



Webinar: Bridging the Gap: Strategies and Insights for the Career Advancement of Internationally Educated Newcomers

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Transcript

Introduction

Debra Means-West: Hi, and welcome to today's webinar on Bridging the Gap: Strategies and Insights for the Career Advancement of Internationally Educated Newcomers. My name is Debra Means-West. I'm the Director of Network and Resource Development at World Education Services, WES for short, and I'm delighted to be joining all of you today to help facilitate and speak to this exciting webinar.

Today's Speakers

DMW: Now I'd like to take a moment to introduce you to two more speakers joining us from Global Talent, Idaho. I'm delighted to introduce Hannah Roche, who's the Program Director of Global Talent and Employment Services at the Idaho Office of Refugees. Hannah brings to today's webinar her experience leading initiatives aimed at helping New American professionals to reclaim their career. Hannah's passion for cross-cultural community building and partnership development has shaped her career journey, and her previous experiences include working with migrant farm workers, serving as a Peace Corps volunteer, and leading community engagement programming for K-12 schools.

DMW: I'm also delighted to introduce Heather Webster, the Employment Engagement Coordinator with Global Talent. In her role, Heather partners with employers and Global Talent alumni to strengthen career advancement, career opportunities, and to create inclusive workplaces for internationally trained professionals. Welcome, both of you, to today's webinar, and welcome all of you for joining us today.

World Education Services (WES)

DMW: As I mentioned in my introduction, I work at WES, which for those of you that may not know, it's a social enterprise that works towards a vision centered around enabling people to learn, work, and thrive in new places. For the last 50 years, WES has been achieving this through the provision of international credential evaluations, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals.

DMW: In addition to core services that WES provides through its social impact arm, it helps immigrants and refugees to use their skills, leverage their training, and achieve their academic and professional goals by joining with institutional partners, community-based organizations, and immigrant and refugee service providers like many of you in the room today.



Learning Objectives

DMW: Now that you know a bit about who we are and what we do, let's talk about what you'll gain from today's session. First, we're going to look at some key data focused on newcomers with international education. This information is essential, as it gives us a clear idea of the scope and potential impact for these individuals. It's about understanding the talent pool and the demographic trends, so we can see both opportunities and the challenges they face.

DMW: Once we've got that overview, we're going to focus on the barriers these newcomers often encounter as they try to advance in their careers here in the U.S. It's important to identify these challenges because only by fully understanding them can we move forward towards real impactful solutions for better inclusion.

DMW: Lastly, we'll get practical. We're going to share three specific strategies that can help support the career growth of internationally educated newcomers. By the end, it's our intention that each of you will be able to describe the current landscape, identify the key challenges, and apply practical strategies to support career advancement for internationally educated newcomers.

1. Overview of Newcomers in the U.S. with High Levels of International Education

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

DMW: With our learning objectives in mind, let's start with an overview of newcomers that we're focusing on, those with international education. This is going to give us a sense of their unique characteristics and their contributions within the U.S. workforce, as well as the context for some of the challenges that they may face.

DMW: Here's a look at the impact of educated immigrants in the U.S. workforce. There [are] approximately 28 million immigrant workers in the U.S. labor force, and that's a significant portion of our overall workforce, demonstrating the essential role that immigrants play in meeting workforce demands.

DMW: What's especially important to note here is that over 32% of these immigrants, they hold post-secondary education. These numbers highlight the potential of immigrants to contribute to the economy, not only in terms of their numbers but in terms of their qualifications. However, as we'll discuss, many of these individuals face barriers that often prevent them from fully utilizing their skills. Our goal today is to explore ways to leverage this talent effectively, ensuring that internationally educated immigrants can fully contribute meaningfully to the U.S. workforce.

Skill Underutilization

DMW: While we have seen that many immigrants bring high levels of education and valuable skills to the U.S., there is a significant issue that we need to address, skill underutilization. This happens when individuals cannot fully utilize their education and qualifications in the job market. In other words, they're not able to work at the level that their training and their experience prepares them for.

DMW: This can take different forms, including unemployment or underemployment, which is a loss not only for them but also for the workforce. It leads to talent waste and lost economic potential. As we move forward,



we're going to explore some barriers that lead to skill underutilization and what can be done to help immigrants and refugees to apply their skills in meaningful ways.

Poll Question

DMW: Now that we've defined skill underutilization and its impact, let's make this a bit more interactive. To kick off this topic, we'd like to hear from all of you. To do this, we're actually going to use an interactive tool called Slido throughout the webinar. You can join today's anonymous Slido session in two ways: you can scan the QR code or you can go to slido.com and enter the code 1181342.

DMW: The question that we'd like you all to consider is,

[How many college-educated immigrants and refugees are affected by skill underutilization in the U.S.?](#)

DMW: We have a lot of people that are already jumping in. This is wonderful. We're just going to take a minute and let's see if the answer surprises you. Okay, so we have a lot of great responses that are coming in, and a little bit of a tie between the first and the second.

