income grows above 200 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately \$3,460 a month for a family of three), was one of the most detrimental benefit "cliffs" the working poor encounter as their economic situations improve. Ohio allocated additional funds to soften the impact of these types of "cliffs" and to remove copays for families with incomes at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Families now have their child care subsidies phased out gradually until their income reaches 300 percent of the federal poverty level, or approximately \$5,190 a month for a family of three.

Step Up to Quality is a rating and improvement system for child care centers. The five-tiered program was implemented in 2013 and built on previous work to incorporate higher-quality early childhood education in day care settings. In Cleveland, we met immigrant husband and wife business owners who were able to expand the number of day care centers they operate by participating in Step Up to Quality. They praised the program, saying that by receiving high ratings for quality early childhood education, they were able to attract more customers. In addition, for customers who received subsidized day care, the subsidy was greater as a result of the increases in quality rating. The couple also told us that child care providers are looking for good employees, which can be another opportunity for immigrants.

Child care provides a career opportunity for immigrants. During the listening sessions, we heard that for women in ethnic communities, child care is a way to be at home with their own children and supplement the family income by caring for other children. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) licenses child care centers or home-based child care. Some web-based, self-paced training for child care workers is available online for free at jfs.ohio.gov.



A new American talks about his journey to the United States at the Akron listening session.

Immigrants in Ohio Are Better Educated

Forty-two percent of foreign-born Ohioans have a bachelor's degree and 44 percent work in the professional sector, according to "Our Pathway to a Brighter Future: Ohio's New Americans," a report for Philanthropy Ohio conducted by the Center for Population Dynamics at Cleveland State University. In comparison, 26.7 percent of native-born Ohioans have a four-year degree or higher.

Highly educated immigrants fill a demand in the state for skilled workers the U.S. does not produce domestically, and they keep Ohio's population steady, says Richey Piiparinen, director of the Center for Population Dynamics at Cleveland State.

"The largest concentration of occupations that immigrants are employed in are education and health care," Piiparinen says. "They teach our children and they take care of us, and that's a big deal because there's going to be a huge shortage of health care workers in places like Ohio that are aging."

The top 10 occupations relying most heavily on foreign-born workers in Ohio are high-skilled fields, with immigrants making up 31.2 percent of workers in software development for applications and systems software, as well as 28.5 percent of the state's physicians and surgeons.



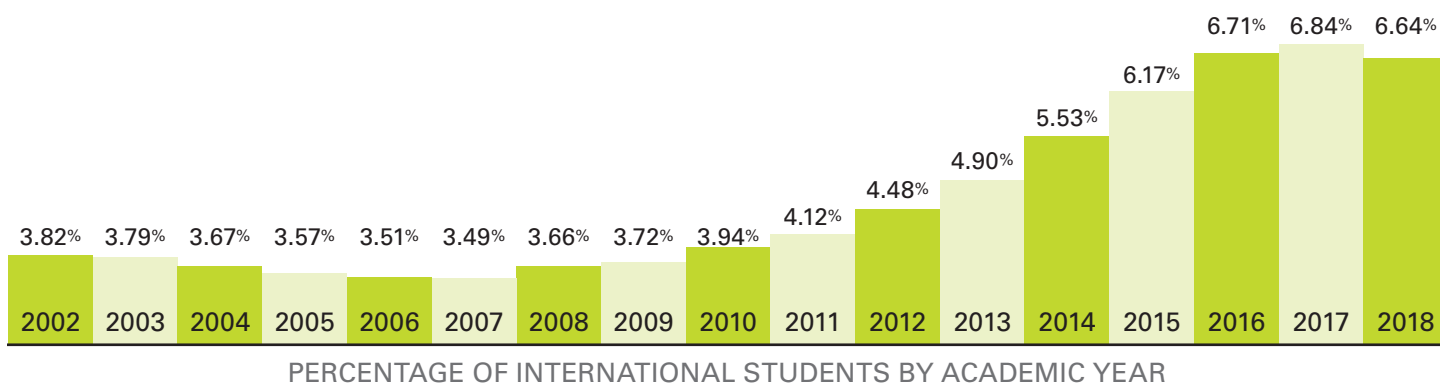
Ohio works to attract international students to its universities through Ohio G.R.E.A.T. (Global Reach to Engage Academic Talent).

