

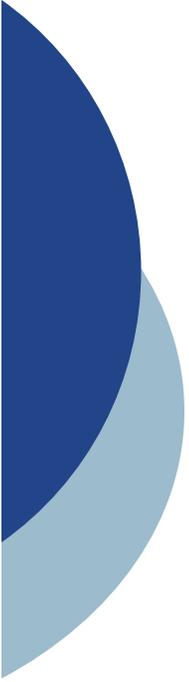
# Positioning Immigrants as Assets

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## Changing the Dialogue from Deficit to Asset

**Marcia Drew Hohn, EdD**  
The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.  
Public Education Institute  
Malden, MA





# Rising Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

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- After 9-11, anti-immigrant groups co-opted the conversation
- Painted immigrants and immigration as economic and social drain
- Promoted myths, misinformation and downright lies



# The ILC Public Education Institute



- Started in 2003 to tell the other side of the story
- Commissioned research studies to develop credible, alternative narrative
- Eleven studies to document economic and social contributions
- Inform policy, media, public, field

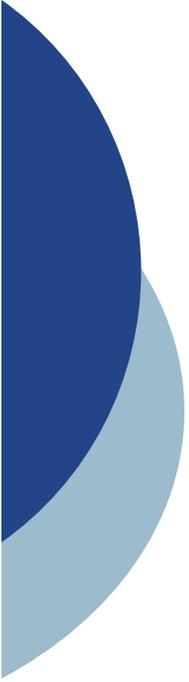


# Economic and Social Contributions



- Entrepreneurs
- Workers in critical economic sectors
- Interweave research, people and stories
  - Research provides credible messages
  - Involving immigrants gives them a voice
  - **Story develops appreciation around shared values, commonalities and mutual benefits**





# Local is Important

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- How these ideas might work in your community
  - Relating to local values and circumstances
  - Checklists to get started
  - Helpful hints





# Immigrants as Entrepreneurs

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- Economic and social contributions in three business categories:
  - **Neighborhood**
  - **Business Growth**
  - **Science and Technology**



# Neighborhood Revitalization

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- Revitalize blighted neighborhoods
- Provide diversity of goods and services
- Expand beyond initial niches
- Attract new customers into area
- Enhance public safety

# Neighborhood Business

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## **MALEE THAI** **Cambodia**

Owner:  
Pailin City restaurant,  
market, function hall,  
Lowell, MA

Came to U.S.:  
1981





# Malee Thai

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## Pailin City Restaurant, Grocery and Function Hall

- Malee fled Cambodia after her family was killed
- Transitioned from survival to seizing opportunity
- Transformed convenience store to Southeast Asian grocery
- Expanded into Pailin City: a one-stop-shop for all things Cambodian
- A shining light in a city climbing out of long-term economic decline



# Growing Businesses

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- Intention to get bigger, hire more workers
- Concentration in transportation, food and building services
- Strengthen local economies and provide local jobs
- Largely unrecognized



# Growing Businesses

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- **Transportation**

- 49% self-employed taxis and limousine service

- **Food**

- More than one-third of all food businesses
- Specialty food and restaurants

- **Building Services**

- More than 40%: strong in cleaning and restoration

- Note: Immigrants are only 13% of total population



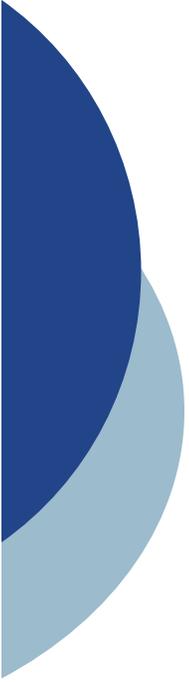
# Transportation Business

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**HECTOR RICKETTS**  
Jamaica

Founder:  
Community  
Transportation,  
New York, NY





# Hector Ricketts

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## Community Transportation

- 40 vans transport 40,000 commuters
- Areas underserved or remote
- Affordable, necessary
- Spin-off businesses





# Hector Ricketts

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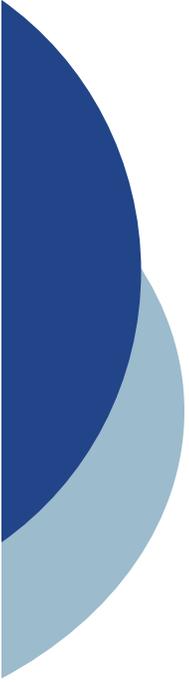
## The bigger picture

**“We are providing jobs.** We are getting people in our community to connections that get them to work on time.”

**“We’re buying vans from Ford,** which keeps other workers employed. We use local mechanics. We buy gas at local gas stations.”