DMW: The answer may be surprising and a little bit concerning, but according to the Migration Policy Institute, if we move forward, we can see that the answer here is the second one, over 2 million. According to the Migration Policy Institute, around 2 million college-educated immigrants and refugees in the U.S. are either unemployed or underemployed. What's particularly striking is that about 60% of these individuals hold credentials that were earned abroad. Despite their high qualifications, many are unable to find jobs that align to their skills and their experience.

DMW: This statistic highlights a systemic issue. That issue is that highly educated newcomers often face barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the workforce. As a result, their skills and their knowledge remain underutilized. In the following slides, we're going to dig a little deeper into some of the reasons behind this.

Accessing Local and State Data on Newcomers

DMW: Before we do, data, as we can see, is really key to understanding some of the challenges as well as the opportunities in immigrant and workforce inclusion. To get a clearer picture, I thought it would be helpful to just share a few sources that we can rely on to guide our efforts. First, the U.S. Census Bureau is a foundational resource. It's going to provide detailed data about the demographics, language proficiency, education, and employment of immigrants, refugees, and other newcomers.

DMW: Next, the Department of Labor provides employment and unemployment data. This data can show us how immigrants are engaging in the job market, where there might be gaps, and if skills are being underutilized. We can also look at the Migration Policy Institute, which offers research and reports specifically focused on immigrant populations. By combining data from these sources, we can get a well-rounded view of the challenges immigrants face, from language barriers to skill underutilization.

DMW: In terms of other sources, you'll notice that towards the bottom of the slide, there's two bullets on utilizing government websites and community organizations for more specific regional data. These sources can



give us a closer look at the unique needs of immigrants in specific areas. Lastly, collaborating with local colleges and universities for more targeted studies can also give us insights that are specific to newcomer populations in particular regions. They can provide the in-depth, localized research that we need to better understand the specific challenges immigrants face in the workforce.

DMW: Together, all of these data sources and partnerships can give us a clear and more comprehensive understanding of how to improve immigrant and refugee inclusion. By using these insights, we can help design programs that address language barriers, educational needs, and underemployment in an effort to create a more inclusive and productive workforce.

Case Study: Sarah and Amir

DMW: As we've just seen, accessing relevant data can help us better understand the needs of newcomers, which is crucial for developing effective programs and services. What does this look like in practice? To illustrate, let's look at a real-world case study.

DMW: Here we have Sarah, a case manager working with Amir, a newcomer who is highly qualified but facing challenges in navigating the U.S. job market. He's 30 years old. He has post-secondary education. He's eligible for our services, but he needs assistance in navigating his barriers and gaining access to relevant programs and services.

DMW: During intake meetings, Sarah typically uncovers her clients' qualifications, their ambitions, and she provides information that's relevant on programs and services. In thinking about the data, in leveraging state data on refugee underemployment, practitioners like Sarah can effectively advocate for essential programs that may be needed to support the needs of internationally educated newcomers. Demographic data can show backgrounds and characteristics of internationally educated newcomers, such as their fields of expertise and the languages spoken. This can inform tailored support services, such as contextualized language training, programs that can be designed to address these specific needs.

Discussion Question

DMW: Now let's briefly look at Sarah's approach with Amir. Let's think about how data can play a role in supporting newcomers like him. Let's take a moment to reflect and use our Slido to answer this question:

[How might Sarah use information to create effective programs that can help Amir settle into his new community and find meaningful employment?](#)

DMW: I would love to hear your thoughts on this question. Examples could be, Sarah could analyze data on language proficiency levels in local industries, such as engineering. She can use that to assess whether or not Amir may need additional language supports or ESL classes to be competitive in his field.

DMW: I definitely see that some folks are typing and are contributing. Really excited to hear what some of the responses are. Yes, this is exactly right. Credential evaluations first, assesses language needs, find companies that can hire similar demographics to Amir. This is great. Thank you so much. Thank you for all of the responses.



2. Common Barriers to the Career Advancement of Newcomers Educated Abroad

Common Barriers to Economic Inclusion and Career Advancement of Newcomers

DMW: Now if we're going to move on to barriers, we want to be able to identify what are some of the common barriers that internationally educated newcomers face in the U.S.?

DMW: First, let's look at the individual barriers. Maybe some of you are very familiar with the fact that many newcomers struggle with limited English language proficiency, which obviously is going to be a huge hurdle when it comes to communicating effectively at the workplace. There is also the challenge of not having the U.S. work experience or education, which sometimes is a little tough for employers to feel confident when they're hiring someone if they don't see that. Social capital is another big one. Access to training or support that can help newcomers adapt and grow professionally is sometimes limited. Career guidance for many newcomers is just something that maybe they don't have the ability or their connections to navigate the U.S. job market. Finally, there's a struggle with the recognition of credentials and evaluating one's experience gained outside of the U.S.

