Today's Facilitator

Debra Means-West

Director, Network and Resource Development, WES

Today's Speakers

Hannah Roche

Program Director of Global Talent and Employment Services, Idaho Office for Refugees

Heather Webster

Employer Engagement Coordinator, Global Talent

Founded in 1974, WES is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1 — **DESCRIBE** national and state-level demographic and workforce data related to newcomers with high levels of international education

2 — **IDENTIFY** common individual and structural barriers to the economic inclusion and career advancement of newcomers with international education

3 — **APPLY** three practical strategies to support the career development of internationally educated newcomers

Overview of Newcomers in the U.S.

with High Levels of International Education

Leveraging Educated Immigrants
Primed to Meet U.S. Workforce Demands

28M
immigrant workers in U.S. labor force

32.7%
hold a bachelor's degree or higher
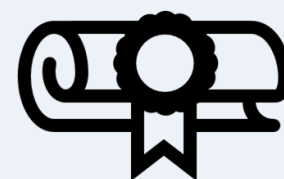
Source: American Immigration Council

Skill Underutilization

Skill underutilization refers to the inability to **fully utilize one's education and skills** in the labor market despite having high professional qualifications.

Unemployment and underemployment are forms of skill underutilization.

Who is Most Affected?

Individuals with post-secondary degrees or certifications and professional experience from other countries.

Individuals seeking to work in their profession or pursue further education to qualify for a career in another country.

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How many college-educated immigrants and refugees are affected by skill underutilization in the U.S.?
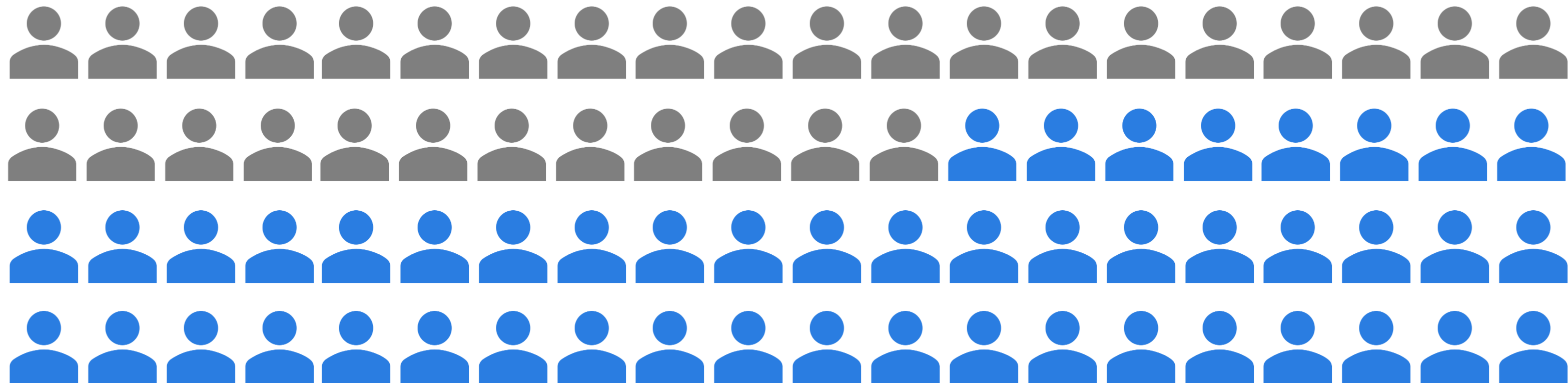
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2,000,000+

college-educated immigrants and refugees in the U.S. are unemployed or underemployed

= 25,000 people

60% hold credentials earned abroad

Accessing Local and State Data on Newcomers
to Inform Program Development and Resource Allocation to Support Newcomers

Key Data Sources
- <u>U.S. Census Bureau | American Community Survey (ACS): Provides data on demographics, language, education, and employment</u>

Department of Labor
- <u>Employment and Unemployment Data: Information on workforce participation and skill underutilization.</u>

