



Refugees Contribute
Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S.

Upwardly Global
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Executive Summary

As the leading organization in the United States providing job search training and support services to immigrant and refugee professionals, Upwardly Global (“UpGlo”) has seen first-hand that investing in skilled refugee workforce integration yields tremendous benefits for our economy and communities. In working with this population, defined as refugees with a bachelor’s degree or higher, we have found that with targeted intervention these individuals are more likely to obtain work that is commensurate with their educational background as well as fill positions in demand in the U.S. economy. These are also jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and help refugees successfully integrate into the workforce and their communities. In 2016 alone, UpGlo assisted 247 refugees to secure professional work, at an average annual salary of \$47,000 and an average increase in income of \$40,000 per family.

When refugees arrive in the U.S., they face multiple barriers to securing professional-level jobs. These can include a lack of professional networks, unfamiliarity with U.S. job search norms, and difficulty navigating a job search in a second or third language. Additionally, the U.S. government emphasizes that refugees reach early economic

self-sufficiency through low-skilled employment, also known as “survival jobs”. These are often minimum wage jobs. As nearly 30% of refugees aged 25 or older arrive with a bachelor’s degree or higher—a proportion roughly equal to the native-born population—this can create deep frustration for motivated and skilled refugees hoping to continue their careers.

Drawing from available data and UpGlo’s own analysis of its refugee program participants, this report details common barriers that refugees face, and how they can be overcome with targeted interventions.

The report covers five types of legal statuses given to persecuted and vulnerable populations seeking resettlement in the U.S.: Refugee, asylee, Special Immigrant Visa holder, parolee, and Temporary Protected Status holder (see Appendix, Table 1 for definitions). For the purposes of this publication, they are grouped under the blanket term “refugees”. By publishing this report, we aim to highlight the possibilities of investing in full workforce integration for these refugees, identify best practices for the field, and provide recommendations for smart policy.

Key Findings

Challenges facing refugees with professional backgrounds are more complex than those facing their new immigrant peers in the U.S. Refugees frequently have experienced more emotional trauma and longer employment gaps in their careers, resulting in additional barriers to their professional job search compared to other immigrants, and a lower rate of placement in skill-appropriate positions.

Female refugees in particular encounter more job search barriers than male job seekers due to childcare responsibilities and cultural family norms around gender. It is more likely that refugees who are primary caretakers of their dependents will drop out of job placement and training programs in comparison to non-refugee immigrants who have fewer dependents.

Refugees are valuable to the current and future labor force as many are educated, young, and bring skills that are in high demand in this economy—in particular medicine and IT. The U.S. has been more

successful at employing refugees in comparison to other developed countries, however refugees often remain poorer than the native-born population.ⁱ By emphasizing quick employment and economic self-sufficiency during the initial resettlement period, some skilled refugees fail to gain employment commensurate with their skills and experience. These individuals could achieve greater professional success with additional workforce support focused on long-term outcomes.ⁱⁱ

Finally, although many employers recognize that refugees are a diverse source of talent and can often fill in demand positions, they also may lack sufficient information to understand this population. This means that many refugees simply aren't given the same opportunities to interview for professional positions in the U.S. as the U.S.-born or educated population.

Program Solutions/Policy Recommendations

Government, businesses, and the nonprofit sector all have important roles to play in addressing the barriers that keep refugees from achieving their full potential in the U.S. The following recommendations outline a pathway to success for refugee professionals:

- Workforce programs that offer services virtually as well as in person are more beneficial to refugees who face logistical challenges such as taking care of dependents, lack of transportation, or working around a survival job schedule.
- Interactive training focused on moving English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners from fluency in classroom English to fluency in workplace English can greatly increase a job applicant's confidence in their job search and ability to communicate their professional expertise.
- Investments in supporting refugees with childcare, providing advanced ESL geared towards workplace fluency, and programs to help them gain U.S. certifications or advanced technology skills all have proven effective in increasing professional and economic outcomes. Policies that address these needs would yield greater benefits.
- By emphasizing quick employment and economic self-sufficiency, some skilled refugees fail to gain employment commensurate with their skills and experience, and could gain greater economic and professional success with additional workforce support.
- Programs that help employers educate their staff on foreign degrees, work authorization, and the variety of cultural norms among different immigrant groups can greatly increase successful hiring. Such programs include direct introductions to refugee candidates, volunteer networking events, or information sessions to help employers understand immigration policies and international cultural differences.

Introduction

For centuries, the United States has been a beacon of hope and a land of refuge to those seeking freedom from war, poverty, oppression, and political and religious persecution. However, the U.S. refugee policy overhaul in 2017 marks a fundamental shift in how the U.S. allows people to enter the country at a time when 65.6 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced, including 22.5 millionⁱⁱⁱ refugees. In September, the White House announced plans to cap the number of refugees the U.S. will accept in 2018 at 45,000, the lowest number since the current U.S. refugee admissions system was established in 1980.^{iv}

For the purposes of this paper, we have focused mostly on Upwardly Global's information and data. However, please review the Appendix, Section 2 for additional data on refugee resettlement, including country and region of origin, resettlement state, and demographic information.

Upwardly Global is committed to upholding the country's proud tradition of welcoming and integrating newcomers. For more than 17 years, the organization has served thousands of foreign-educated professionals, helping these talented men and women restart their professional careers in the U.S. Although there is abundant documentation of empirically-proven economic benefits of skilled immigrant integration and refugee resettlement in

other contexts (see section titled Why Invest in Immigrant and Refugee Integration), there is a dearth of consistent data on refugee demographics in the U.S. and the benefits of skilled refugee and asylee workforce integration.

In this report, for the first time, UpGlo shares expertise gained from 17 years of workforce development work with over two thousand skilled refugees. We combine existing research in the field with a unique practitioner's perspective to demonstrate the need for public-private investments in skilled refugee workforce integration. This report:

- Highlights successful integration programs and career pathways that lead to employment of skilled immigrants and refugees in their trained professions.
- Shares lessons and expertise UpGlo has learned in working with refugees versus non-refugee immigrants, including outcomes analysis.
- Recommends improvements to streamline and create career pathways for refugee professionals.

The report aims to inform sound policy decisions, streamline cohesive partnerships among community and nongovernmental organizations, and encourage businesses and funders to invest in and hire refugees.

Upwardly Global Workforce and Re-Skilling Programs for Refugees

Upwardly Global Program Details

UpGlo is the first and longest-serving U.S.-based organization that provides streamlined job search and upskilling programs for skilled immigrants and refugees nationally. In 2016 alone, 855 UpGlo job seekers who placed into professional jobs generated \$38 million in additional tax revenue and consumer spending.