Keeping Ohio's International Students in Ohio After Graduation

Governor Kasich championed legislation to better position the state to attract international students seeking a degree in the state and encouraging those students to remain in Ohio after graduation. These are international students paying a premium for a quality Ohio education, but in most cases, they return to their country of origin with the knowledge and experience they gained here.

Ohio is the first state to approach and codify in law the opportunity to bolster the state's global economic competitiveness by educating international postsecondary students. Ohio G.R.E.A.T. (Global Reach to Engage Academic Talent) is an initiative of the Ohio Department of Higher Education with three main policy objectives:

- Promote Ohio as a postsecondary destination globally.
- Encourage international postsecondary students to remain in the state beyond their study.
- Enhance global economic competitiveness for native Ohio students.



During the 2018 school year, Ohio's 13 public universities had 23,749 international students on temporary visas enrolled. This number grew steadily following the recession until a slight dip this last year, attributed to federal immigration policy changes rather than any change in state policy.

Business Owners Value Immigrants in the Workplace

Since the inception of the Office of Opportunities for New Americans, in less than six months, several employers have reached out to our office to ask us to connect them with immigrants to fill their workforce needs. Staff is working with local OhioMeansJobs offices and refugee resettlement groups to connect employers with potential employees. We will continue to explore new ways to connect workers and businesses.

The Office is also gathering best practices for employers that have a larger percentage of immigrant employees to provide them with ideas to assist these employees in assimilating with the local culture and identifying local needs.

Hiring immigrants can result in major benefits for employers. An October 2018 article in the Harvard Business Review states that immigrants bring a diverse and global perspective to their work, giving a boost to companies looking to expand into international markets.

We learned at our listening sessions that an employer's efforts to ease immigrants' integration into the workforce made a big difference in retaining employees. Those that helped immigrants who speak little English and made some accommodations for different ethnic and religious backgrounds tended to keep immigrant employees longer. Immigrants told us about companies that post explanations of terms commonly used in their workplaces. The simple act made the immigrants more comfortable and satisfied in their work. Once immigrants find a welcoming workplace, they spread the word, adding more potential employees to the mix.

"I found him (a business owner) through the internet, and I went there since I have experience in plastic factories. My father owns a plastic factory overseas. Then I got hired in 2015 as a foreman. Then I suggested to a local organization that they should send the immigrants to Nasco Human Resources if they want to work. The owner was very happy to hire a lot of immigrants since they are hard-working new Americans, and he is willing to hire more."

– George Charchar



Immigrants and representatives of community groups attend a listening session at the Dayton Metro Library.

Refugees

Migrants choose to move mainly to improve their lives in finding work, seeking a better education or reuniting with family, among the most popular reasons. Each country has its own laws for migrants.

A subset of migrants who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, armed conflict, persecution or natural disaster is an asylum seeker or a refugee. An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for refugee status but whose application has not yet been evaluated. Once designated a refugee, they are protected by international law.

Refugees are resettled in the United States by the U.S. Department of State. The State Department provides funds to local resettlement organizations to assist with reception and placement, including housing, health screenings, school and cultural orientation for the first 90 days a refugee is in the country.



In Medina County, a company needed workers to pack its compostable drinking straws

into cartons for shipping. The company had difficulty finding good, reliable workers and was willing to train new employees. They reached out to the Office of Opportunities for New Americans. We connected the company president with the International Institute of Akron, and the firm has hired five people so far through Asian Services in Action in Akron. A supervisor says the new employees are working out well, and he's hoping more immigrants will apply through word of mouth. "I have a feeling this is going to work out great," he told us.

After that, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), administering federal Health and Human Services funding, works to find the refugee employment as quickly as



Participants prepare for a listening session in Toledo.

possible. This may include training for language proficiency, job training or matching existing skills with available jobs.

The funding is federal and comes to the state to be administered by ODJFS, which selects established, regional resettlement organizations to provide services in the local communities. These regional agencies are:

- International Institute of Akron
- Catholic Charities of Cleveland
- US Together in Toledo
- Franklin County Job and Family Services
- Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley
- Catholic Charities of Southwest Ohio

Many of the regional refugee resettlement agencies work with other social service agencies in the region to provide services.

The amount of funding is based on refugee arrivals in Ohio, as resettled by the State Department, in previous years. No funding is available for secondary migration. Secondary migration is when a refugee is resettled in another state but chooses to come to Ohio on their own.