Migration Policy Institute
- <u>Reports and Databases: Research on immigrant populations, educational attainment, and labor market outcomes.</u>

Key Data Points
- <u>English Proficiency and Educational Attainment: Statistics on languages and ESL needs, and levels of education among immigrants and refugees</u>
- <u>Skill Underutilization: Data on immigrants working below their skill level</u>

Recommendations
- <u>Utilize local government websites and community organizations for regional data</u>
- <u>Collaborate with local universities for tailored studies on newcomer populations</u>

Case Study: Sarah and Amir

Background

- Sarah J: case manager with 10+ years of experience, based in Austin, Texas

- Works on supporting the economic inclusion of refugees and other newcomers

- Works with **clients who have international degrees** and professional experience, but are **unsure how to use these in the U.S. job market**

Sarah's Current Approach

- During intake meetings, Sarah uncovers clients' qualifications and career ambitions, connects them with programs, and provides information on credential evaluation services

New Client

- Amir: 30-year-old civil engineer from Syria
- Bachelor's degree, seven years of experience
- Lives in Texas, speaks advanced English
- Eligible for ORR services, seeking a job in his field
- Needs assistance in navigating his barriers and gaining access to relevant programs and services

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How might Sarah use state data to understand Amir's needs as an internationally educated newcomer and create programs to help him settle and find a job?

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2

Common Barriers

to the Career Advancement of Newcomers Educated Abroad

Common Barriers to Economic Inclusion

and Career Advancement of Newcomers

WES

Individual

- Limited English **language** proficiency
- Lack of U.S. work **experience** or education
- Insufficient **social capital** and networks
- Limited access to training or wrap-around **supports**
- Inadequate career **guidance**
- Inadequate **recognition of credentials** and experience

Structural

- Insufficient, unaffordable, and misaligned **training and workforce programs**
- Systemic inequities such as **racism, xenophobia, and nativism**
- Limited **infrastructure** among employers to support immigrants and refugees
- Restrictive **licensing** policies

Case Study: Sarah and Amir, Continued

Recall Amir's Background

- 30-year-old civil engineer from Syria
- Bachelor's degree, seven years of experience
- Lives in Texas, speaks advanced English
- Eligible for ORR services, seeking a job in his field
- Needs assistance in navigating barriers and gaining access to relevant programs and services

Barriers Amir is Facing

- Credential recognition: degree not recognized in the U.S.
- Licensing: needs Texas-specific certifications
- No U.S. experience: employers may prefer U.S. experience
- Limited network: lacks professional connections
- Unfamiliar with U.S. market: unaware of hiring practices

Next Steps

- Sarah, his case manager, provides guidance on licensing and certifications, information on job training and mentorship programs, and credential evaluation services

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What might be some ways you could support Amir in addressing the barriers he may currently be experiencing?

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3

Practical Strategies to Support Career Development
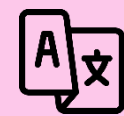
for Internationally-Educated Newcomers

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What is one practical strategy you have used to support the career development of internationally educated newcomers?

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Practical Strategies

Overview

WES

English Proficiency

- Community college classes
- Public library resources
- Contextualized ELL classes
- Intensive courses
- Volunteering
- Conversation partnerships

U.S. Experience

- Community college courses
- Volunteering
- Internships
- Apprenticeships
- Certifications
- Degree programs

Social Capital

- Networking
- Professional associations
- Conversation partnerships
- Immigrant-serving organizations
- Mentorship programs
- Volunteering
- Contextualized ELL classes
- Online supports

Credential Recognition

- For licensure
- For credit transfer
- For employment
- For admission to degree programs

What is credential recognition?

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Evaluation and Recognition
of International Education

Evaluation

- A credential evaluation report:

  - **Compares** international academic qualifications to standards in the U.S.

  - Provides a U.S. **academic equivalency**

  - Helps institutional recipients **better understand** the academic background of individuals who hold credentials earned abroad

  - Note: Evaluations are **advisory** in nature.