Since UpGlo's inception, the organization has focused on skilled immigrant workforce development with a mission to eliminate employment barriers for skilled immigrants and refugees, and facilitate their integration into the professional U.S. workforce. We provide customized online training and support to new Americans while giving them an equal opportunity to find and secure skill-appropriate opportunities and achieve their full economic potential in the U.S. The organization also engages employer partners who benefit from access to this talent pool.^v We provide job seekers across the U.S. with trainings, resources, and support through our online platform, weGlo. Additionally, job seekers have the opportunity to build critical professional networks by interacting with staff,

employer partners, volunteers, and a community of trusted of program alumni.

Further, UpGlo has designed three initiatives to provide vocational training to support refugee professionals in their job search. We are fortunate to have the support of public and private partners in training job seekers around the country. Below, we highlight partners and programs that successfully integrate skilled refugee professionals through educational and professional training programs.

Upskilling

UpGlo's program helps refugee job seekers gain supplemental skills, as well as learn new skills that improve their professional job prospects. These are not skills to move them to new industries (reskilling), but rather skills to make them more competitive in their original industry. For example, a refugee with a background in IT may have spent time out of his or her field and now needs to learn a more up-to-date software package, or obtain a certification that will greatly enhance marketability in the U.S.

Two partnerships are highlighted here, Coursera and Udacity:

Coursera - Coursera for Refugees launched in 2016 as an initiative to provide online education at no cost to refugees around the world. Through a partnership between UpGlo and Coursera for Refugees, 400+ of UpGlo's refugee job seekers have been able to enroll into online classes free of charge. These courses have helped refugees increase their technical skills, overall marketability, and helped them round out business communication skills in English.

Success Stories:

Alejandro, a Cuban refugee living in Washington, was taking all the right steps in his job search. He attended Meetups, practiced his English and met UpGlo volunteers who connected him to their contacts. Alejandro also enthusiastically jumped into Coursera and enrolled in *'Web Application Development with JavaScript and MongoDB'* to acquire new skills and stay sharp for technical interviews. As a result, Alejandro secured a job as a Front-End Web Developer at BlueVolt, an e-learning company in Portland, Oregon. They were so excited about bringing him on that they changed the role from a contract position to a full-time hire.

Arezoo is an IT professional from Iran with a background in software engineering and project management. She used free access to Coursera through UpGlo to practice coding languages she needed to know to be competitive. Arezoo landed a job with Barracuda Networks as a Technical Support Engineer where she uses her IT background to solve hardware and software problems. She also recently referred another IT job seeker to a role within Barracuda, which he was offered and accepted! This is a strong example of how refugees' success often opens doors for other newcomers.

Udacity - Udacity is a for-profit educational organization focused on vocational training courses in IT fields. In partnership with Accenture and the Lowenstein Foundation, UpGlo has supported two cohorts of job seekers totaling 16 candidates to take an industry-recognized six-to-eight month training in IT fields. Through these trainings, job seekers acquire nanodegrees including Front-End Web Development, Android Development, and Data Analysis.

Mid-Career Internship

Designed as a higher form of internship or apprenticeship, paid “midternships” enable refugee professionals to acquire practical experience and receive direct guidance from line managers at a company. Our model is a three-month contract-to-hire format that allows the job seeker to receive on-the-job training while working towards full employment. UpGlo, Box (a tech company specializing in file sharing and content management), and TripIt (a travel itinerary and trip planner company) have partnered together on this initiative. After collaboratively designing an interview and onboarding process that keeps in mind common application barriers for underrepresented talent, Box hired their first UpGlo midtern, a software engineer.

Pre-Apprenticeship

Primarily for IT job seekers, pre-apprenticeships are designed to enhance IT job seekers’ competitiveness through a combination of soft skills training, hard skills training, and/or apprenticeships. Funding has been made possible by the City of San Francisco, Accenture, and JP Morgan Chase in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Success Stories:

Through UpGlo’s City of San Francisco-funded pre-apprenticeship program, two of our IT job seekers were accepted into the TechSF training program for web development where

they will receive 160+ hours of advanced technical training, portfolio support, and connections to apprenticeships and full-time roles.

Enhanced ESL

Education First (EF) is a renowned international English language training institute whose partnership with UpGlo provides objective English language assessments and virtual courses designed to enhance the learner’s proficiency in English for the workplace. UpGlo participants complete the assessment when applying to our Job Search Program. Depending on their score, they may be put on hold for low English level, accepted into the regular UpGlo program, or accepted into the UpGlo program with enhanced ESL training provided by EF.

EF’s instruction is completely online. Web-based, any-time access to the program addresses typical barriers of access - such as transportation, hours, and childcare - making courses accessible and flexible for our job seekers. Courses range from general English, office English, and business English to specialized English for industries including engineering, medical, legal, IT, scientific, industrial, and finance.

In the Appendix, Table 2 and Table 3, we have highlighted many other organizations that are doing refugee workforce integration and reskilling.

Upwardly Global Program Participant Demographics and Insights

In working with job seekers who have come to the U.S. through the refugee process as well as other immigration paths, including the diversity lottery and family reunification, we continuously evaluate our data and note outcome trends among these groups. More specifically, by comparing refugees with non-refugee immigrants, we are able to better understand the common experiences refugees face during their unique journeys to overcoming employment barriers in the U.S.

UpGlo recently conducted a study of our data focused on two specific stages of the Job Search Program: Training completion and job placement. For this data study, we considered asylees, refugees, Special Immigrant Visa holders, parolees, and Temporary Protected Status as one group called “refugees”, and the remainder of the population as “non-refugees”. The data were gathered from 5,320 eligible applicants who were accepted into UpGlo’s program from January 2014 to November 2016.

The analysis shows that job placement rates were 6% lower for refugees compared to their non-refugee peers.

This means that fewer refugees are able to go back to their professional fields in comparison to immigrants, despite having similar professional skills. Among the refugee group as a whole, SIVs had the lowest placement success.

The factors affecting the refugees’ outcomes included level of English fluency, number of dependents, survival job schedules, and the length of time they had been out of professional work. They were also less likely to complete training than their non-refugee counterparts, at 79% versus 82%, likely due to these same factors. Language fluency in particular influences the confidence and communication skills that are essential in the job search process. Refugees with self-reported advanced English speaking ability were 25% more likely to secure professional jobs than the overall UpGlo jobseeker population. Those with two or more children were 8% less likely to find jobs, while those with three or more children were 11% less likely to find jobs than the overall jobseeker population. Refugees working survival jobs were 7% less likely to be placed.