During our listening sessions, we heard from secondary migrants who chose Ohio over the state where they had originally resettled. They had heard from Ohioans from their shared country of origin that Ohio is welcoming, there are jobs available, housing is available and affordable compared to other states, and there are good schools for their children. Ohio is receiving great word-of-mouth promotion. And that's the most trustworthy source, someone you know. Knowing someone who is already here speeds the process of integration into the community.

Next Steps to Advance Immigrant Workforce Development

The work ahead of the Office of Opportunities for New Americans, as it relates to workforce development, should focus on:

- Market in-demand jobs in immigrant communities so as they seek employment, they can plan for training in fields where the jobs are available.
- Make information available about opportunities for training, apprenticeships and employment in construction and the skilled trades.
- Increase awareness of the pathways to education, training and employment so that immigrants can move quickly into employment and advance in their employment as their skills grow.
- Gather and share examples of best practices for ensuring immigrant-friendly workplaces.
- Serve as a conduit between businesses and the community to ensure that development of infrastructure for families, such as housing and transportation, is in place to serve the workers for the growing businesses.
- Work with certification and licensing boards, educational institutions and employers to assist immigrants with advanced skills and degrees to move quickly into their field. Encourage options for earning while working in the field, rather than starting over.



Ryan Burgess, director of the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, talks about immigrant workforce issues at the 2018 Refugee Integration Conference in Columbus.

Entrepreneurship

Small business is the backbone of the Ohio economy, accounting for 98 percent of all private-sector jobs. Immigrants, by their nature, tend to be industrious. Leaving their country of birth, their home and family to move to another country requires the willingness to take huge risks to achieve great rewards.

A report by New American Economy shows there are more than 30,000 immigrant entrepreneurs in Ohio, and immigrant-owned firms employ more than 122,000 people. Business income of immigrant-owned firms totals \$726.7 million, and 29.2 percent of Fortune 500 companies in Ohio were founded by immigrants or their children.

It's a national trend. Immigrants account for 27.5 percent of U.S. entrepreneurs, but they are 13 percent of the overall population. The rate of new business startups by immigrants grew by 50 percent between 1996 and 2011.

New American Economy also reports on the important business sectors in which immigrants are entrepreneurs. They account for 25 percent of startups in seven of the eight sectors that the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects to be the fastest-growing over the next decade:

- Health care and social assistance: 28.7 percent share
- Professional business services: 25.4 percent share
- Construction: 31.8 percent share
- Retail trade: 29.1 percent share
- Leisure and hospitality: 23.9 percent share
- Educational services: 28.7 percent share
- Transportation and utilities: 29.4 percent share



Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati is No. 36 on the Fortune 500 list today. The company

was founded by two immigrants: British American William Procter, a candle-maker, and Irish-American James Gamble, a soap-making apprentice. They joined forces in merchant trade in Cincinnati in 1837. By pooling their skills and resources, they built a mega company.

It's a process that has occurred throughout the history of immigrants making Ohio their home. Ohio History Connection articles on early immigrant groups note that new Ohioans often found jobs in factories or as day laborers, or they became farmers. Many successful immigrants opened businesses or restaurants that featured products or cuisine from their native countries. This was especially true for the immigrant groups who tended to create their own communities and neighborhoods, such as the Germans, Italians and Poles. The same process happened beginning in the 1960s when Latinos and Asians began arriving in the U.S. in larger numbers. And it's still happening in Ohio today. Some examples are:

- An Indian immigrant in Mason who started a traditional dance studio and is looking for a larger space to accommodate the growth of her business.
- A Mexican immigrant who graduated from Harvard and settled in Cincinnati where her husband grew up. After becoming a U.S. citizen, she and her husband developed a computer simulation program that has helped thousands of U.S. high school students get a better understanding of personal finance.
- The Somali community in Columbus where community members pool their resources to help buy semitractor-trailers, car dealerships and restaurants for their fellow Somalis. Those Somalis then return the favor by helping others do the same.



Anupama Rao Mirle moved from her native India to the Cincinnati area with her husband, both of them going to work for Procter & Gamble. She is a chemist with master's degrees in chemistry and business administration. Her love of traditional Indian dance and culture led her to leave her P&G job and found the NrityArpana School of Performing Arts in 2004 in Mason, where she serves as executive director. Mirle has since added yoga to the classes she teaches, and the school has outgrown its current studio. She now is searching for a larger space, perhaps creating a multicultural center. She wants to remain in the Mason area, however, because many Indian immigrants live there.

Anupama Rao Mirle (right) tells Padmini Roy-Dixon about her performing arts studio in Mason.