DMW: Moving to the structural barriers, we sometimes see a misalignment in training and workforce programs. Even if someone wants to upskill or to retrain, it sometimes is not possible. There's also deep-rooted systemic inequities, such as racism, xenophobia, and nativism. These factors can contribute to a discriminatory environment that makes it hard for some newcomers to break free or break through.

DMW: Additionally, there's often limited infrastructure among employers in which most companies aren't equipped to be able to prepare and to support newcomers in meaningful ways. Then there's restricted licensing policies that are sometimes in place and may be a factor, especially [for] Amir, because he's looking at regulated occupations. These barriers, both individual and structural, they highlight the complexity and the interconnectedness of challenges newcomers face. It's clear that addressing them requires thoughtful and multi-layered solutions.

Case Study: Sarah and Amir, continued

DMW: Now that we've explored some of the common barriers newcomers face, let's revisit Amir's story briefly. Amir's journey is a powerful illustration of how these challenges could show up in real life and how they can impact someone's career progression. Think of Amir as he's going through his background and his barriers. I want you to consider how and what are some of the ways that this could play out for him. What are possible solutions? What are possible strategies that could help?

DMW: Let's look at who Amir is. He's a civil engineer from Syria, and he's trying to navigate the complexities of starting over in the U.S. He represents the experiences of many internationally educated professionals. With the support of his case manager, he is able to gain necessary information to help them uncover what his barriers are and how to best address them. In his specific case, he can find out what's necessary to really address the lack of recognition for his international education.



Discussion Question

DMW: Now that we've revisited Amir's situation, after reading some of the barriers that he's up against, it's clear that he and many other newcomers need thoughtful and strategic support to move forward. Let's now take a moment and think about the barriers that Amir is facing, like credential recognition and licensing. How might someone in your role be able to offer support? Looking at the Slido question,

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

DMW: Feel free to share your ideas and your strategies. All insights are extremely valuable. Yes, guidance on hiring and interviewing process, mentoring is so valuable, helping him in filling out the forms, connecting him to someone in the industry, referring him. Thank you so much for all these amazing insights.

DMW: It's clear that there are many ways that we can support newcomers like Amir, and your ideas highlight the importance of being proactive as well as being resourceful. Building on all of these great suggestions, let's dive into our next section, which is Practical Strategies to Support Career Development for Internationally Educated Newcomers. We'll take the concepts that we've talked about so far and look at tangible, actionable steps that you can take in your own roles and your communities.

3. Practical Strategies to Support Career Development for Internationally Educated Newcomers

DMW: The goal here is to empower you with strategies that make a real difference, whether it's providing better guidance, facilitating credential recognition, or fostering valuable professional connections. Let's explore some of these strategies together.

Discussion Question

DMW: First, I'd love to tap once again the collective wisdom in the room. Before we dive into the specific strategies that we'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you.

What is one practical strategy that you've used in your support of newcomers looking to advance in their careers? Or what's something that you think you could imagine using to support the career advancement of newcomers?

DMW: Maybe you've helped someone get connected to a professional network, you've offered them mentorship. Whatever it is, your experiences are valuable and can set the stage for upcoming discussion. Please, feel free, this is great. I love some of the suggestions that are coming in. This is exactly right. It's a really great way for all of us to be able to learn from each other as we explore this important topic together.

DMW: Training programs in specific industries, partnering with literacy centers for free English classes, finding certification programs and referring our clients, practicing interviewing, providing resources and connecting them with education and career institutions. This is great. Thank you so much once again for sharing all of your input and your suggestions in this space.



Practical Strategies: Overview

DMW: Now let's look at some of the practical strategies that we think can also help to make a difference. On this slide, you're going to see an overview of key areas where support is often needed. There's English proficiency, there's gaining U.S. experience, there's building social capital, and lastly, navigating credential recognition.

DMW: Since we have Heather and we have Hannah lined up to cover the first three, English proficiency, U.S. experience, and social capital, in a little bit more depth, I'm going to leave these up on the screen, but I'm really going to focus on strategies related to credential evaluation. As we go through these strategies, I want you to consider how they might be able to be applied to your work in your community.

Poll Question

DMW: As we get ready to dive into the specifics of credential evaluation and strategies for recognition, I want to take a moment, and I want each of us to just think about what it really means when we ask the question,

What is credential recognition?

DMW: Is it A, the details of U.S. equivalency of education completed abroad? Is it B, the verification of the authenticity of educational credentials? Or is it C, the acceptance of academic credentials earned abroad? All right, so it looks like we've got some strong leaning on the first one, and I'd love to hear some more thoughts coming through. Thank you, everybody, for filling out the Slido. The answer to this question is actually C. It's the acceptance of—it's A actually, I apologize. The order is a little changed on the screen. It's the acceptance of academic credentials that are earned abroad. This is great. We're all starting from a really great place.

Evaluation and Recognition of International Education

DMW: Our next slide shows us that an evaluation is a report that compares education earned overseas to education earned in the U.S. It's a really helpful tool because it helps refugees and other newcomers from having to redo their education in the U.S. Recognition, which was the question we asked, it refers to the acceptance of that credential evaluation report. When we talk about recognition, it's important to consider with our clients what they are seeking a credential evaluation for.