We also found that among the refugee cohort, female refugees were 4.5% more likely to complete UpGlo's trainings than their male counterparts, but were 12.8% less likely to be placed into jobs. In comparing refugees to non-refugees, one difference that surfaced is the number of dependents in the family structure. In general, refugees have more dependents than non-refugee immigrants in our program and the percentage of refugees having 3+ dependents is almost double those with non-refugee status (9% vs. 5%). We found that the number of dependents influenced training completion rate: Refugees with 3+ dependents were 9% less likely to complete the training than non-refugees.

The evidence from our data analysis suggests that gender and number of dependents are significant factors in determining successful outcomes. Refugees who are primary caregivers of their dependents are more likely to drop out of the training program in comparison to non-refugees who have fewer dependents. A higher number of dependents negatively impacts refugees' ability to complete online training as well as attend in-person networking events. This in turn affects their ability to build

the professional network that is crucial to job placement. Our analysis points to a great, unfilled need for broader childcare accessibility within the refugee integration system.

The findings from our study are consistent with UpGlo staff members' observations. Refugees are vulnerable to psychological distress due to uprooting and adjustment difficulties in the resettlement country, such as language, occupational problems, and cultural conflict. In coaching refugees through the job search, we see that the challenges can be more complex than those facing their new immigrant peers.

Refugees also tend to have longer employment gaps in their careers resulting from the flight from political turmoil and war. U.S. employers are likely to see employment gaps as a cause for concern in reviewing candidates. Refugees also have higher levels of financial instability and can be more isolated from other immigrant professionals who tend to have more robust support structures within immigrant communities.

Why Invest in Immigrant and Refugee Integration?

Launched at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in 2016, the Tent Partnership brings the private sector, NGOs including Upwardly Global, and governments together to help end the refugee crisis. Tent Foundation published the first comprehensive report, *Refugees Work*^{vi}, looking at the socioeconomic benefits of refugee integration in developed countries. In this section, we summarize much of that research. We then bring the analysis back to the United States by looking at impact.

Many refugees and immigrants achieve success and contribute to their surrounding communities due to their diverse experiences and backgrounds. “Simply by being aware that there are several ways of approaching the problem, someone from a multicultural background is more likely to view any situation from multiple perspectives,” says Donald Campbell, a leading psychologist in creativity research.^{vii} Previous studies of the economic impact of migrants as a whole have shown that they make a positive contribution to the host country, aid the country of origin, and improve living standards for their children.^{viii}

Accepting refugees is not only a humanitarian and legal obligation, but an investment that leads to long-term socioeconomic benefits. According to *Refugees Work*, welcoming refugees yields an immediate demand in addition to “deftness, dynamism, diversity, demographics and debt dividends”.^{ix} The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has estimated that every euro spent in welcoming refugees generates nearly a two euro return in economic benefits within five years.^x In fact, Vietnamese refugees resettled in the U.S. in the late 1970s arrived with very little or no English and few assets or relevant skills. Yet, they now have a higher employment rate and greater average income than people born in the U.S. and they have played a great role in building trade relations and investment links with Vietnam.^{xi}

We recognize that admitting refugees and facilitating their integration requires an investment, usually in the form of public funds and services. In fiscal year 2014, the budget for the U.S. refugee resettlement program was \$582 million, resulting in an \$8,300 per-individual cost.^{xii} However, this investment yields significant benefits for the U.S. economy and society.

A September 18, 2017 article in The New York Times reported key findings from an unpublished study by the Department of Health and Human Services. The study found that refugees “contributed an estimated \$269.1 billion in revenues to all levels of government between 2005 and 2014. Overall, this report estimated that the net fiscal impact of refugees was positive over the 10-year period, at \$63 billion.”^{xxiii}

Demand for Workers

Currently, in many economies there are not enough workers (skilled and unskilled) to meet the economic demand. Consequently, an initial investment in job search programming and reskilling or upskilling for refugees can act as an economic stimulus.^{xiv} In fact, in many American cities and states, labor shortages are weighing on overall economic growth, slowing the pace of expansion in fast-growing regions, even as unemployment remains high in select cities recovering from the 2008 recession.^{xv} Instead, these regions could utilize refugee talent to fill needs. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has estimated that additional government spending on refugees in the EU will boost growth by 0.1-0.2% of GDP.^{xvi} In the example of Germany, the German Institute for Economic Research calculates that by

2030 refugees will have boosted the German economy by 0.5% through the demand dividend.^{xvii}

Skills that Complement the Workforce

There is a misconception that refugees’ economic contributions depend on their skill level with only skilled refugees making a positive contribution and lower skilled ones having a negative impact. Refugees’ contributions to the labor market depend on whether their characteristics are different and complementary to those of local workforce.^{xviii} The belief that refugees or migrants are taking local jobs from natives happens to be incorrect as well. Refugees create jobs when they spend their wages and boost the demand for workers who produce goods and services. Further, when low-skilled refugees take low-skill jobs, it enables low-skilled locals to take higher skilled jobs they prefer, which increases wages and job satisfaction. For example, refugees who become construction workers allow for more positions as supervisors and building suppliers that natives fill.^{xix} In economies, including the U.S., where there are shortages of workers with particular skills, skilled refugees boost productivity of local workers.

Conversely, there are significant skills gaps in the United States and other advanced economies. The National Federation of Independent Business found that as of September 2017, 49% of small businesses reported that they were unable to find qualified applicants to fill job openings. Chief executive officers report shortages of workers for middle-class-wage jobs such as nurses, construction workers, truck drivers, oil field workers, automotive technicians, industrial technicians, heavy equipment operators, computer network support specialists, web developers, and insurance specialists.^{xx} Many refugees possess the relevant skill sets to immediately help fill an advanced economy's skills gap, or could do so after receiving initial reskilling or upskilling support.

One notable statistic shows that refugees are just as educated as the native born population. 28% of refugees aged 25 and older have bachelor's degrees or higher, a similar statistic to the U.S.-born population. When the data are parsed, refugees from certain countries are more educated on the whole than the U.S. population – notably Iranians,

Russians, and Ukrainians.^{xxi} The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation found that in 2012, immigrants to the U.S. were almost twice as likely to start a business as native-born Americans. "More than 40% of Fortune 500 companies in 2010 were founded by an immigrant or the child of an immigrant."^{xxii} Of these founders, refugees include:

- Andy Grove, Hungarian refugee, founder of Intel with a value of \$163 billion in 2015.
- Jan Koum, Ukrainian refugee, founder of WhatsApp which in 2014 was purchased by Facebook for \$22 billion.
- Steve Jobs, the son of a Syrian refugee, co-founder of Apple, currently valued at an estimated \$750 billion.