Immigrants today start businesses the way entrepreneurs always have, by pooling money from family and friends and paying that generosity forward to the next group of entrepreneurs.

Some immigrants become entrepreneurs out of necessity. During our listening session in Akron, we heard from a man from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He arrived in the U.S. with an advanced degree in business administration, but he couldn't find work commensurate with his education. Undeterred, he established his own carpet-cleaning business even though he had never cleaned carpets before and turned it into a success story.



Palmira Buten is driven to succeed. She grew up on the Mexico side of the U.S. border and began attending a private school in the U.S. at the age of 3, crossing the border every day for school. She graduated from Harvard and later earned an MBA from Indiana University. She held accounting jobs in Mexico and Michigan and moved to Cincinnati, where her husband grew up. She said Cincinnati is an open and welcoming community. As she and her husband, who also holds an MBA, were buying a house, they realized that many people learn about personal finance through trial and error. That led them to found their own company and develop an online personal finance simulation that teaches high school students and others how to build a budget and keep track of their finances. They patented their product, and it's been used by thousands of students.

Palmira Buten launched her startup, Budget Challenge, in Cincinnati.

At the same session, a woman told her immigration journey: She grew up in Mexico and came to United States to go to college on a golf scholarship. She held several jobs after earning her bachelor's and master's degrees, including as an assistant golf coach at the University of Akron. Now, she is working on her doctorate and is a research associate for an educational research institute. Through all that, she and her American wife also became entrepreneurs, making Not Yo' Daddy's Mexican Hot Sauce, which is available at various businesses in the Akron area.

Clearly, immigrants can fuel Ohio's economy, and we must nurture these risk-takers to help maintain Ohio's economic momentum.

The state offers several programs to assist budding startups and those looking to grow and expand. For instance, business assistance centers such as the Ohio Small Business Development Centers, Minority Business Assistance Centers, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Export Assistance Network, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers and the Entrepreneurial Services Provider Program offer no-cost or inexpensive services to all Ohioans. What is required is increased awareness of services available to immigrant entrepreneurs, as well as all Ohioans. Helping immigrants start businesses and grow ensures a strong future for Ohio's economy.

Several programs can help minority and socially disadvantaged businesses get started and grow. They are administered by the Minority Business Development Division of the Development Services Agency. Among them:

Minority Business Bonding Program

This provides bid, performance and payment surety bonds to state-certified minority-owned businesses that are unable to obtain bonding through surety companies. There is a 2 percent fee for bonds that are issued. Bonding availability, which is provided for one year, can be renewed annually.

Minority Business Direct Loan Program

This provides low-, fixed-interest-rate loans directly to certified minority-owned businesses, in partnership with a lender. This program allows minority-owned businesses to purchase or improve fixed assets at lower rates, resulting in creating new jobs for Ohioans.

Collateral Enhancement Program

This is a \$35 million program that provides banks with cash collateral deposits to use as additional collateral for loans made to eligible small businesses. The Development Services Agency will open an interest-bearing account with a lender and deposit up to 50 percent of the loan amount when there is a collateral value shortfall.

The Somali community in Columbus and Ohio has a history of entrepreneurship. Since the struggles in Somalia in the early 1990s, thousands of Somalis have moved to Columbus, giving the city the second-largest concentration of Somalis in the United States. Somalis own and operate dozens of businesses in Columbus. There are more than 10 malls where multiple businesses provide their goods and services within a large space. Businesses include clothing stores that sell traditional garments, barbers, cafés, tax services, groceries and restaurants. There also are more than 40 grocery stores carrying halal foods, and more than 30 restaurants serving native cuisine to a diverse customer base. Somalis also own medical transport companies, home health care businesses, urgent care offices, dental care offices and day cares. And the Somali community has a big imprint in the trucking industry, claiming 3,000 owners, operators and drivers. These businesses were built without using traditional bank loans. Instead, the community would pool money to buy a truck for one of their countrymen, for instance. Profits from operating the truck were used to buy a truck for another person and so on. Now, Somalis own hundreds of trucks in central Ohio and transport goods throughout the United States.



Hassan Omar (left), president of the Somali Community Association of Ohio, leads a tour of a Somali mall in Columbus.

Ohio Capital Access Program

This supports small business lending by establishing a loan guarantee reserve pool at a lending institution that participates in the program. This program can provide financing to for-profit and nonprofit businesses that may be experiencing some difficulty obtaining business loans using conventional underwriting standards.