**“The restaurants we go** to help stabilize the community. We support the tire shops and the insurance companies.”





# Hector Ricketts

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The future

**“It’s a good feeling** to know that when I’m gone there will be people going to work taking people to work.”



# Food Business

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**HELENE &  
THOMAS STOHR**  
Switzerland

Founders:  
swissbakers,  
Reading & Allston, MA



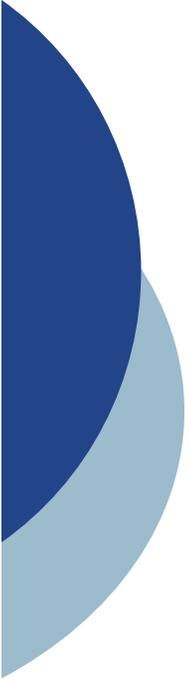
# Helene and Thomas Stohr

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- Authentic, organic baked goods
- Debuted in farmer's markets, now expanded catering and in Whole Foods, opened second cafe
- Annual growth rate of 25%
- Adding 30 more workers per year





# Building Services

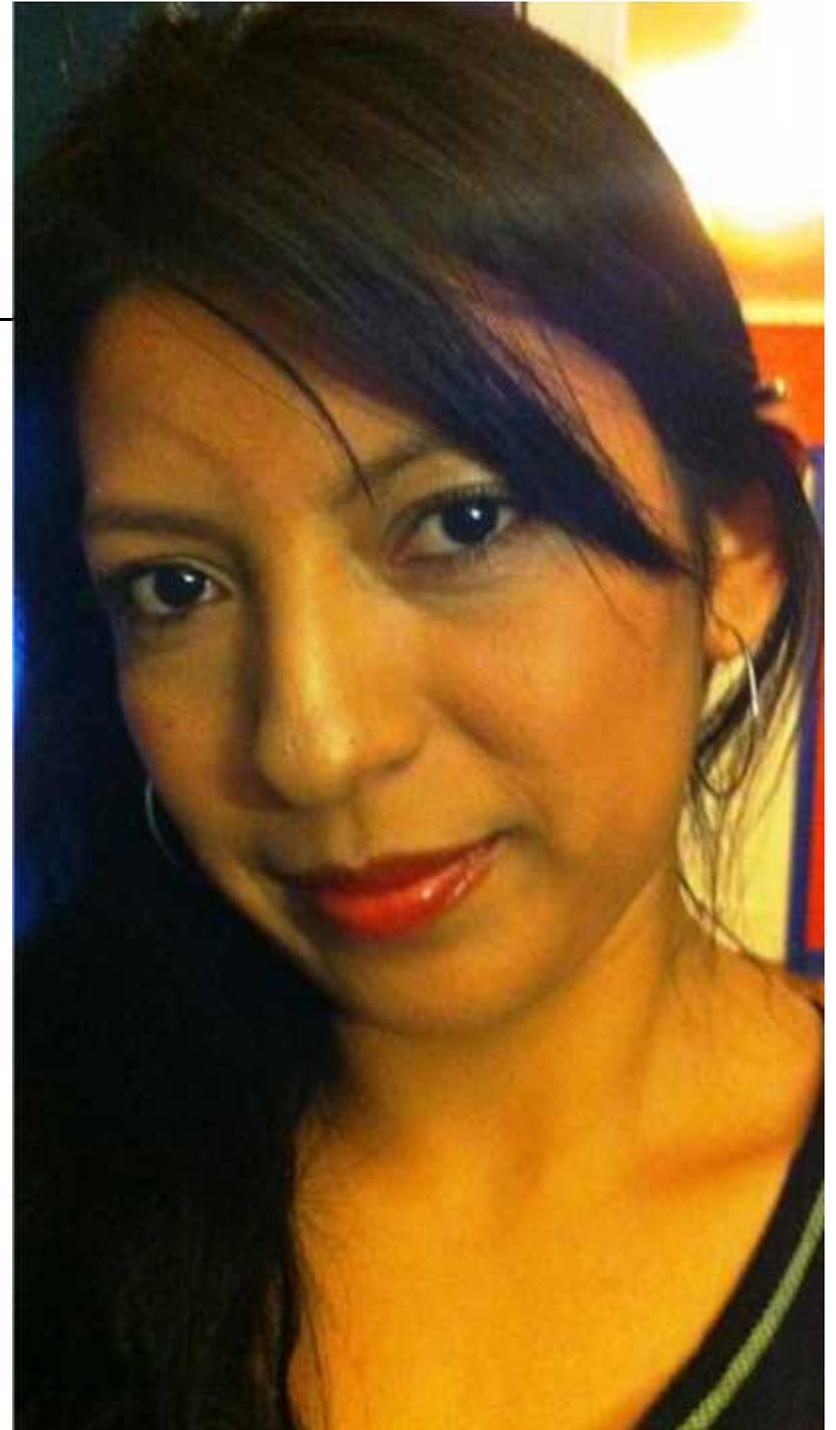
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**YADIRA FRAGOSO**

