

# WE Global Network

## Serving Highly Skilled Immigrants



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State of Michigan



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# Immigrant Initiatives State Organizational Structure

Governor Rick Snyder created the Michigan Office for New Americans (MONA) through Executive Order 2014-2. Its mission: to help grow Michigan's economy by attracting global talent to our state and promote the skills, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit of our immigrant communities.

The Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), created by Executive Order 2011-4, is Michigan's primary regulatory department – housing 49% of all state regulations and responsible for, among many other jurisdictions, all professional licensing and regulation.

Recognizing the synergy between the mission of MONA and the professional licensing responsibilities of LARA, Governor Snyder transferred MONA into LARA as an independent entity through Executive Order 2014-12.

# Partnerships with Ethnic Chamber Communities

- MONA works closely with a strong group of partners representing Michigan's extensive immigrant and ethnic communities – loosely referred to as MONA's kitchen cabinet.
- MONA's kitchen cabinet meets at least quarterly to discuss initiatives, brainstorm ideas, share developments within communities, and discuss communication strategies.
- Participation within the kitchen cabinet is both geographically and ethnically diverse and includes long-established and newer ethnic chambers.

# Initiatives Directed Toward Skilled Immigrants

## PROGRESS TO DATE

# Upwardly Global Partnership

- In June of 2015, Michigan partnered with Upwardly Global to become the fourth state to open an Upwardly Global office – located in the heart of Detroit, a city with a strong immigrant and refugee population and a rebuilding economy.
- Upwardly Global's Job Seeker Services Program prepares educated and skilled immigrants, refugees, and asylees to overcome the numerous barriers to professional employment.
- Upwardly Global's Employer Network Program partners with employers to raise awareness of the skilled immigrant population and increase the employers' capacity to integrate this population into the mainstream workforce.
- Upwardly Global's average income increase one year after placement is \$42,000.
- To date, 19 candidates have been placed through the partnership in a wide range of professions.

# Upwardly Global/MONA Success Stories

- Mazin, a refugee from Iraq with more than 20 years of experience as an Electrical and Controls Engineer, secured a job as **Electrical Controls Technician with Aichelin Heat Treatment Systems** with a starting salary of \$62,000 and full benefits.
- Eduardo is a marketing executive from Mexico with more than 10 years of experience with GM Mexico. He secured a position with **Fiat Chrysler Automobiles as an International Marketing Manager** with a starting salary of \$110,000 and full benefits.
- Pavel, originally from the Russian Federation with more than 5 years of experience, secured a position as **Lotus Notes Administrator with Transway Inc.** with a starting salary of \$77,000 and benefits.
- Zeyad, a refugee from Iraq with more than 9 years of experience as IT Project Manager, secured a position as **Systems/Applications Engineering Analyst with Comerica Bank** with a starting salary of \$68,500 and full benefits.

# Licensing Guides – the Beginning

- In June of 2014, LARA and MONA issued their first licensing guides.
- Using a successful template developed by Upwardly Global, the guides are created to help individuals understand the steps required for professional licensure or credentialing and are particularly directed toward those immigrants and refugees whose professional careers were interrupted by their move to the United States.
- The guides explain how the professions are organized, the eligibility for licensing, testing, time and costs, other linked careers and credentials, and tips for working through the credentialing or licensing process.



# Licensing Guides – Michigan Expansion

- The licensing guides issued in June of 2014 followed the Upwardly Global template and focused specifically on university degree required careers including accounting, physicians, architecture, dentistry, engineering, lawyers, nursing, pharmacology, physical therapy, teaching, and veterinarians.
- Since initial issuance, Michigan has committed to expanding the licensing guide program and has now published 20 licensing guides for additional professions including occupational therapy, barbers, child care, cosmetology, electricians, occupational therapy, plumbers, real estate brokers, residential builders and maintenance and alterations contractors, and respiratory therapy.
- Our commitment is to issue five new guides every six months. Selection of new guide candidates is made with input and suggestions from our kitchen cabinet so our work can reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

# Licensing Guides – the Metrics

- Original 10 guides were posted 2 years ago.
- There has been +7,000 views of the guides posted on LARA's webpage alone.
- The guides have grown significantly in popularity over the past year, averaging over +500 views a month from June 2014-June 2015.
- Our licensing Guides on Upwardly Global's website have received an additional 11,216 views.
- Engineer, Accountant, Nurse and Physical Therapist licensing guides have received the most views.