In addition, Ohio law requires state government to be inclusive when it spends taxpayer dollars. The Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program establishes a 15 percent set-aside for certified minority-owned businesses to compete for contracts with state agencies, boards and commissions. Owners of eligible companies must be Ohio residents, U.S. citizens and either African-American, Asian, Hispanic or Native American. Many immigrants meet those requirements.

An article at *Forbes.com* in August 2018 featured Mercadito Raices, a training effort started by the Small Business Development Center at Columbus State Community College. It starts with five months of training for Latinos interested in becoming food vendors and culminates in the entrepreneurs operating booths at Festival Latino in downtown Columbus. One of the vendors featured in the story is Nadia de Jesus, owner of DNadia's Events & Catering and who has participated in the training program for two years. Her involvement in the 2017 program led to more business in the ensuing year. "I haven't stopped," the native of the Dominican Republic said in the article. "I've been busy catering events all year." In addition, her empanadas are now available in two local grocery stores.

Next Steps in Entrepreneurship

- We will focus on immigrant success stories, telling those stories in both general-interest media and ethnic media so immigrants who hear and read the stories are picturing people like them.
- The Development Services Agency needs to encourage its small business counselors to be visiting the ethnic neighborhoods in their regions to meet with people and increase awareness of state services.
- The Office needs to partner with the Ohio Secretary of State's Office to provide information about small business services when people initially register their businesses with the state.



Ohio Development Services Director David Goodman (right) meets with Tariq Mohamed, director of Refugee Social Services for Jewish Family Services in Columbus.

Language

"English is the base so you can go for more," a woman told us at the Youngstown listening session. She was able to access English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes through the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

Higher Education offers ESOL classes at 57 sites around the state. In addition, churches, colleges, nonprofit organizations and others help immigrants learn English. Some employers sponsor ESOL classes at their workplaces. We even heard a story from a Youngstown woman who feels so strongly about teaching English that she holds classes for free in her home in the evening to accommodate professional immigrants who work during the day, including a microbiologist, an engineer, a speech therapist and more.

The Office is working to make sure immigrants are aware of these options. We have worked with the Department of Higher Education to improve a map that shows where ESOL classes are held throughout the state. Now, the map shows not only the locations but also the days and times the classes are held. The map is available on the New Americans website – *NewAmericans.Ohio.gov* as well as on Higher Education's site. In addition, Higher Education has launched a toll-free telephone number people can call to get specific information about these ESOL classes.



Students participate in an English for Speakers of Other Languages class at Sinclair Community College in Dayton.

During the listening sessions, some immigrants said they were frustrated with many ESOL courses that are one-size-fits-all, requiring up to two years of classroom work to complete. Not all immigrants fit into that approach. Some arrive in Ohio with limited English proficiency, and there are others who had extensive education in their native countries and are faster learners. For people who support a family, for fast learners, the priority needs to be securing employment, and they can't wait two years.

At the International Institute of Akron, immigrants are placed in classes according to their level of proficiency. The staff at Higher Education is responding by developing a curriculum that will speed the learning environment for qualified immigrants, cutting the required classroom time. This new curriculum is expected to be available in spring 2019.



In Dayton, Ana Rivera told us she emigrated from Colombia and settled in Connecticut. She lived in an area where her neighbors spoke Spanish, and she worked in a factory where her co-workers spoke Spanish. She lived in the United States, but she thought she wasn't becoming an American. After 12 years, she relocated to Ohio and learned to speak English. She now owns her own restaurant, La Colombiana Restaurante, and is stepping outside of her Spanish-speaking community. "Just being in this country is a blessing," she told us. "I'm very thankful for that."



New citizens wave American flags and sign "God Bless the U.S.A." before their naturalization ceremony in U.S. District Court.

Also, workplace programs that teach new employees about language and terms specific to that profession or business are available in some areas. Cleveland Clinic has implemented such efforts to help acclimate new staff, and warehouse businesses also include training on language specific to their worksites.

Next Steps in Language

- Gathering information about agencies and companies that offer on-the-job English classes and job-skills training. Use the information to identify best practices that can be disseminated to other companies and industry groups around the state.
- Raise awareness of ESOL classes through the New Americans website and contacts with social service agencies.
- Collaborating with the Department of Higher Education to build ESOL curriculum that fits different skill levels.
- Work with businesses to develop a list of best practices with examples of workplace language-learning programs that have been developed.