Examples of Decision-Makers

DMW: Our next slide is going to talk about some examples of decision-makers. If someone is looking for employment purposes to further their education, to pursue further licensing, or to reclaim licensing for their occupation that they held overseas, understanding what it is that our clients want is really going to help us to understand what type of evaluation is most helpful and most needed. It also helps our clients to avoid extra time and cost, especially because there are different types of evaluations that exist.



Two Types of Evaluation Reports

DMW: The two types that I'm going to talk about very briefly are a document-by-document and a course-by-course. Reflecting on the previous slide for an example, if a client was looking to obtain a certification and the program had prerequisites, then a course-by-course could be a really helpful tool in helping your client to demonstrate that they had satisfied the requirements of those prerequisites. It's important to understand this as we're trying to understand the best ways in which we can support our clients and being able to have their international education validated.

Choosing a Credential Evaluation Service

DMW: Now, when it comes to choosing [a credential evaluation] service, one thing to remember is that there is not a single universally accepted credential evaluation service. Different institutions, employers, state licensing boards, they will have their own requirements for which services they accept. This means being prepared to ask questions so you can help your clients to navigate the right choice, and making the best choice is going to be really important.

Strategies for Covering the Costs of Credential Evaluations

DMW: Another thing to keep in mind is that the cost of credential evaluations can certainly vary. In addition to always checking with where it is that they want to actually have their documents sent to, you want to make sure that they understand what type of evaluation they need, because the costs are certainly going to vary.

DMW: Finally, we want to make sure that they're always being directed towards reputable credential evaluation services. One great resource is the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services, which lists recognized providers. For clients who aren't sure where to start, NACES can be a great resource for finding reliable, trusted services. Overall, the main message here is that choosing the right evaluation service depends on your client's specific goals. Our goal is to guide them with the right questions so we can help them make an informed decision.

DMW: Now that we've talked about the right credential evaluation agency, you might be wondering about the cost involved, especially since we just mentioned that sometimes evaluation prices can vary. The good news here is that there are funding options to help clients cover these costs. These are just a few examples at the federal and the state level that I thought would be helpful to share in making credential evaluations more accessible for your clients.

DMW: First, let's talk about some federal programs that can be leveraged. These sources of support can make a big difference for clients that might have a limited amount of financial resources of their own. For example, the Office of Refugee Resettlement has their Career Pathways Grants. If you have a program in your area, they can offer services that specifically focus on re-credentialing and credential recognition. Another option is SNAP Employment & Training. Clients who might qualify for SNAP may in fact be eligible for training and support services, which could include credential evaluation assistance to help them secure a job or advance in the job. Then finally, we have Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, AEFLA, funds. These funds can be used to cover costs associated with occupational certificates and credential evaluations, provided that they meet the requirements as part of integrated education and training programs.



DMW: Now, aside from federal sources, some states have specific programs in place to also support credential evaluations. State Offices of New Americans, or ONAs, may have set aside funds just for this purpose. Take, for example, New York. The New York State ONA does allow funds to cover credential evaluation costs for clients that need international educational transcripts evaluated to secure employment. Under these programs, local agencies and coaches can often access funding to help their clients obtain evaluations that are critical for career advancement.

DMW: The key takeaway here is that clients don't necessarily have to bear the full cost of credential evaluations by tapping into federal and state resources that can help lower this barrier and open more doors for their career goals.

Case Study: Sarah and Amir, continued

DMW: Now that we've discussed the type of credential evaluations and some of the resources that are available to cover the cost, let's quickly check back on Amir's story and see how this process has played out for him.

DMW: Remember, Amir initially faced some significant challenges. He needed to be able to find out what were some programs that were good for him, and maybe in finding out some of the programs and what he wanted to pursue, he realized that his international degree wasn't necessarily recognized. After he got guidance and after he got support, he took the right steps, asked the right questions, and he was able to proceed in getting a credential evaluation to help him understand what his degree was equivalent to and how he can use that to be able to apply to more jobs in his field with confidence.

Discussion Question

DMW: Now let's put ourselves in the shoes of Sarah, Amir's case manager.

If you were in her position, what questions might you ask Amir to help him select the right credential evaluation service?

DMW: Take a moment to think about this. What do you think it would be important to know? By asking thoughtful questions and guiding Amir through the credential evaluation process, we can help him in being able to take a crucial step towards pursuing his career goals. What could be some of the questions?

DMW: Certainly in this case, if we know that his background is engineering and he wants to pursue a licensed occupation, we might think about questions along those lines. What's his timeline in this budget? Does he have access to his official transcripts? Exactly. What are the length of the courses? The type of courses that he'd need to take? Why does he need the credential evaluation? What schools did he attend? When did he graduate? This is great. [These are] some really great suggestions. All of these will help us dive into specific strategies and resources that can help us tailor the supports that we're giving to clients like Amir on their journey toward success. This is great. There's some really amazing responses that are coming in here. It's great to be able to see all these things.