Recognition

- Recognition refers to the **acceptance** of **academic credentials** earned abroad, or a **credential evaluation report**, and is determined by the institutional recipient or decision-maker.

- Examples of decision-makers include **employers, licensing bodies, and academic institutions.**

Examples of Decision-Makers

WES

Employers

A credential evaluation allows employers to understand education earned in other countries.

TIP FOR CLIENTS

Include WES equivalency on resume.

Licensing Bodies

Assessment of education is a key step in the licensing process.

TIP FOR CLIENTS

Understand state licensing requirements, as well as other requirements like written and practical exams, working hours, and so on.

Colleges and Universities

Admission requirements include an assessment of prior education obtained abroad.

TIP FOR CLIENTS

The type of evaluation needed depends on school and program student is applying to.

Connect with the school to understand requirements.

Two Types

of Evaluation Reports
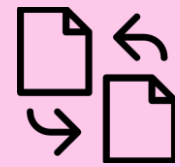
Document-by-Document

- Use: first-year admissions, employment
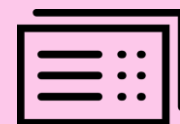
Course-by-Course

- Use: transfer credits, graduate school, licensure

Choosing a Credential Evaluation Service

1

There is **no universally accepted** credential evaluation service.

2

Always check with schools, employers, or state or professional licensing boards about evaluation services they require, recommend, or accept.

3

Costs may vary depending on the service or the area of specialization.

4

Consult licensing boards and the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services to **identify a reputable service.**

Strategies for Covering the Costs
of Credential Evaluations
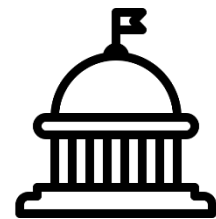
Leveraging federal funds that can be used for credential evaluations
These sources could include:

- **Office of Refugee Resettlement Career Pathways Grants**
  - Services include re-credentialing and credential recognition.
- **SNAP Employment & Training**
  - Eligible participants receive training and support services to help them enter or move up in the workforce.
- **Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Funds**
  - States and eligible providers may use AEFLA funds to pay for occupational certificates and/or credentials within an AEFLA-funded Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs.

Leveraging state funds that can be used for credential evaluations
These sources could include:

- **State Offices of New Americans (ONAs) may have set aside funding**
  - Some states, like New York, allow the use of funds to cover the costs associated with international credential evaluations. "ONA Job Coach agencies may use funds under this grant to cover the cost of credential evaluations of foreign transcripts for individual clients by a credential evaluation agency as needed."

Case Study: Sarah and Amir, Continued

Challenge Amir is Facing

- Upon arriving in the U.S., Amir encountered significant barriers to employment due to the inadequate recognition of his international education.

Solution

- To overcome this challenge, Amir, with the support of his case manager, sought a credential evaluation service. This process involved:
  - Researching agencies recognized by U.S. employers and educational institutions;
  - Submitting required documents; and
  - Receiving the evaluation report.

Outcome

- The evaluation report established that Amir's degree was equivalent to a U.S. Bachelor's degree in Engineering. This documentation helped him apply to jobs alongside his case manager with confidence.

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What questions might Sarah ask Amir to help him select the best credential evaluation for his needs?
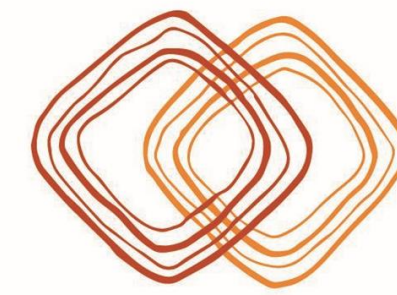
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Program Spotlight

Global Talent and the Refugee Career Pathways Program through the Idaho Office for Refugees
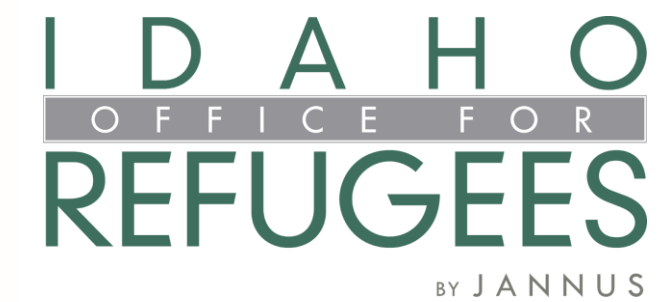
Reclaiming Careers