Transportation

Transportation is critical to landing a job and staying in a job. The Ohio Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), works to assist immigrants to get a driver's license in the Buckeye State. The BMV's driver's license knowledge test is available in seven languages, and applicants can bring an interpreter with them for that portion of the testing. The knowledge test for a commercial driver's license is now available in English and Spanish, and BMV is working to make it available in five others. The languages for Class D and Motorcycle/Moped/Scooter knowledge tests are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Japanese, Russian, Somali and Spanish.

BMV makes it easier for new Ohioans from some countries to get on the road faster. Ohio has reciprocity agreements with four countries that allow immigrants with driver's licenses from those countries to skip knowledge and skills tests, and those countries do the same for Ohio residents who move there. The state and the countries reach these agreements after studying each others' tests to make sure they meet their own requirements. The countries are France, Germany, Japan and Taiwan. Applicants must have their vision tested and must present documents that they are in the U.S. legally.

In addition, visitors from a list of nearly 170 countries can legally drive in Ohio using their valid domestic driver's license for a period of one year. This privilege is a result of the United Nations Convention on Road Traffic. If these foreign motorists want to obtain an Ohio license, they would have to meet all the required testing.

We also learned during our outreach efforts that consistent procedures previously weren't followed at BMV offices, and BMV officials already have conducted training to make sure standards are being met at each site.



Hassan Omar (right), president of the Somali Community Association of Ohio, talks about Somalis involved in the trucking business and the hundreds of Somali-owned trucks at a site in Columbus.

Next Steps in Transportation

- Work with the BMV to help ensure that standardized procedures and documents are required at each of the BMV offices.
- Collaborating with BMV to determine when the commercial driver's license knowledge test can be made available in more languages.
- Work with local public transportation authorities to encourage evaluation of bus routes to accommodate specific neighborhoods, if warranted.
- As Ohio develops driverless vehicles and incorporates them into communities to provide routes to workplaces, the Office has reached out to Smart Columbus and will monitor and engage the Ohio Department of Transportation, as well.
- Work with employers and immigrant support organizations to identify best practices that can be replicated in other parts of the state with other employers.

Consumer Protection

Immigrants and the agencies that help them told us that the U.S. financial system can be confusing to new arrivals and financial literacy is an important educational area. To that end, we are working with the Department of Commerce and navigators from other agencies to boost efforts related to improving financial literacy among new Americans. This working group is designing a program to teach basic financial literacy, including how to build credit, open a bank account, secure capital and more. The training will be beneficial to new Americans and all Ohioans.

Credit can be a major stumbling block for immigrants and refugees. They often arrive with little documentation from their lives in their native countries. At the Dayton listening session, a doctor talked about emigrating from Kenya. He and his family immigrated to Ohio because they wanted better educational opportunities for their children. They found it difficult to purchase housing and cars, however, because they first had to build a credit history.

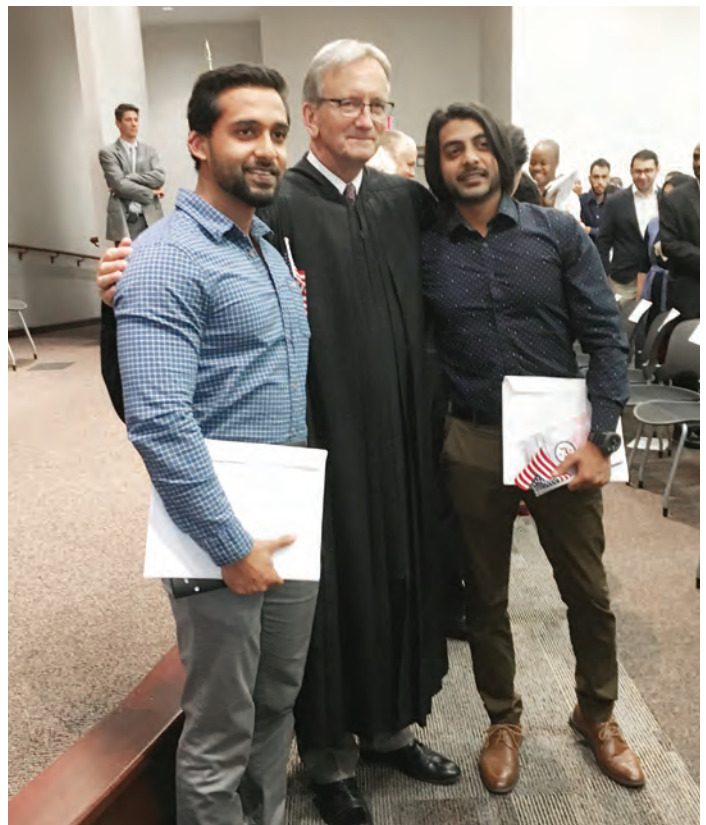
Unscrupulous individuals also can take advantage of new Americans who don't understand U.S. financial processes and institutions, and financial literacy training can help new Ohioans avoid scams.