DMW: With this in mind, I'm really excited to hand it over to our next speakers who are going to dive into more specific strategies and resources that their program is going to offer to support clients like Amir on their journey toward success. Hannah and Heather, over to you.



Program Spotlight: Global Talent and the Refugee Career Pathways Program through the Idaho Office for Refugees

Hannah Roche: Thank you so much, Debra. My name is Hannah Roche. I'm the Program Director of Global Talent, and I'm joined by my colleague, Heather Webster, and she'll be able to introduce herself in just a little bit. We're super excited to be here and to have the opportunity to share with you all our Career Pathways Program here in Idaho and a couple of the strategies that we found useful in supporting internationally trained newcomers in their career development.

HR: Global Talent is a program of the Idaho Office for Refugees, and we're based in Boise, Idaho. Together in partnership with resettlement agencies, USCRI, and IRC, and also with Community College, College of Western Idaho, we administer a Career Pathways Program across the state of Idaho. Global Talent was founded in 2014 to address the issue of skill underutilization that Debra shared about earlier. We know that about one in five college-educated New Americans in Idaho are under- or unemployed. This comes at a loss for the individual, for our local communities, and for our country. Global Talent aims to address the barriers that highly educated newcomers face by providing one-on-one career coaching and access to skill-building resources.

Global Talent Mission: Reclaiming Careers and Retaining Local Talent

HR: We really see our mission as being twofold. We help internationally educated newcomers reclaim their careers by accessing the skills and resources they need. We also focus on retaining that talent here locally. We believe that our state is better when our businesses and our organizations leverage the diverse talent, skills, and perspective that Global Talent job seekers bring.

Global Talent Participants

HR: While we work in partnership with agencies across the state to provide services for newcomers with a variety of educational and work experience backgrounds, Global Talent specifically focuses on working with newcomers who have university degrees from outside of the United States. In addition, our program requirements are that someone be a resident of Idaho, [have] full work authorization, and have intermediate or high English proficiency and computer skills. Global Talent works with a wide variety of professionals including engineers, educators, pilots, physicians, accountants, and more.

HR: Now, Heather's going to be able to jump in and share a little bit more about how Global Talent job seekers work directly with career advisors in our program.

Global Talent: Training Process

Heather Webster: Thank you, Hannah. My name is Heather Webster, and I would like to share with you the process when a job seeker applies to our program. When somebody applies to our program, we sit down with them. It's an important time to establish connection. It's also an important time to create an individualized career plan for them. We then start assembling the tools for a resume, a cover letter, whether a degree evaluation is going to be done, and then also, are there any upskilling courses that would help them on-ramp back as they reclaim their career. Next, in that third step, we really begin the networking process, which is such a unique part of the United States professional system.



HW: We do informational interviews so that job seekers can meet people in their field. We practice mock interviews, and we also do a variety of networking opportunities. Finally, when somebody is offered a position, we help them negotiate and also understand the U.S. custom of negotiating a salary. We establish the first 90 days with a meeting and also individualized coaching. We talk about what their career advancement would look like as they join their company, and we offer mentorship.

Global Talent: Role of Career Advisor

HW: The role of the career advisor in all this is that it is not our career. We are just merely walking beside somebody. We might offer tools for navigation or opportunities or resources that folks might not know as they are getting to know their local area. We also try to expand their network. We believe that we are stronger together. We want the network of professionals, colleges, employers. We want to expand that out.

HW: Next, we are a listening ear. We recognize that as people are reclaiming their career, there's a host of other things that people are going through as they're reassembling and rebuilding a new world in Boise, Idaho, or in the United States. Oftentimes, the biggest thing that we can do for them is just listen. We also are encouragers. We want to encourage them, let them know that their skills are needed, which leads me to the last one. We want people to understand the value that they bring to our communities, to our job markets, but also we need their perspective, and we value what they bring to local companies and to our communities.

Global Talent: Common Barriers

HR: As job seekers have joined Global Talent, and then as they've moved on and started positions in their field, we've heard feedback about some of the common barriers they face. Really, these are in line with what Debra shared earlier in the presentation for some of the common barriers faced by internationally trained newcomers. Some of these are outlined here: limited English proficiency and confidence in electronic communication, lack of professional network or knowledge of how to use it as an effective tool in the job search, and the lack of familiarity with U.S. workplace norms, culture, and expectations.

Practical Strategies: English Proficiency and Social Capital

HR: You see here several strategies for how to address some of these common barriers: English proficiency, U.S. experience, social capital, and credential evaluation. We just heard a great deal about credential recognition and how that can be used to help internationally educated newcomers establish their careers here. Global Talent would like to share a little bit more of how we are addressing English proficiency and social capital.