# The “Barber Experiment”

- A number of MONA’s kitchen cabinet members approached us shortly after our formation to talk about a licensing issue that was of major importance to their community, but not on our radar screen – barbers.
- An honored and skilled profession – barbering did not fall under the university degreed construct of Upwardly Global but was nonetheless important to our partners – so we created a licensing guide. That did not solve the problem.
- Michigan, like many states, has foreign experience equivalencies that allow professional education and training in home countries to substitute – if appropriate – for state education and experience requirements.
- In many regions of the Middle East, it is not possible to get the necessary proofs, so many experienced barbers were unable to practice their profession and support their families using the skills and training they had achieved.
- In response, we passed legislation permitting LARA to waive all but a minor part of the education requirements – if LARA could determine that the applicant could not produce the required documentation because he or she came from a “non-cooperating” country.

# Global Talent Retention Partnership

- Michigan has first international student retention program
  - Global Talent Retention Initiative (GTRI)
  - Launched by Global Detroit in 2011
  - In general, the program strives to educate students on visa options for remaining in Michigan after graduation, and educate employers to demystify the U.S. immigration process
- MONA partners with GTRI, presents at its conferences, and assists with strategic planning for the program
- In 2013-2014, Michigan was home to almost 30,000 international students who contributed \$927 million to the state's economy
- International students in Michigan are 3 times more likely to major in STEM fields than native-born
- For each foreign-born, STEM advanced degree holder, 2.6 jobs are created for U.S.-born

# Agricultural Task Force Participation

- Michigan's food and agricultural economy has grown significantly over the past decade and has now exceeded the \$100 billion mark in annual economic impact. Nationally, Michigan ranks fifth in processed and fresh fruit exports, sixth for other processed plant products, and seventh for both fresh and processed vegetables as well as dairy products.
- USDA estimates that every billion dollars in food and agricultural exports generates 8,402 jobs, resulting in over 29,000 Michigan jobs supported by exports.
- MONA is a member of the Agricultural Task Force with representatives from Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Workforce Development Agency (WDA), and Michigan Farm Bureau. Immigrants continue to play an important role in filling the needs of our agricultural community. It is estimated that roughly 80% of all agricultural workers in the United States are foreign-born. Without immigrant farm workers, economic output would decline and thousands of U.S. citizens would lose their jobs.

# Agricultural Task Force Participation - Barriers

- Barriers we are examining –
  - Allowing H-2A guest workers to live in USDA 514 Housing
  - Improving services and communications between WDA, Ag Employment Specialists, and the Ag Employers
  - Establishing collaborative agency efforts to create a welcoming environment for migrant and seasonal labor in Michigan
  - Recruiting and train more immigrants, as well as domestic workers, to participate in Michigan's agricultural economy
  - Establishing a Temporary Farmworkers plan in partnership with Mexico's State of Guanajuato to provide seasonal labor for Michigan's Ag Employers

# Immigrant Hotline

- Our Immigration Hotline connects skilled immigrants to a state professional licensing specialist who will answer licensing-related questions regarding any of Michigan's professional licenses. Its number is **517-373-0104**.
- Over 183 licensed occupations are accounted for under the Hotline.

# Initiatives Directed Toward Skilled Immigrants

## Recent and Planned Initiatives



# Who is a Skilled Immigrant?

- At inception, our primary focus was on those skilled professions for which a university degree was required. While that will continue to be a strong focus, based on input from our kitchen cabinet and an assessment of job growth potential, we are pivoting and adding an emphasis on skilled trades.
- Just as with doctors, lawyers, and accountants, immigrants and refugees come to Michigan with experience and education in a variety of skilled trades – building, plumbing, electrical, barbering, etc. As many of these trades are in high demand, particularly now in Michigan in the construction industry, an emphasis needs to be made on empowering immigrants and refugees to use their skills – both to better themselves and their families and to help drive economic growth through filling labor gaps.
- That shift is already reflected in our licensing guides and will lead to a closer examination of experience credentialing and equivalencies rather than just educational.
- It will also require a new focus on experience analysis in a variety of apprenticeship tracks as well as training to enable community leaders to leverage their existing licenses to create new apprenticeship tracks.

# Breaking Down Barriers

- The Licensing Guides attempt to break down the barrier caused by misunderstanding and confusion. Indeed, one of the lessons we have learned is many immigrants and refugees thought that the licensing and credentialing process was more difficult than it is or – worse – thought that a profession required a license when in fact it did not.
- The “Barber Experiment” was also an attempt to break down barriers – this was caused by the home country’s failure to cooperate with the immigrants’ credentialing needs.
- We are now examining structural barriers with some of the licensed professions to determine how they can be modified. We are examining best practices among the other states to see if we could make them work within Michigan’s statutory and regulatory structures. These include:
  - Engineers
  - Physicians and Physician Assistants
  - Lawyers

**LARA**

**LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS**

**CUSTOMER DRIVEN. BUSINESS MINDED.**

**MONA**

**Michigan Office for New Americans**