Next Steps in Consumer Protection

- The Department of Commerce and other agencies will provide more consumer finance information on our website.
- Information will include how to build credit, the different types of banking institutions, how to open a bank account, how to secure capital and more.



A new Ohioan participates in the listening session in Youngstown.



Chief Judge Edmund A. Sargus Jr. of U.S. District Court, Southern District of Ohio, poses with two new citizens after a naturalization ceremony at the headquarters of the Ohio Division of State Fire Marshal in Reynoldsburg.

Summary

The Office already is making a difference with a variety of accomplishments and success stories:

- Connected a Cleveland business owner with business advisors at the Cleveland Procurement Technical Assistance Center to help him bid for government contracts. He says he received the assistance he needed to grow.
- Connected a Cincinnati entrepreneur with the technology incubator Cintrifuse so he can build out his tech startup idea.
- Also in Cincinnati, connected a business owner with the local Small Business Development Center, and she has started with the advising process.
- The Department of Higher Education is developing an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class program accommodating various levels of proficiency and plans to test the program starting in February in Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus.
- A toll-free information number has been added to the “Learn English” page at *NewAmericans.Ohio.gov* so that immigrants and others have a simple way of getting more information about ESOL classes.
- An ESOL map has been improved with the help of the Department of Higher Education and the Development Services Agency and work is continuing on further refinements.

The above list shows that while the Office has been listening and developing recommendations for the future, it also has been acting to help immigrants right now. Those efforts are continuing, with short- and longer-term actions underway. The Office will continue to reach out to individuals, groups and businesses to broaden our understanding of barriers facing immigrants, gather feedback on action plans and discover the best practices that will help all Ohioans. Much work has been done, but so much more can and will be done to keep Ohio moving forward.



A new Ohioan listens to the discussion at the Cincinnati listening session with the help of an interpreter.

- A woman from Syria who now lives in Toledo was having difficulty with a state tax issue, and her problem has been resolved with help from the Department of Taxation.
- Brochures about the Office of Opportunities for New Americans have been created and are being given to new citizens at naturalization ceremonies. Another information piece is now available and will be delivered to libraries, schools, social service agencies and other organizations to hand out to immigrants. Both pieces emphasize visiting the *NewAmericans.Ohio.gov* website to access information about available services.

Appendix I: Office of Opportunities for New Americans Progress Report

Language

Opportunities	Actions	Status	Owner	Support
<p>Language proficiency is the basis for workforce integration and career advancement. Immigrants arrive with different levels of education. Currently, basic courses for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are one-size-fits-all and take more than a year to complete. This is too long for people who need to work to support themselves and their families.</p> <p>Information also should be provided about which basic ESOL classes have fees and which are free, and which are offered for academic credit and which are not.</p>	Improving awareness of the location of ESOL classes and the associated costs through the Opportunities for New Americans website.	Complete	ODHE	DSA, OWT, ODJFS
	Improving access to the location of ESOL classes and the details of classes are offered through a map of all classes offered in the state. Launched a toll-free number people can call for specific information about ESOL classes.	Complete	ODHE	DSA
	Connecting service organizations that work closely with immigrants with the Department of Higher Education's (ODHE) ASPIRE program, which includes free ESOL classes.	In process	ODHE	DSA, OWT, ODJFS
	Building a curriculum for ESOL classes to fit different skill levels. Those who are faster learners will be offered accelerated classes.	In process	ODHE	
	Working with employers to begin offering on-the-job ESOL and job skills training.	Investigating	ODHE	DSA, OWT, ODJFS
People with different language/cultural backgrounds need help navigating American systems.	Ensuring the New American website is a one-stop shop of available resources and relevant information.	In process	DSA	All affiliated agencies
	Working with state agencies to ensure their websites are translation-friendly.	In process	DSA	All affiliated agencies
Job seekers and employers need to be aware of and have easy access to existing services and programs.	Updating the New Americans website continually so that it is easy to understand and has a robust list of available resources.	In process	DSA	All affiliated agencies
Job seekers and employers need to be aware of and have easy access to existing services and programs.	Disseminating information to resettlement agencies, libraries, consulates, airports, Small Business Development Centers and associates, Minority Business Assistance Centers, and other major points of contact. A brochure has been produced to give to new citizens at naturalization ceremonies. The focus of this effort is to drive people to the New Americans website.	In process	DSA	All affiliated agencies
	Making information available through social media on a continual basis.	Ongoing	DSA	All affiliated agencies