Discussion Question

HR: Before we jump in, we'd love to hear from you all in the room. If you could please use your Slido and share,

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

HR: We would love to hear some ideas from you specifically for English proficiency, knowing that all of the common barriers and strategies interweave with one another. In some cases, this might be something that's



in-house. You may have a really innovative partnership that you're doing to leverage the skills or expertise of outside organizations. Since, seeing building resume, digital skills. Absolutely, digital skills are connected with this English proficiency engine in Burlington English. Speaking English only or practicing with coaches in that process, ESL, connection to language volunteers, incredible community colleges. For sure, all of this is definitely of value, and thank you so much for sharing your great ideas.

Global Talent: Professional English Class Topics

HR: Similar to what many of you shared, we wanted to highlight what we're doing with a professional communication class at Global Talent. We've often found that there are two chapters to working with Global Talent and the work that participants do in our program. Chapter 1 is really gaining all the knowledge and skills you need to land a job in your field, and Chapter 2 is all of the skills and knowledge that it requires to succeed in your new role.

HR: Traditionally, Global Talent focused on working with job seekers in this first chapter, and once somebody had accepted a position in their career field, we congratulated them and offered one-off consultations as needed. We started hearing from alumni and employers that although former participants were... highly educated, well-trained, and in many cases, overqualified for the role that they were working in, they were running into issues. We know that starting a new job is hard for anybody, and in particular, it can be hard when you're facing some of the common barriers that we shared earlier.

HR: In response to this, we partnered with the English Language Center here at Boise to develop a four-week hybrid professional communications course. This is really developed to explicitly teach the topics that you see listed here. Content includes using calendar systems, how to write professional emails, power dynamics between supervisors and employees, and communication standards. This course creates a safe environment for people to be able to ask questions and to learn about the unwritten rules. We really see this as being able to provide the rules of the game so that people know and can make informed decisions that lead to success in their career field. This class also is an opportunity to build professional network and social capital, something that we'll dive into a little bit more.

Practical Strategies: Social Capital

HW: Thank you, Hannah. We're going to talk about social capital. Talking about social capital, for the sake of this conversation, I want to talk about it as a vital resource that is derived from social networking and social relationships. We're going to talk about professional associations, conversation partnerships, immigrant-serving organizations, mentoring, volunteering, contextualized ELL classes, online support.

Discussion Question

HW: Before we talk about specifically what Global Talent has done, would you take a moment again to participate with Slido?

[What networking practices have you found to be most effective in building social capital for newcomers?](#)



HW: Thank you for typing. Churches, local congregations. Excellent. I have been researching social capital. We do it, but I am finding that there's a financial benefit and also a social-emotional benefit to networking as well in social capital. Rotary clubs, LinkedIn, local universities. Thank you. All of these are fantastic. Thank you. All right. Thank you.

Professional Networking Activities

HW: Some things that we have done at Global Talent to increase social capital is informational interviews. I find that the more informational interviews I can conduct with a job seeker, the higher likelihood that they will find a job in their field and the more [ability] and ease that they have to communicate with other professionals in their field and in this area. We do career summits where we spend the morning reteaching and relearning and practicing again the skills that it takes to get a U.S. job. Then in the afternoon, we bring in probably 40 volunteers to do interviews. Then what we find is that the job seekers and the professionals are energized by meeting each other, but also there's great understanding and a likelihood that there might be an interview that comes out of that event.

HW: We have started the Global Talent Mentoring Network, believing that mentorship is a powerful and safe way to be able to ask questions as you enter a field that you know technically, but it is different culturally. We also have called upon our alumni for advice. They are vital resources that we ask to weigh in and give wisdom and help with that guidance and also navigating that new job field. Then the final thing that we've done is that we've become very explicit in the practice of networking. We've started using digital business cards for our job seekers because, traditionally, you don't get a business card until you've been offered a position.

HW: However, we want our job seekers to be able to be part of that, so we teach them when it is that maybe you should offer your business card. Then we've also taught the very explicit tools of how to enter into a conversation for networking and then how to exit it.

Building Social Capital on the Job

HW: Along with that, once folks have received a position, Global Talent continues to check in. We seek to form a relationship with the employer because we know that this is a team effort. We present a slideshow and open new conversations of what it is you should expect in those critical 90 days on the job.

HW: We have become more explicit as we've noticed professionals talking about time and communication and power structures. It's very helpful to know the culture that you are coming from and be able to name those and then also what is the U.S. culture that you are now participating in. We've begun to really coach participants in managing up. It's a concept that encourages communication with supervisors. It gives them tools because it brings retention and success on the job.

HW: The last thing that we've done is that, as people have joined the United States, they are learning a new culture, but then they get hired by a company, and every company has a culture. We begin to coach participants, what is the culture that you've joined and what does that look like to succeed in that culture?

Success Stories

HR: These have really helped us find success in the work that we do. We feel really honored to be working with such resilient and dedicated professionals, and we're proud of the accomplishments that we've been able to



reach together. Over 170 Global Talent participants have reclaimed their careers, and that is, on average, with earnings of over \$40,000 a year more than when they started with us. Our businesses, our communities, our economy are stronger when we're able to tap into this talent and skills and experience that internationally trained newcomers bring.