Equipping college-educated new Americans with skills and resources to rebuild professional careers

Retaining Local Talent

Helping local employers benefit from this pool of diverse professional talent

GLOBAL TALENT
BY JANNUS

Global Talent Participants

- Received a university degree from outside of U.S.
- Came to U.S. as a refugee or immigrant
- Resident of Idaho
- Holds full work authorization
- Proficient in English and possesses computer skills

Training Process

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
- Application	- Resume	- Job Search	- Negotiation
- Onboarding	- Cover Letter	- Informational Interviews	- First 90 Days
- Career Plan	- Degree Evaluation	- Mock Interviews	- Career Advancement
	- Upskilling	- Networking	- Mentoring

Role of Career Advisor
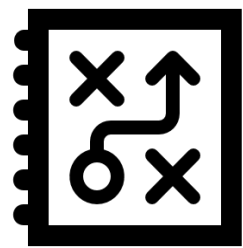
Navigation

Expanding the Network

Listening Ear

Encouragement
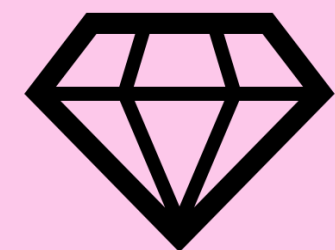
Value

Common Barriers

Lack of professional network and/or knowledge of how to use it as a tool for job search
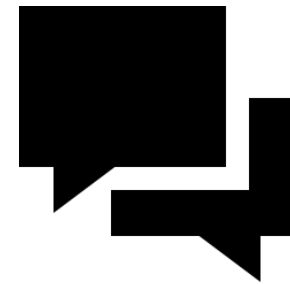
Limited English proficiency and confidence in electronic communication

Lack of familiarity with U.S. workplace norms, culture, and expectations

Practical Strategies

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U.S. Experience

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- Apprenticeships
- Certifications
- Degree programs