Employers/Workforce

Opportunities	Actions	Status	Owner	Support
Employers need workers and there are people who want to work.	Building relationships with employers and collaborating with Chambers, human resources organizations and industry associations to encourage best practices in finding and hiring qualified immigrant workers.	In process	DSA, OWT	ODJFS
	Connecting employers with immigrant community leaders to find qualified workers.	In process	DSA, OWT	
	Identifying skills that employers are seeking, then match immigrants who have those skills with the jobs that require them.	In process	DSA, OWT	ODJFS
Immigrant-friendly workplaces will help Ohio businesses grow.	Connecting with HR professionals and HR professional organizations (such as the Society for Human Resource Management) to increase awareness.	In process	DSA	OWT
	Identifying best practices for language and cultural sensitivity.	In process	DSA	OWT
Transportation options will get workers to where the jobs are.	Working to develop a pilot partnership with Smart Columbus.	In process	DSA	
	Finding one or more pilot programs to use as an example for businesses and communities across the state.	In process	DSA	
Workers should be able to find housing where the jobs are.	Watching the Akron immigrant housing pilot, which is funded by the Ohio Housing Finance Authority, to see if it can be replicated in other areas of the state.	In process	DSA	OWT, OHFA
Immigrants with advanced degrees can obtain licensing without having to start their education over again.	Connecting with boards (medical, nursing, etc.), licensing associations, skilled trade organizations, etc., to establish steps to license these individuals.	In process	DSA, Commerce	OWT
Construction businesses and the skilled trades need workers. We can provide paths for immigrants to get those jobs.	We will direct employers and workers to the New Americans website where we will have information about related services.	Complete	ODJFS, DSA	OWT

Education and Training

Opportunities	Actions	Status	Owner	Support
Foreign degrees and certifications can be converted into U.S. equivalent.	Survey of college transcript translation requirements has been completed. We will update the New Americans website to inform immigrants of required qualifications.	In process	ODHE	DSA
	Encouraging development of proficiency exams for advanced degrees.	In process	ODHE	
Individuals seeking their high school equivalency need help accessing services.	Updating the New Americans website with links to adult diploma programs, whether the individual is starting fresh or trying to complete a diploma.	Complete	DSA	ODE

Public Safety/Consumer Protection

Opportunities	Actions	Status	Owner	Support
Transportation is critical to maintaining a job.	Working to standardize the documents and procedures required at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles for immigrants to obtain a driver's license.	Complete	DPS	DSA
Immigrants need tools to learn U.S. financial systems to start and run businesses without being taken advantage of.	Working to provide financial education on how to build credit, open a bank account, secure capital, etc. There is existing model curriculum.	In process	Department of Commerce	DSA, ODE, ODHE, ODJFS, TAX
	Raising awareness of a financial literacy grant program offered by the Division of Financial Institutions in the Department of Commerce. Disseminating best practices learned through the program.	In process	Department of Commerce	DSA, ODE, ODHE, ODJFS, TAX

Entrepreneurship

Opportunities	Actions	Status	Owner	Support
Immigrants need to be aware of the services offered by the state to help business development.	Targeting outreach to immigrant communities through the Small Business Development Centers, the Minority Business Assistance Centers and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership.	Ongoing	DSA	
	Communicating the importance of outreach to our business assistance partners at statewide conferences. SBDCs and MBACs have statewide meetings in the next two months.	Complete	DSA	

Definition of Acronyms

DSA	Development Services Agency
DPS	Department of Public Safety
MBAC	Minority Business Assistance Center
MEP	Manufacturing Extension Partnership
ODE	Ohio Department of Education
ODHE	Ohio Department of Higher Education
ODJFS	Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services
OHFA	Ohio Housing Finance Agency
OWT	Office of Workforce Transformation
SBDC	Small Business Development Center
TAX	Ohio Department of Taxation