HR: Furthermore, Global Talent job seekers help inspire another generation through their experience and through their accomplishments. They are instilled with a sense of pride, hope, and agency, and also inspire other newcomers to believe that they too can reclaim their careers. We will end with a story of a participant who has been able to experience several of the strategies that we were able to share and share his success.

Case Study: Computer Science Instructor to Software Engineer

HW: Thank you, Hannah. I want to introduce my friend Wahid. He is an Afghan professional who is a computer software engineer, and he also was a lecturer at his local university in Afghanistan before he came to the United States. When he and his family had some time in the safe haven camp, he began studying, working on his resume, working on his cover letter in anticipation of using his skills in the U.S. market. Upon his resettling and his family building a life in Boise, Idaho, he was given an internship at a software company where he began to work.

HW: During that time, he participated in the professional English. He participated in coursework that gave him U.S. contextualized vocabulary for his field. He also finished his internship and began looking for a full-time job. During that time, we did several informational interviews, and it turned out that the company that he interned at offered him a full-time position. During that time, we have connected him with a professional mentor in his field. They are meeting, and they continue to meet still. They're on there about six months where they have lunch together every Thursday. What that has become is a safe place to ask questions, get feedback, and share interests.

HW: He also has done a few upskilling courses in his computer language to be better and more effective at his job. We continue to look to Wahid, as he is going to be a very important resource for our future job seekers because he will be able to speak to what's worked for him, give advice, and then also help guide others as they reclaim their career. I want to thank you.

Q&A Panel

HW: Are there questions that you would like to put in the chat? You can use the chat at this point to begin asking questions. We've got a little bit of time that we will do our very best to field any further questions you have.

DMW: Heather and Hannah, there actually was a question that came through specific to Global Talent Services:

Wondering if you can share for folks just talking about eligible populations for Global Talent Services. Is there a criteria around the arrival dates for individuals? Is there specific criteria for services open to our eligible refugees and asylum seekers?



HR: We require full work authorization and residents of Idaho. As far as immigration or immigration pathways that somebody has arrived through, we use different funding sources to be able to serve a larger population of immigrants, not specifically refugees or asylum seekers or asylees. We have a little bit more flexibility there when we're using ORR funding for particular clients, and we're looking at the date of arrival and making sure that they fall in line with ORR eligibility requirements.

DMW: Great, thank you. There also was another question, which I'm happy to take this one, and it was just a question around,

[Does] WES provide services to clients [who] might not have access to their official documentation?

DMW: One of the things that I didn't get a chance to mention but I think certainly I should here is that there is a program called the Gateway Program that specifically was designed to address the needs of newcomers that may not have access to their official documentation, or they may have a difficult time gaining access to it because maybe the Federal Ministry of Education no longer exists in their country of prior education, or the university that they went to school at no longer exists. Gaining access to those documents could be challenging. Certainly, I can make sure that it's included in any follow-up materials, but if you go to the WES website, there is a program called the Gateway Program that certainly can provide some assistance in helping any clients you may be working with for which they have that as a specific barrier to their career advancement.

DMW: There also was another question here that I think maybe is best directed to yourself, Hannah, and to Heather. There was just a question around,

How do you go about finding professionals willing to participate in informational interviews or in mentorship programs?

DMW: Wondering if either of you might be able to answer that question.

HR: Heather, do you want to take that one?

HW: I think it's old-fashioned networking, and I will be in the community and meet somebody who has a similar profession as a job seeker, and I will say, "Would you give me one hour?" I've never had anybody turn me down. We set up an hour meeting with the professional and then with the job seeker. We're very clear in the practice and the preparation. It's not a job interview, but it's a chance for the job seeker to prepare like it is a job interview. We do networking. We also have a host of companies that we work with that we will often call on. We have volunteers. That is how we do it. We network to find those informational interviews.

DMW: Great. There's another question that's coming in that talks about,

How do you balance the work with self-sufficiency deadlines for refugees?

DMW: Wondering if that's a question that either of you might be able to address.

HR: Yes, in particular, we do a lot of work in partnership with resettlement agencies. Global Talent is working alongside the work of resettlement agency staff and employment teams at RA. It's not a competition. Our ideal is that somebody's first job be a job in their career field. We're both working with them in tandem to make that



happen. There is not a conflict of interest or duplicative services as far as initial job placement and working with us for longer-term career goals and attainment in their career field.

DMW: Great. There's another question actually for Global Talent, and it's around,

[Does Global Talent collaborate with external professionals or specialists to extend the range of support services that are available to your clients?](#)

HR: I'm taking a deep breath because I'm thinking, "Oh man, everything we do is in partnership with organizations across the region." A lot of what we do is really in-house. We have a really strong team, a small but mighty team. We're doing that by connecting with, as Heather mentioned, a lot of professionals in the field. In some cases, there have been times that if we have a challenge with a participant and we're seeking to brainstorm or crowdsource ideas, we'll pull in external consultants or other partners to put more of a focused effort on supporting that person. In general, I would say most of what we're doing is with our core team and then in partnership with other organizations.