The Partnership for a New American Economy recently found that more than three in four patents generated at the top patent-producing U.S. universities had at least one foreign-born inventor in 2011^{xxiii}. Diversity brings innovation and boosts productivity, and by hiring refugees many employers could bring higher profits to their businesses.

Youth Movement

Finally, as the data in the appendix show, the majority of refugees arriving in the U.S. are young adults. The median age in 2013, for example, was 25 years. Younger refugees are a particular benefit to an aging society. It is estimated that the ratio of working-age population to retirement-age population in the U.S. is going to fall from 4.5 to 2.8 in the next 15 years, meaning the number of eligible native workers is declining. Due to the Baby Boom generation retiring and people living longer, millions of retirees need to be supported by a declining native working-age population. Without migration, the retirement-age population is projected to increase by 8 million to 17.4 million between 2015 and 2020.^{xxiv} Young and hard-working refugees could boost the aging U.S. labor force. Further, refugees who have been educated abroad are net contributors to public finances because the cost of education has been borne by education systems outside the U.S.

Case Studies

In 2012, 598 refugees were resettled in Cleveland, Ohio, adding to a refugee community of more than 4,000, including people from Bhutan, Ukraine, Burma, and Somalia.

The refugee resettlement member organizations spent an estimated \$4.8 million on refugee services including

staff salaries, purchasing supplies, clothing, and transportation. The impact of resettling refugees was measured from three sources: Household spending of the refugee families, refugee-owned businesses, and refugee service organizations. Once adjusted to their new life, they have provided substantial contributions to the local economy and workforce. The study found that the total economic impact of refugees in the area in 2012 was \$48 million and the creation of 650 jobs. The total fiscal impact has been estimated at \$2.7 million in tax revenue alone to local and state governments.^{xxv}

In a study commissioned by the Tennessee State Legislature, the Fiscal Review committee of the State of Tennessee examined the net economic impact of the refugee resettlement program on the state since 1990. Based on the attainable information collected, on average, refugees and their descendants have accounted for 0.73 of the state's population since 1990.

Cumulatively, they estimated that the state expenditures attributed to refugees and their descendants was at least \$753 million since 1990, while the cumulative state revenue was \$1.4 billion. Over a 22-year span, the study calculates that refugees have contributed a net gain of \$634 million to the state's economy.

Upwardly Global's Experience with Barriers to Placement

Since 2001, Upwardly Global has accepted 3,265 refugees into our job search program. As of October 2017, we have helped 1,199 secure jobs within professional fields. Upwardly Global's job search coaches, called Employment Service Associates (ESAs), are the backbone of our work. ESAs have daily conversations with refugee job seekers to help them create job search strategies, update their resumes, prepare for interviews, and navigate the professional and personal challenges that come with arriving in the United States without a support system or knowledge of the American job market. In the thousands of conversations that ESAs have had with refugee job seekers, some recurring themes have surfaced and continue to arise that are either unique to refugee job seekers or more pronounced in their job search experience compared to non-refugee participants.

The following are barriers that Upwardly Global job coaches have identified to be common and at times unique to the refugee job search experience:

- A focus on attaining a job as quickly as possible, often low paying and requiring few skills, prevents refugees from allocating an appropriate amount of time and energy to securing employment that matches their skill set
- Refugees receive support from multiple service providers, many of which offer conflicting advice on building a strategy and setting realistic expectations for a job search
- Lower levels of English proficiency
- Mental health challenges related to previous circumstances in their home country or difficulty adjusting to new surroundings
- Significant gaps in work experience

These barriers affect many job seekers within our program, but they affect most refugee job seekers.

Obtaining any type of employment is important for new refugees – it can provide self-confidence in individuals who are able to provide for their families and facilitate interaction with long-term community members.

However, these first jobs often take precedent over a more robust job search that could lead to employment in more lucrative professional fields that utilize a job seeker's unique skills. As evidenced by data analysis discussed in previous sections, a common problem is that refugee job seekers are unable to commit the time and resources required for a professional job search because of the long hours and inflexible schedules at a survival job.

Additionally, a newly-arrived refugee can find it confusing to identify and balance employment priorities when receiving conflicting advice about strategy. With some service providers focusing on support for immediate employment and others focusing on assistance with a professional job search, refugees feel pulled in different directions and struggle to identify a coherent strategy. A combination of significant gaps in work experience, low level of English proficiency, and mental health challenges can make a survival job appear to be the most appropriate route for employment, even for professional refugees. These challenges are more likely to affect refugees than non-refugee immigrants by virtue of their circumstances of forced migration – long gaps in employment often stem from many years, at times more than decade, in refugee camps awaiting resettlement. While many non-refugee immigrants plan their moves to the U.S. and begin

honing their English skills in advance, refugees are forced to flee quickly without any knowledge of their final destination, thus making planning for resettlement with language training difficult. On top of this, mental health issues stemming from the escape of violence and persecution, often compounded by years in a refugee camp, are a frequent challenge that resettlement service providers are often under-equipped to support. Even upon resettlement, an uncertain political climate and difficulty navigating the immigration system can discourage refugee job seekers from searching for professional jobs.

Though not unique to refugees, but perhaps particularly helpful for refugees where communities are less diverse, integration into a local community has a myriad of benefits that can indirectly move refugees towards a successful job search. Integration into local communities creates opportunities for refugees to speak English and acculturate with local populations, to develop a sense of support and security, and to feel some alleviation from emotional trauma.

Based on the stories of more than 1,000 refugee job seekers, ESAs have noted that rebuilding a career and rebuilding a community are both directly and indirectly related.

Next Steps and Policy Recommendations

Collect better data on refugee demographics and education attainment

There is an overall lack of consistency and data on refugee demographics and their skills upon arrival to the United States. The U.S. Refugee Processing Center (USRAPS) collects voluntary surveys, however, the data are inconsistent and missing for most countries (for instance, the data points on refugees from Afghanistan are different from those from Iraq). To evaluate the impact of resettlement programs and design appropriate integration for the population, better data must be collected by all actors. The Urban Institute is currently fielding the Annual Survey of Refugees for the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement and leading an effort to assess and redesign the survey while convening stakeholders to set a policy research agenda on refugee self-sufficiency and integration in the United States.^{xxvii}

More virtual programs

We have found that taking care of family, lack of transportation, or having a survival job are each likely to hinder refugees from attending in-person and local professional networking events and programs. At UpGlo, we have successfully provided virtual networking events where job seekers are connected

to other professionals in the convenience of their home. We encourage service providers to create more virtual opportunities for refugee professionals to meet other professionals and build their network.

