



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2019

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AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Created in 2016, the Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force is a consortium of stakeholders that seek to leverage 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 three of the Task Force, from July 2018 through June 2019.

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/wdplan/wdstateplan.pdf>.

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. Third-year membership included representation from the following local, state, and national organizations:

- Anne Arundel Community College
- 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
- Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center
- 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
- Employ Prince George’s?
- Prince George’s County Department of Social Services
- Telamon Salisbury American Job Center
- 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. Several times throughout the year, site tours of organizations throughout the state occur instead of the regular monthly meeting.

In addition to monthly meetings, workgroups consisting of small groups of members tackle specific issues. 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 THREE IN REVIEW

OVERVIEW

In year three of the Task Force, the group decided to continue to use the same goals and action items from year two, as there were a number of items still left to accomplish. The group continued to meet monthly, with 10 meetings being held in the year. Four of the regularly scheduled monthly meetings were site tours. Site tours took place at the Plumbers & Gasfitters Local 5 Training Center, a Registered Apprenticeship sponsor; the Eastpoint Career Center, an American Job Center in Baltimore County; Prince George's Community College, an adult education local service provider; and the Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland, an effective EARN Maryland grantee. During the site tours, participants were given a tour of the facility and provided information about clients served, services offered, referral processes, and available resources.

The full organizational member list can be found on page 4 and 5.

GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS

In order to adhere to the above mission and in accordance with the opinions of Task Force members, the following four goals, originally created for year two, carried over into year three:

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 bold were previously completed in year two of the Task Force. Action items in red were started and/or completed during year three. Further information on 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>Task Force members went on a site tour of an American Job Center.</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>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>Workforce system staff in the Eastern Shore received training on best practices, cultural competency, and language access.</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>Barrier elimination defined through workgroup.</p> <p>Workgroup began reformatting the resource guide into a useable tool for immigrant job seekers.</p> <p>Engineering licensing and career pathway guide completed, disseminated to partners, and published to Labor's website.</p>

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Many of the accomplishments of the Task Force's third year were related to specific actions tied to the four goals. A further discussion of these accomplishments can be found below.

Communication and Information Sharing

One of the site tours was at the Eastpoint Career Center, an American Job Center in Baltimore County. During the site tour, Task Force members were given information about available offerings, WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocation Worker, and Youth programs, Title III Wagner Peyser services, along with referral services and processes. Through this site tour, members gained a deeper understanding of the resources available through Maryland's 30 American Job Centers.

Technical Assistance

Task Force members were able to offer several technical assistance opportunities. DWDAL staff presented twice at the Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) conference in Spring 2019. The presentations shared information about best practices in immigrant integration in Maryland, including the Task Force, and Maryland's experience receiving technical assistance from the WES SIIP.

In addition, DWDAL staff helped facilitate a cultural competency and language access training for one of Maryland's local workforce areas, the Upper Shore. The full-day training included three presenters. DWDAL staff presented about Maryland's efforts to integrate New Americans in the workforce system, a staff member from the State's interpretation vendor presented on best practices in working with interpreters, and the Executive Director of a local non-profit serving New Americans, the Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center, presented on cultural competency in community services.

Tangible Products to Remove Barriers to Employment

Task Force members worked on several action items related to this goal in year three. First, a Language and Definitions workgroup was created to define barrier elimination in the context of skilled immigrant jobseekers. The goal of this workgroup was to ensure the language used to describe the Task Force on the website, created several years back, still aligned with the mission, vision, and goals of the group. Task Force members reviewed the current language, made edits, and finalized the language. This finalized language was posted to the website and shared with all Task Force members.

In addition, the Task Force continued its work on a career pathways/professional licensing guide. The *Career Pathways in Engineering in Maryland: A Guide for Skilled Immigrant Professionals* was finalized and disseminated in year three. The work was informed by technical assistance provided through the WES Global Talent Bridge's SIIP. A workgroup convened to decide on the profession to focus the guide on, the elements to include in the guide, and to provide edits throughout the process. DWDAL staff also worked closely with the Maryland Board for Professional Engineers to ensure accuracy and relevancy of content. The guide was placed on the website as well as disseminated to partners.

A new workgroup was formed to reformat the existing Resource Guide into a useable tool for New American job seekers. The workgroup decided that the reformatted resource guide should be concise, including the address and a telephone number of organizations specific to skilled immigrants as well as

community colleges, American Job Centers, and refugee resettlement agencies. The workgroup reviewed several examples of similar documents from other states and began to create a Maryland-specific document. This workgroup took a hiatus given several staff changes, and continued into year four.

RELATED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In addition to the accomplishments directly related to the goals of the Task Force in its third year, members continued to recognize the importance of meeting regularly as a diverse group of stakeholders. Organizations continued to become better acquainted with the work of other organizational members, paving the way for increased client referrals to needed services and partnership.

DWDAL staff participated in the Office of New Americans network, led by WES Global Talent Bridge and New American Economy.

In addition, all Task Force members continued to be able to be involved in DWDAL policies, as they were informed of relevant DWDAL policy drafts and able to provide feedback during public comment periods.

LOOKING AHEAD TO YEAR FOUR

Moving into year four, the Task Force will continue work on the reformatting of the Resource Guide for immigrants. In addition, Maryland will continue its work with the Office of New Americans State Network and remain involved with the SIIP Alumni Group to stay informed with best practices in other states.