DMW: That's great. There's another question that came in, which maybe I'm wondering we probably can all take a little piece of this one, but specifically, they're curious about,

[How do programs support those that come with medical or law degrees in particular?](#)

DMW: Because certainly those probably are going to be some of the more challenging regulated occupations. I'm happy to start off. I know that there are certainly some programs across the country that focus their services on those that have health care backgrounds. I can probably lean a little bit more heavily into that space.

DMW: I would definitely encourage, if folks are not aware on the call, the Welcome Back Initiative. It's a great program model that operates, I think, in about maybe 10 states, if I'm not mistaken. Please don't hold me to that. They're definitely really good at helping individuals. Certainly, if they had a medical background, if they were an international medical graduate working as a physician, maybe what they have to do is actually consider whether or not maybe a pathway back into working as a doctor might be appropriate. There are some RN or LPN into an IMG-focused occupation that folks can look at.

DMW: I know that there's also some really great programs coming out of Minnesota that specifically focus on supporting those that have an international medical graduate background, as well as in the state of Washington. I think Colorado also has some really progressive programs in that space. There certainly are some options available for folks that have those types of degrees.

DMW: I will say as well that there are a few states that have developed licensing pathway guides that also help to be able to talk about short-term what folks should look at doing to be able to reach their long-term goals. I know that if you visit the WES site, we actually do have some career pathway guides at a national level, but also we have some that are featured from states. I know that Idaho Global Talent has specifically developed some licensing guides that are great resources to help. Wondering, before we wrap, if maybe Heather or Hannah, if you might also have some input for that question.

HR: I'm happy to add, I think I pretty much echo what you've said, Debra, and we'll also just add that being able to connect with the licensing bodies in your state in particular, while there are these licensing guides, we've



picked up the phone several times to clarify the step-by-step process for the state of Idaho for relicensing, for example, in a regulated field. I think just building a connection there has been really helpful for us. I would suggest it as practice for anyone on the call.

HW: Just to speak to lawyers, we are a United States where every state has their own governing bodies for certification. I think what's important is that you go visit your bar association in your state, find out what are the opportunities in your state. Then also it's really great to share with the job seeker what is happening nationally, because our job is to just give information and let the job seeker make choices.

DMW: I think one final note I might also share is that there are some great programs across the country. Certainly, as is even highlighted by Heather and Hannah, partnership is critical in being able to support our clients and to do this work. I think also being aware of where there are some additional resources, which certainly, on the tail end of this slide, I think that we actually do have a slide that speaks to some additional resources that are available through WES, as well as additional resources available through Switchboard and through Global Talent. I'd encourage folks to take a look.

DMW: There is an interactive national program map that WES actually has available which you can take a look at which state you reside in and where you're trying to support newcomers and see if there's a program that exists there. If not, reach out to us, and we can see if we can help to facilitate a connection to some of the programs that do so that you can learn a little bit more about how to help those newcomers that are seeking services at your program door.

Conclusion

Reviewing Learning Objectives

DMW: I know that we're shortly coming up to the top of the hour. Really appreciated the last 60 minutes, or a little short of 60 minutes, that we've been able to engage and discuss. And really hope that for all of you joining us today, you are now able to, as we said at the start of the webinar, describe the national and state-level demographic and workforce data related to newcomers with high levels of international education, identify some of the individual as well as the structural barriers that sometimes play a part in preventing folks from being able to reach their full economic inclusion opportunities here in the United States. Lastly, we really hope that you've been able to learn more and that you can go out and you can apply some of those three practical strategies that we've talked about in an effort to support the career development for internationally educated newcomers.

Recommended Resources

DMW: We really want to thank all of you for taking the time to join us today. As I mentioned about the resources, here are some great links that we want to make sure that you're engaging with and you're using to browse some of the fact sheets, toolkits that are available from not only WES but also from our partners, the conversations and the questions about the career guidance, specifically for folks in regulated occupations. There's a link to career pathways, tools, and guides. Then we do have a newsletter as well, which is a great way to be kept up to date on some of the relevant trends and topics related to newcomers and being able to support them.



Feedback Survey

DMW: Lastly, help us help you. Please scan the QR code, click the link in the chat to give us feedback. It's five questions. It's less than 60 seconds to complete, and it's just a great way in which we can do our part to make sure that we're giving the right feedback to Switchboard on the training and technical assistance offerings that they provide.

Stay Connected

DMW: Thank you all for spending this last 60 minutes with us. We really hope the information was valuable. Really appreciate all of the input and the insight that you've provided us. We look forward to being able to connect with you all as we continue to do this work in supporting newcomers and their career development here in the United States. Thank you all. Stay connected. Bye.

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