Female-focused programs

Gender is an important aspect of immigrant integration. Our analysis shows that although more female refugees complete job search training, fewer of them achieve job placement. Creating female-focused programs for refugee job seekers could assist refugee women to succeed at a higher rate. This recommendation can be closely tied to virtual events recommendations.

Add English in the Workplace focused trainings

Our data analysis shows the importance of advanced English speaking skills leading to higher placements rates. In addition to providing training on resume development, interviewing, cover letter development, networking, and creating a LinkedIn profile, service providers should assist refugee job seekers with interactive trainings focused on moving ESL learners from general fluency to workplace fluency, which greatly increases a job applicant's confidence in their job search and ability to succeed at work.

Childcare services for refugees with a large number of dependents

This research report points out the need to create inclusive approaches that address specific needs of the refugee population who are unemployed or work in low-skilled jobs regardless of where they acquired their skills and education. As evidenced by our data, refugees with a large number of dependents do not fare as well in the job market; our recommendation is to provide childcare to refugees while they are searching for work.

Replicate workforce integration programs

Just as the congressional Refugee Act of 1980 standardized resettlement services for all refugees, we must standardize workforce integration services for all refugees.

Because many services are funded by community foundations for local impact, we lack a mechanism to replicate proven workforce programs across the country.

Employer-focused training and inclusion programs

Upwardly Global has found that when employers conscientiously educate their recruiting teams and hiring managers on what it means to have a foreign degree and experience, and how immigration channels function with different types of work authorization, both the employers and the skilled immigrant job seekers benefit. Nonprofits and government agencies alike can help to educate employers on these different topics, help make direct introductions, and hold events for networking. All of this can help employers understand policies as well as cultural differences.

Conclusion

All refugees who bring their professional talent and skill sets to the United States should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. As a nation, we have an ethical responsibility to support those fleeing violence and persecution, as well as an economic incentive to facilitate refugees moving back into their careers. Refugees bring a diversity of skills and abilities that can complement the native-born workforce and strengthen our economy. When encountering the additional barriers to full economic integration that refugees face, communities and institutions can use the recommendations presented in this report to more quickly move refugees to full economic integration.

The recommendations in this paper are meant to build and continue the conversation about the economic integration of refugees and inspire potential partners to take action.

Government, business, and the nonprofit sector all have a role to play in investing in refugees' economic success. While businesses can rethink hiring practices to be more inclusive and community organizations can offer programming, government at all levels can function as a facilitator and convener that encourages new and innovative integration techniques. We all should have an interest in the full economic integration of refugees – in 2016, UpGlo helped 247 refugees gain full-time positions with an average income of \$47,000 per year. Through a one-time intervention, UpGlo and our partners helped our clients lift themselves out of poverty and become significant economic contributors. It's exciting to imagine what could be accomplished with more partnerships between government, business, and the nonprofit sector.

Appendix

Table 1. Types of Statutes and Legal Rights for Persecuted Populations in the United States

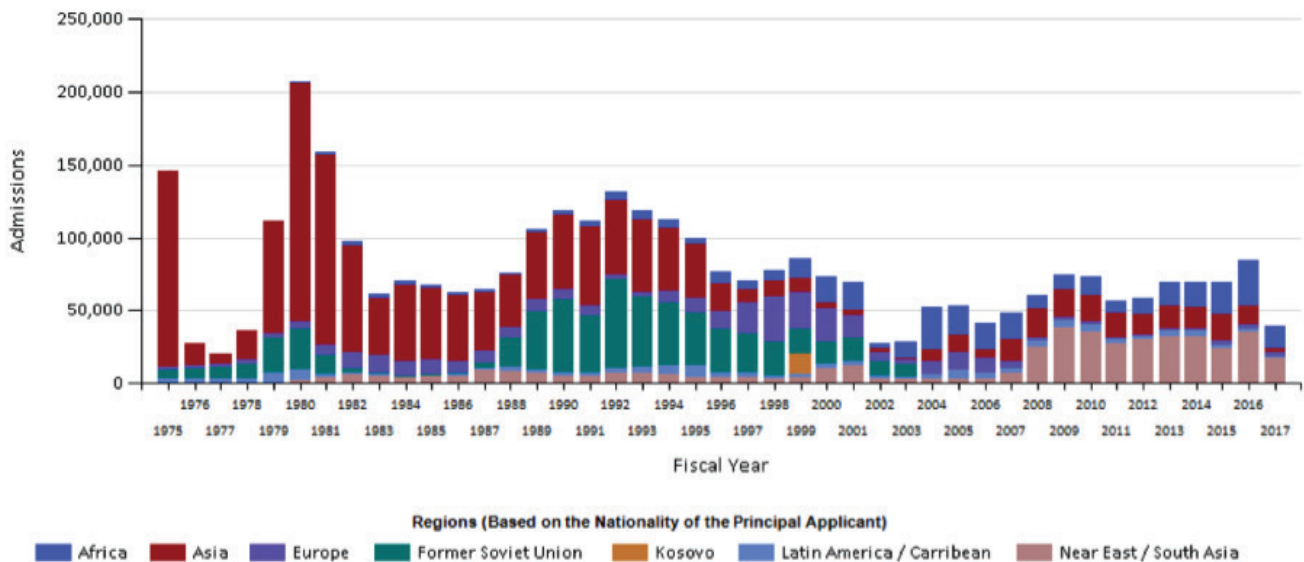
There are five types of legal statuses given to persecuted and vulnerable populations seeking resettlement in the U.S. discussed in this paper: a refugee, an asylee, a Special Immigrant Visa holder, a parolee, and one with temporary protected status. All these groups are screened extensively by various government agencies.

The commonality for all three groups is the fear of persecution and inability to return back to their country of origin. Although the timeline for work authorization and permanent residency may differ for each group, all are eligible to seek assistance from the resettlement community.

