Tools for Supporting Immigrant Entrepreneurs

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The Welcoming Center is a nonprofit economic development organization that works to connect immigrants with economic opportunities in Pennsylvania.
Our Research: Challenges Faced by Immigrant Entrepreneurs

- Limited financial access
- Lack of social capital
- Lack of familiarity with US laws and regulations
- Limited English proficiency
- Lack of knowledge about existing resources
- Challenges in community relations
Tools to Support Immigrant Entrepreneurs

English for Entrepreneurs
Course to teach language and practical skills needed to run a business:
- Increased competence in communicating with customers
- Strategies to resolve misunderstandings and defuse conflict
- Improved cultural sensitivity, customer service, community relations
- Increased awareness of city services available (guest speakers)

Business Clinics
Workshops held with local partners to increase knowledge about:
- Laws and regulations pertinent to their businesses
- Short- and long-term business planning
- Increase access to financial institutions and expert advisers
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“How To Open A Business” Guides

Clear, accurate business guides to help immigrant and native-born entrepreneurs to cut through the red tape of rules and regulations

- Can be general or industry-specific (e.g., coffee shop)
- Can help steer entrepreneurs away from oversaturated fields
- Should be checked carefully with government officials for accuracy
- Should clearly indicate the municipality for which they apply
- Can be translated into multiple languages
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Opportunity Calls
Automated monthly information calls in several languages in order to:
- Efficiently disseminate information to merchants
- Reach those entrepreneurs with limited English skills
- Build bridges with other organizations and agencies

Business Technical Assistance
Dedicated staff to provide expertise to native-born and immigrant entrepreneurs
- Provide basic business technical assistance
- Share information about existing resources
- Make connections with financial, government, nonprofit institutions
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Networking
Assist neighboring entrepreneurs to work together in order to:
  – Advocate to local government authorities
  – Organize joint efforts for marketing, security, sanitation
  – Increase buying power through group procurement (e.g. PhillyBuyingPower)

Market Research
Collect and analyze data about existing and potential markets in order to:
  – Provide vital data about customers from within and outside area
  – Assist immigrant entrepreneurs to develop market-based sales and marketing strategies
Opportunity is Calling: How Supporting Entrepreneurs Creates Shared Prosperity

- Immigrant entrepreneurs are a critical force in the US economic recovery. From retail to high-tech, supporting business owners means creating jobs.

- Providing “on-ramps” so that these talented strivers can access traditional business-support services is vital.

- The Welcoming Center has robust expertise in creating those on-ramps to connect entrepreneurs with municipal agencies and other services.