Social Capital

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Credential Recognition

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- For credit transfer
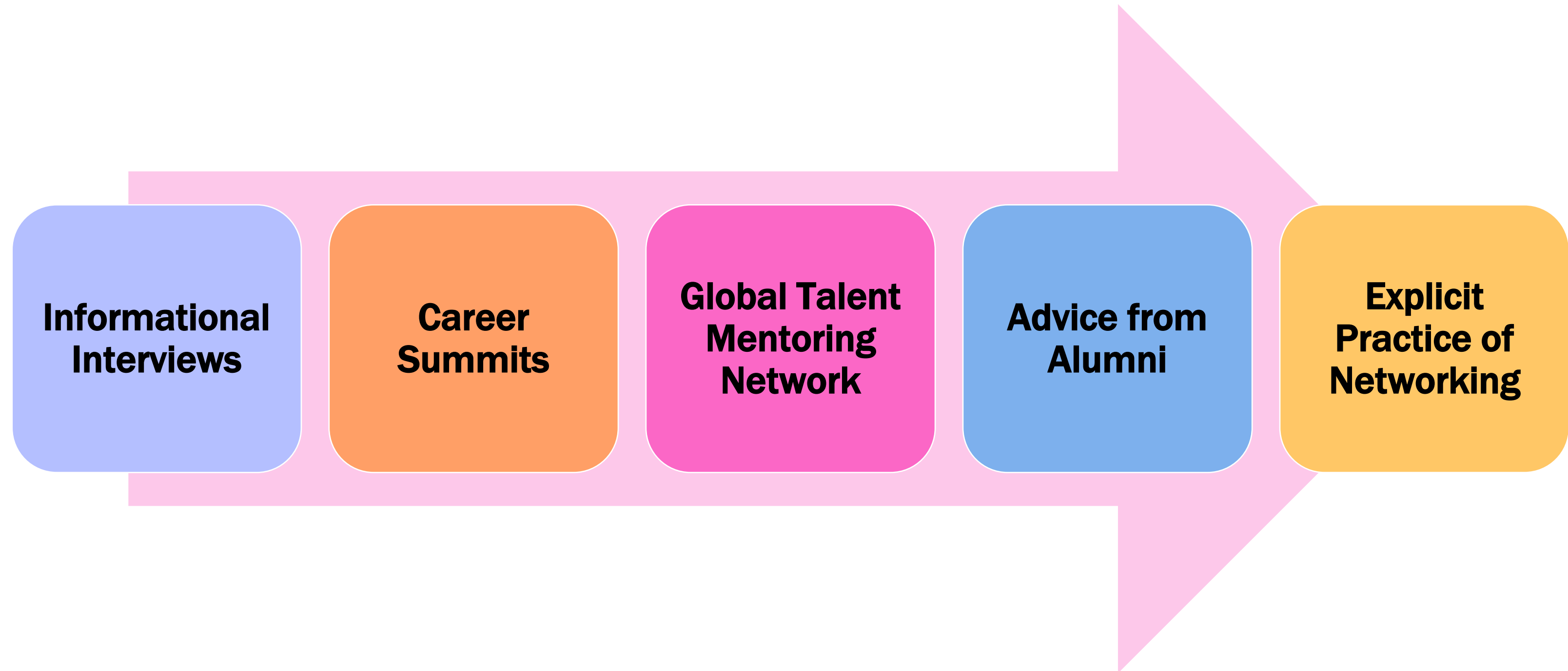- For employment
- For admission to degree programs

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What strategies or tools have you utilized to help strengthen newcomers' English proficiency as they work to build a career?

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Professional English Class Topics

Global Talent

GLOBAL TALENT BY JANNUS

Office Calendar	Email Communication	Direct Communication with Supervisor
U.S. Workplace Culture	Small Talk	Asking for Promotions or Raises

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What networking practices have you found to be most effective in building social capital for newcomers?

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Professional Networking Activities