Legal Status Definition	Right to Work	Right to Permanent Residency
Asylee – fits requirements of living under the threat of persecution. The status is similar to that of a refugee but an asylee is already present in the United States or is seeking admission at a port of entry	Apply for work authorization 150 days after submitting a completed application for asylum. The work authorization can be extended by USCIS for the length of time required to finalize and adjudicate an asylee's application for asylum	Eligible to apply one year after being granted asylum
Parolee – an individual who is ineligible to enter as a refugee or immigrant may be granted seldom-used parole for humanitarian or emergency reasons.	May have temporary work authorization, but may qualify after one year	Certain parolees are eligible for permanent residency after one year
Refugee – is a person of special humanitarian concern demonstrating fear of persecution; located outside of the U.S. and is not firmly resettled in another country	Receive permanent work authorization upon admission to the United States	
Special Immigrant Visa – an Afghan or Iraqi translator who has served the U.S. government and is under threat of persecution due to their work	Similar to refugees, receive permanent work authorization upon admission to the United States	Eligible to apply one year after the date of admission
Temporary Protected Status – temporary immigration status, granted to citizens from certain eligible nations	Eligible to receive employment authorization document, depending on whether they have approval on initial form	Receive permanent residency upon arrival Does not typically lead to permanent residency

Section 2. Additional Data

Since 1975, the U.S. has resettled more than 3 million refugees. Although the United States refugee resettlement program is the largest – and one of the oldest – in the world, the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program was only officially set up in 1980. Since the ruling of the 1980 Act, annual admissions have ranged from 207,116 in 1980 to a low of 27,100 in 2002 due to the September 11th attacks.^{xxvii} Although the number of refugees has had a steady but slow increase post-2002, it has not gotten back up to the high figures of the 1980s and 1990s (*Graph 1.*).



Graph 1. *U.S. Refugee Admissions by Region FY 1975-2017.* Refugee Processing Center (USRAPS) Data April 2017.

U.S. Refugee Population and Demographics

Due to fluctuating international crises, the demographics of admitted refugees has changed over time as well. Every year, the President, in consultation with Congress, determines the admission ceiling in response to ongoing humanitarian crises in the world. Consequently, the top ten countries of origin of refugees in fiscal years (FY) 2014-2016 included Iraq, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria and Somalia due to ongoing conflicts and civil wars in those countries.

In this section, we mainly focus on the refugee population from these top 10 countries. We have created three interactive dashboards of the refugee population demographics. Below are static graphs of two of them, but please visit [**https://public.tableau.com/profile/upwardly.global#!/**](https://public.tableau.com/profile/upwardly.global#!/) to view and manipulate the dashboards. Each dashboard consists of interconnected maps and graphs filtering specific data by fiscal years and other variables. The first dashboard includes graphical representation of Refugees by Country of Origin and by state in which they resettle.

Key Metrics

Number of Refugees

224,400

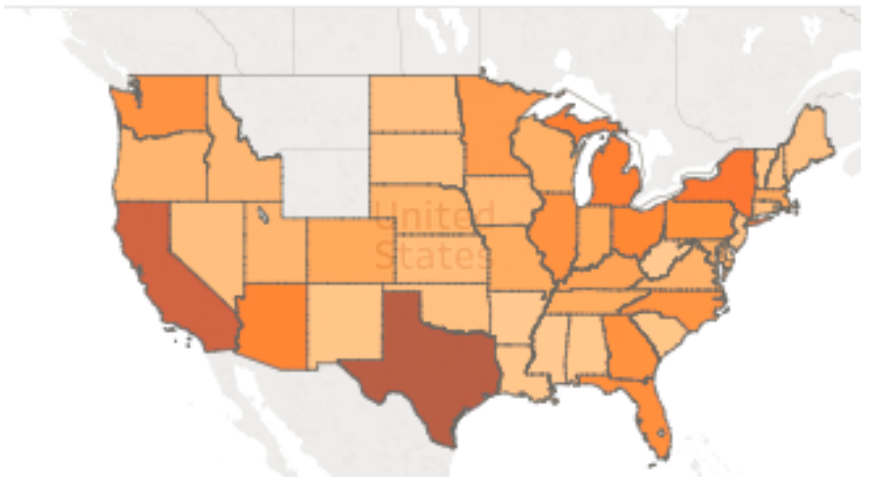
Total Number of Countries

92

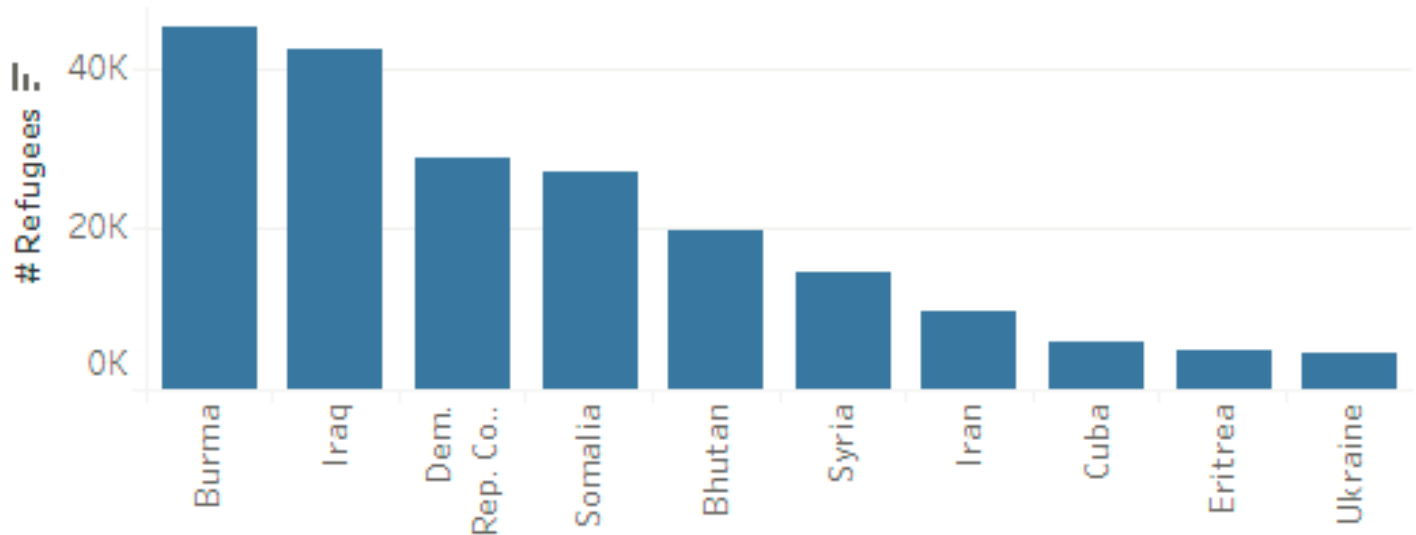
Number of States/Territories

50

Refugees by State



Refugees by Origin Country (Top 10)