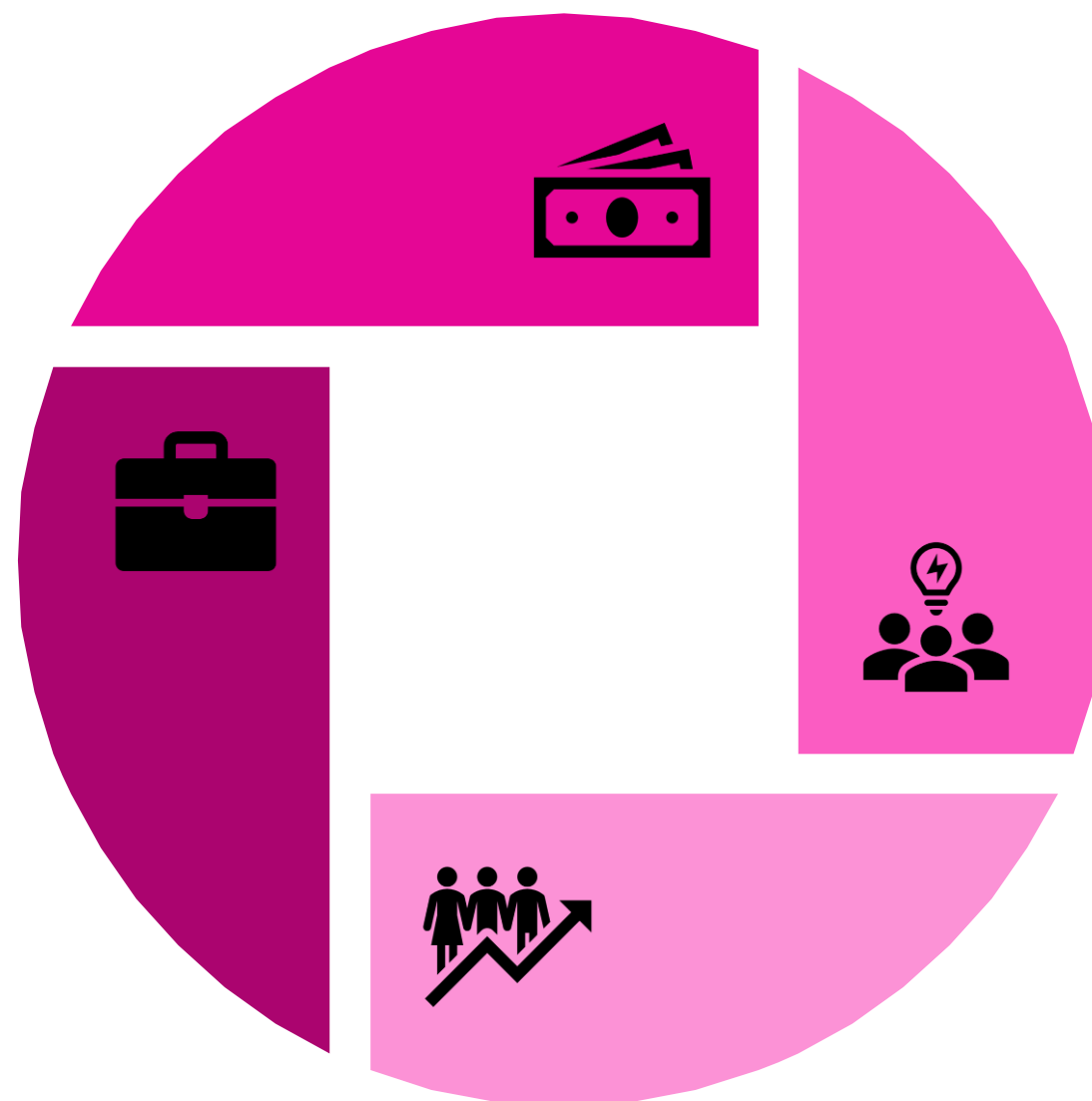| Informational Interviews | Career Summits | Global Talent Mentoring Network | Advice from Alumni | Explicit Practice of Networking |

Building Social Capital on the Job

GT check-ins

Employer engagement

What to expect in first 90 days

Cross-cultural training: time, communication, & power structures

Communication with supervisor

Absorbing culture of new company

Success Stories

Economic Impact

$40,000 Avg. Salary Increase

Inclusive Workplaces

75+ Business Partnerships

Meaningful Careers

165+ Careers Reclaimed

Community Impact

Hope, Pride, & Agency

GLOBAL TALENT
BY JANNUS

Case Study: Computer Science Instructor to Software Engineer

Questions? Type your question in the Q&A 💬

Learning Objectives

Now you are able to:
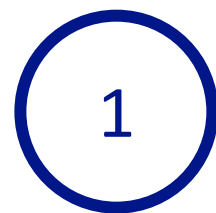
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

DESCRIBE

national and state-level demographic and workforce data related to newcomers with high levels of international education
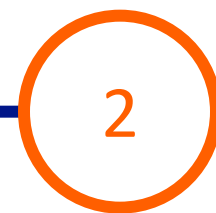
IDENTIFY