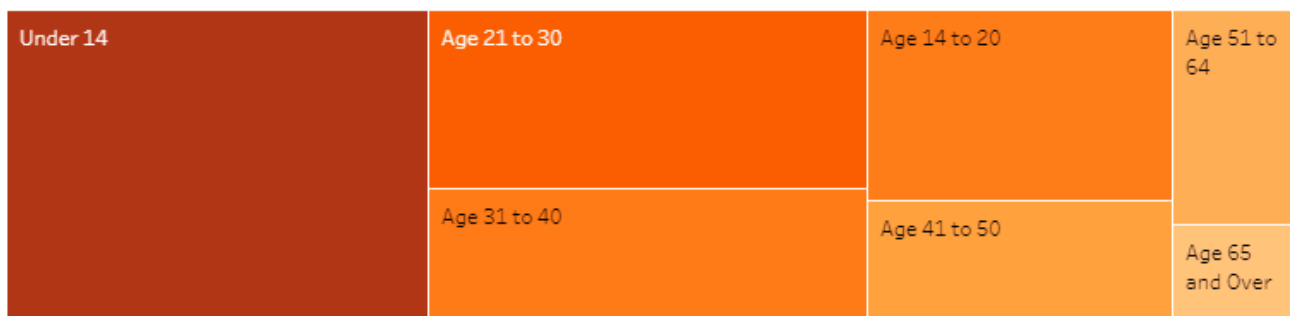


Top 10 Countries and States

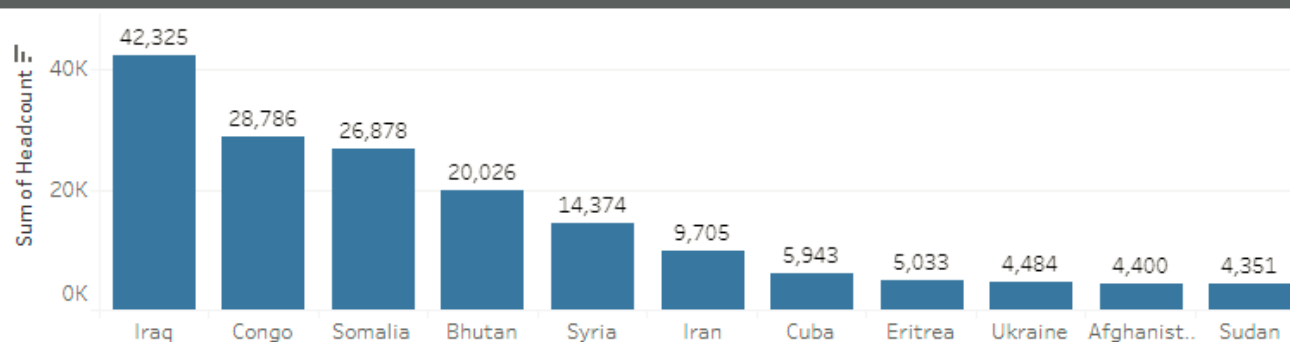
Country	State	#
Burma	TEXAS	6,546
	NEW YORK	3,155
	INDIANA	4,054
Iraq	TEXAS	5,643
	MICHIGAN	5,300
	CALIFORNIA	6,223
Somalia	MINNESOTA	3,263
Bhutan	OHIO	3,535
Iran	CALIFORNIA	5,768
Cuba	FLORIDA	3,311

The second dashboard includes data around Refugees by Continent and month they are resettled and is not pictured here. The third dashboard, below, includes demographic data around age, education, ethnicity, religion, and gender of refugees resettled. All of these dashboards are from fiscal years 2014-2016 and are interactive if viewed online.

Demographic Breakdown



Top 12 Countries by Demographic



Demographic By Country

Category	Afghanistan	Bhutan	Congo	Cuba	Eritrea	Iran	Iraq	Somalia	Sudan	Syria	Ukraine	Grand Total
Under 14	1,340	4,818	11,817	997	1,548	1,062	12,576	10,325	1,458	6,889	1,375	54,205
Age 14 to 20	1,111	3,026	5,661	749	923	707	4,625	4,291	476	1,761	546	23,876
Age 21 to 30	836	4,242	4,956	451	1,123	2,295	8,831	6,097	914	1,634	825	32,204
Age 31 to 40	531	2,917	2,918	901	890	2,028	7,119	3,052	923	2,297	621	24,197
Age 41 to 50	356	2,141	1,927	1,457	361	1,109	4,130	1,824	390	1,218	412	15,325
Age 51 to 64	162	1,859	1,180	877	161	1,472	3,475	1,009	164	455	482	11,296
Age 65 and Over	64	1,023	327	511	27	1,032	1,569	280	26	120	223	5,202
Grand Total	4,400	20,026	28,786	5,943	5,033	9,705	42,325	26,878	4,351	14,374	4,484	166,305

Gender Breakdown

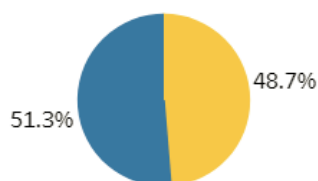


Table 2: *Community Organizations Providing Employment and Integration Services.*^{xxix}

Organization/ Program	Description
Welcome Back Initiative	The Welcome Back Initiative (WBI) has 11 Welcome Back Centers across the U.S. Each center serves as an information and resource center for people who have received their formal education and training in a health profession field outside of the U.S., who live in the center's respective state/ area, and who would like to enter or to advance their career in the U.S. healthcare sector. The WBI builds a bridge between the pool of internationally trained health workers already living in the United States and the need for linguistically and culturally competent health services in underserved communities.
Emily Griffith Technical College	Emily Griffith Technical College in Denver offers transition classes which are specifically designed to support re-claiming careers-of-origin for foreign-trained professionals. Navigators are specifically trained in motivational interviewing to support career pathway planning that brings a refugee or immigrant professional's career back into play. Additionally, Emily Griffith Technical College partners with at least 23 other immigrant-focused organizations as well as Colorado's refugee resettlement agencies to serve all newly arriving refugees with a unique refugee ESL program, transition programs, and certificate programs. The college has also published ESL curricula for refugee and immigrant professionals.
Global Talent Idaho	In partnership with UpGlo, the Job Seekers Program at Global Talent Idaho provides resources for foreign-trained professionals searching for a way back to former careers in Idaho. Additionally, the Professional Licensing and Credentialing Guidance Guides were created to help skilled immigrants and refugees who have interrupted careers as doctors, engineers, teachers, and other regulated professions understand all of the steps required to earn an Idaho state professional license or credential to return to the full practice of a regulated profession. or credential to return to the full practice of a regulated profession.

The College of Western Idaho	<p>The Multicultural Healthcare Program at the College of Western Idaho is a career ladder training program designed to facilitate viable career pathways in healthcare professions that will lead to employment for local people whose primary language is not English. The program offers an ESL course as part of its Nursing Assistant training. A unique feature of this healthcare program is that ESL teachers participate in the classroom training offering English fluency tutoring to those with limited English to ensure their completion of the program with optimum success.</p>
Chicago Bilingual Nurse Consortium	<p>The overarching goal for CBNC is to assist resident IEN's re-entry into nursing practice; thus increasing the number of bilingual, bicultural nurses to serve the needs of immigrants and non-English speaking patient populations in order to provide culturally sensitive and quality health care. CBNC accomplishes this by: Addressing barriers and challenges in the recruitment and licensure of IENs; Coordinating services for IENs across professional organizations and the workforce; Assisting IENs to navigate the health care, immigration, and education systems to secure licensure as registered professional nurses in Illinois.</p>
Greater Louisville International Professionals	<p>Greater Louisville International Professionals, at the Greater Louisville Chamber of Commerce, is committed to providing a platform of distinct initiatives, such as social media networks, workshops, and hosted events to engage and connect the accomplished individuals of the international and local community. The program primarily provides networking opportunities and connections to community resources to international professionals.</p>
St. Louis Mosaic Project's Professional Connector Program	<p>The Mosaic Professional Connector Program, an initiative of the St. Louis Mosaic Project at the World Trade Center, matches participants who have a long-term 3+ year visa and foreign college degree with a local Connector in their field for a coffee and three more professional introductions. There are also programs for entrepreneurship and international student/corporate hiring, connecting foreign-born professionals to resources and helping them navigate the St. Louis job market.</p>

Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE)	CCCIE is a national network of community colleges and other organizations committed to increasing educational and career opportunities for immigrant and refugee students through action-based research, best practices, advocacy, and outreach. The consortium is hosted and led by Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York. CCCIE's mission is to build the capacity of community colleges to accelerate immigrant and refugee success and raise awareness of the essential role these colleges play in advancing immigrant integration in communities. CCCIE focuses on student success/completion, academic and career preparation, and building community partnerships.
Cooper Union at CAMBA	The Cooper Union's Retraining Program for Immigrant Engineers at CAMBA provides admitted participants the opportunity to update their skills and work in their chosen fields by offering them professional courses and job placement assistance free of charge. The program includes courses in information technology as well as chemical, mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering.
WES Global Talent Bridge	WES Global Talent Bridge is dedicated to helping skilled immigrants fully utilize their talents and education in the United States. WES Global Talent Bridge collaborates with institutional partners including community-based organizations to help skilled immigrants leverage their training, achieve their academic and professional goals, and contribute their talents to their full potential.
Refugee Focused Employment and Education Programs	
Forced Migration Upward Mobility Project	The Forced Migration Upward Mobility Project (FMUMP) helps understand and inform paths of upward mobility for newcomer populations from the most vulnerable to the highly skilled. FMUMP works with practitioners, the private sector, and refugees to develop sound programs based on research outcomes that contribute to alternative and sustainable livelihood practices in resettlement. sustainable livelihood practices in resettlement.
Tatweer	Tatweer, an initiative of Jewish Family Service Seattle, is a mentorship program for highly skilled refugees. Tatweer pairs refugee professionals with volunteer mentors in their field. These mentors provide industry-specific career advice and the networking opportunities necessary for advancement. Tatweer also provides individualized case management and teaches job search skills that are specific to the U.S. workplace.

Table 3. *Skilled Immigrant and Refugee Integration Programs Focused on Employment and Upskilling*

Organization/Program	Description
Baltimore Alliance for Career in Healthcare (BACH)	<p>A nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating the critical shortage of qualified healthcare workers in the Baltimore area by working with local agencies, healthcare institutions, and other entities to create opportunities for residents to pursue careers in health professions. The new apprenticeship pilot seeks to engage under-employed or unemployed immigrants in Baltimore City to re-enter the healthcare industry through participation in competency-based apprenticeships in middle-skill occupations such as Environmental Care Supervisor, Surgical Technologist, and Critical Care Technician.</p> <p>A competency-based structure allows participants with previous training to progress and increase their earnings more quickly. The program also seeks to remove barriers faced by many skilled immigrants such as English proficiency and understanding of U.S. workplace culture through contextualized English as a Second Language courses, coaching, and Essential Skills courses. While partnering with local medical centers, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, BACH seeks to fill the gap by training immigrants for middle-skill rather than entry-level jobs with family sustaining wages.</p>
Boston Center for Refugee Health and Human Rights (BCRHHR)	<p>BCRHHR provides holistic healthcare coordination with social services and legal aid for refugees, asylum seekers and torture survivors while also providing career development training, case management and refugee patient navigation. Half of the population served are highly skilled with the majority being women. The organization has had a high impact in career development of refugees: 77% who completed pre-employment training either obtained a job or were accepted into an upskilling program within six months of training completion. BCRHHR has assisted more than 5,000 individuals to rebuild their lives in the U.S. through services while supporting the healing and recover process.</p>

International Rescue Committee Career Development Program	<p>IRC's Career Development (CD) Programs help clients transition from low-wage, low-skill jobs into higher-paying, higher-skilled careers. While project designs vary in IRC offices to adapt to local employment market opportunities and caseloads, there are four common components that define its approach across all CD Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive, one-on-one case management & career counseling support and educational navigation • Advanced Work Readiness Training • Support in overcoming financial barriers to achievement of vocational certificates/degrees/licenses, etc. • Career-Pathway Job Placement <p>Furthermore, depending on local capacity, client base, and job markets, offices may implement CD Programming through a sector-specific career pathway approach, an individualized client-centered approach, or both. Through CD Programs, IRC aims to build upon its highly successful national Early Employment programming for low-income immigrants – programs that consistently achieve job placement rates of over 80% for some of the most vulnerable, marginalized, and underserved populations in the country. Whether helping foreign-trained professionals resume their careers in the U.S. or supporting newly arrived refugees to take their first steps towards a fulfilling and viable career, IRC's CD Programs aim to leverage the agency's unique competencies to help clients move into living-wage jobs.</p>
Coursera for Refugees	<p>Coursera for Refugees enables an unlimited number of nonprofits that work with refugees to apply for at least one year of group financial aid, learner engagement data, private communication forms, and dedicated Coursera technical support. Full financial aid is offered for Course Certificates. This is done in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, to provide in-person facilitation of courses via Embassies and Consulates.</p>
Udacity	<p>Udacity offers free online courses for refugees, as well as advanced standing to refugees who complete MOOCs offered on platforms such as Coursera, or EdX.</p>

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