common individual and structural barriers to the economic inclusion and career advancement of newcomers with international education
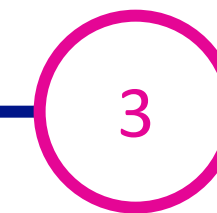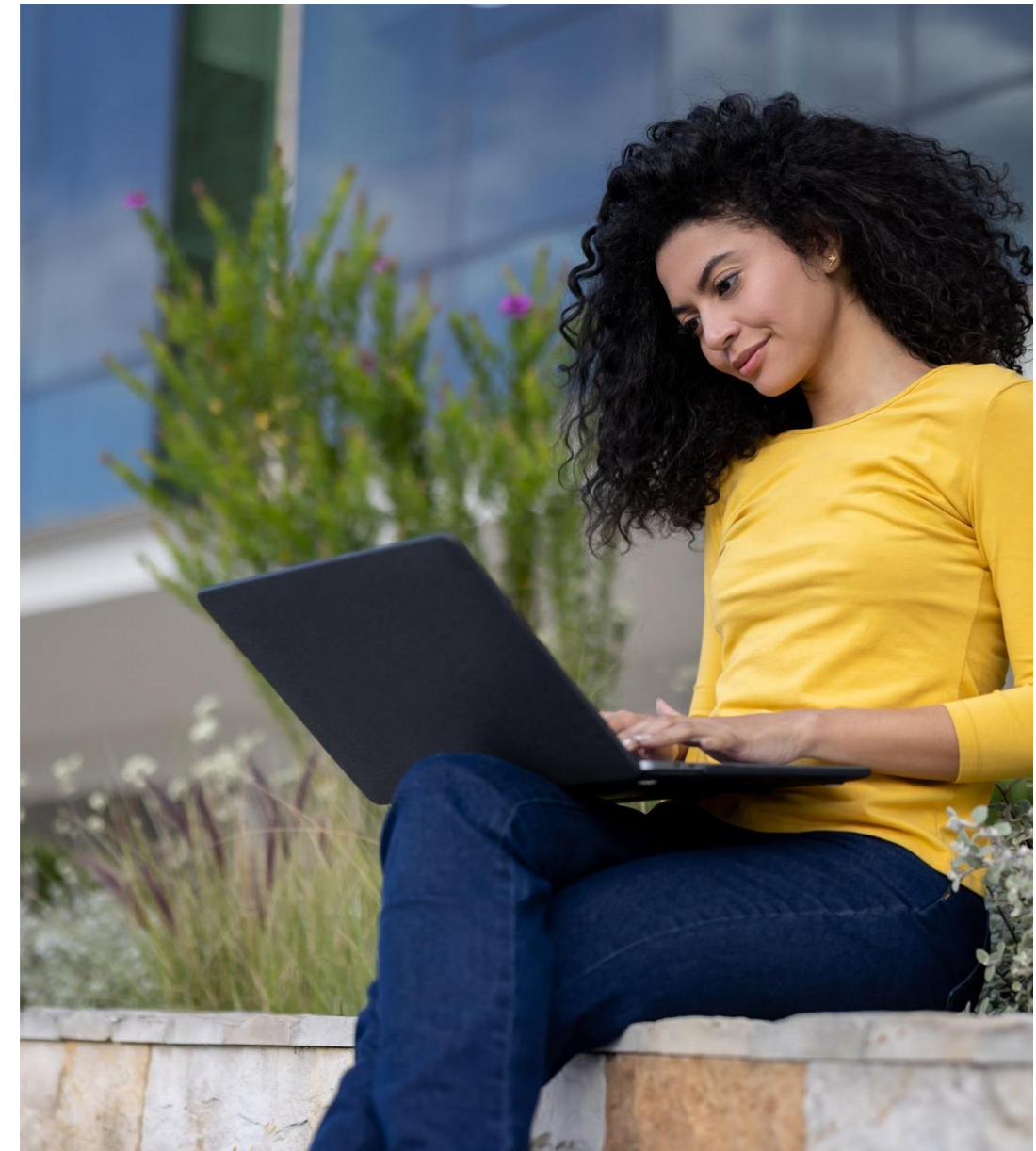
APPLY

three practical strategies to support the career development of internationally educated newcomers

Recommended Resources

- Browse articles, fact sheets, policy briefs, and tool kits from WES and its partners

- Career Pathways tool and e-guides

- Subscribe to our newsletter in the WES Subscription Center

Help Us Help You!

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat to give feedback!

- Five questions
- Less than 60 seconds to complete
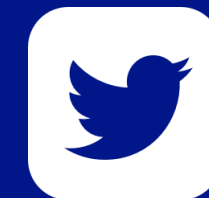- Improves our training and technical assistance offerings!

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