**Mexico**

President:

We Can Do It!  
cleaning co-op,  
Brooklyn, NY





# Yadira Fragoso

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## We Can Do It! Cleaning Co-op

- Combining independence with strength of the community
- Each member owns her own business
- Group benefits of training, shared marketing
- Gaining control over their lives



# Science/Technology Businesses

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- Variable across country
- 25% immigrant-founded
- \$52 billion revenue and 450,000 workers
- Keeping U.S. on cutting edge of innovation



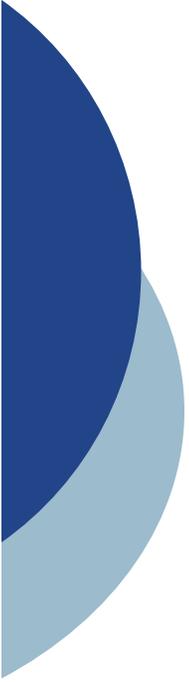
# Science and Technology

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**SRIDHAR IYENGAR  
and SONNY VU**  
India/U.S. and Vietnam

Founders:  
AgaMatrix, Inc., MA





# Sridhar Iyengar and Sonny Vu

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AgaMatrix, Inc.

Started in a cramped apartment with \$1.25 for lunch;  
they impressed would-be investors

- Knew how to work hard and not waste money
- Developed a smart team working cheap
- Scientific advances that led to mobile glucose monitoring product to use with iPhones
- Highly valuable given the rise of diabetes



# Science and Technology

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**AMAR SAWHNEY**

**India**

Owner:

Ocular Therapeutix,  
Bedford, MA

Came to U.S.:

1987



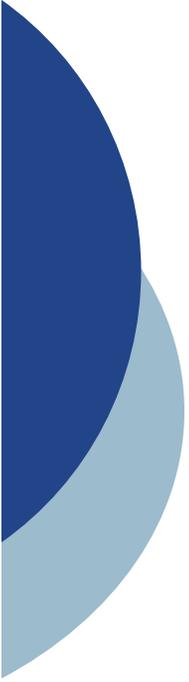
# Grateful for Opportunity in U.S.

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<http://youtu.be/J-vU3FVXsJY?t=2m44s>



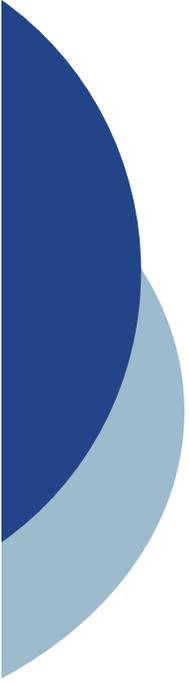


# Health Care

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- Health care is a crucial life issue for everyone
- Immigrants fill critical job vacancies at both high and low ends
- Baby boomers aging and need more care
- Affordable Health Care Act will increase demand
- Diversifying population needs cultural competence



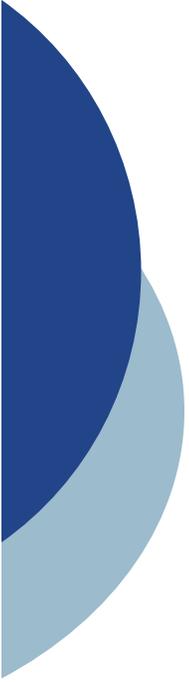


# Health Care

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- Immigrant health care workers concentrated in high- and low-skill ends
  - 27% of physicians and surgeons
- International medical science graduates are 30% of the primary-care workforce
- Practice in underserved and rural areas
- Immigrants are 15% of nurses
  - Many complicating factors





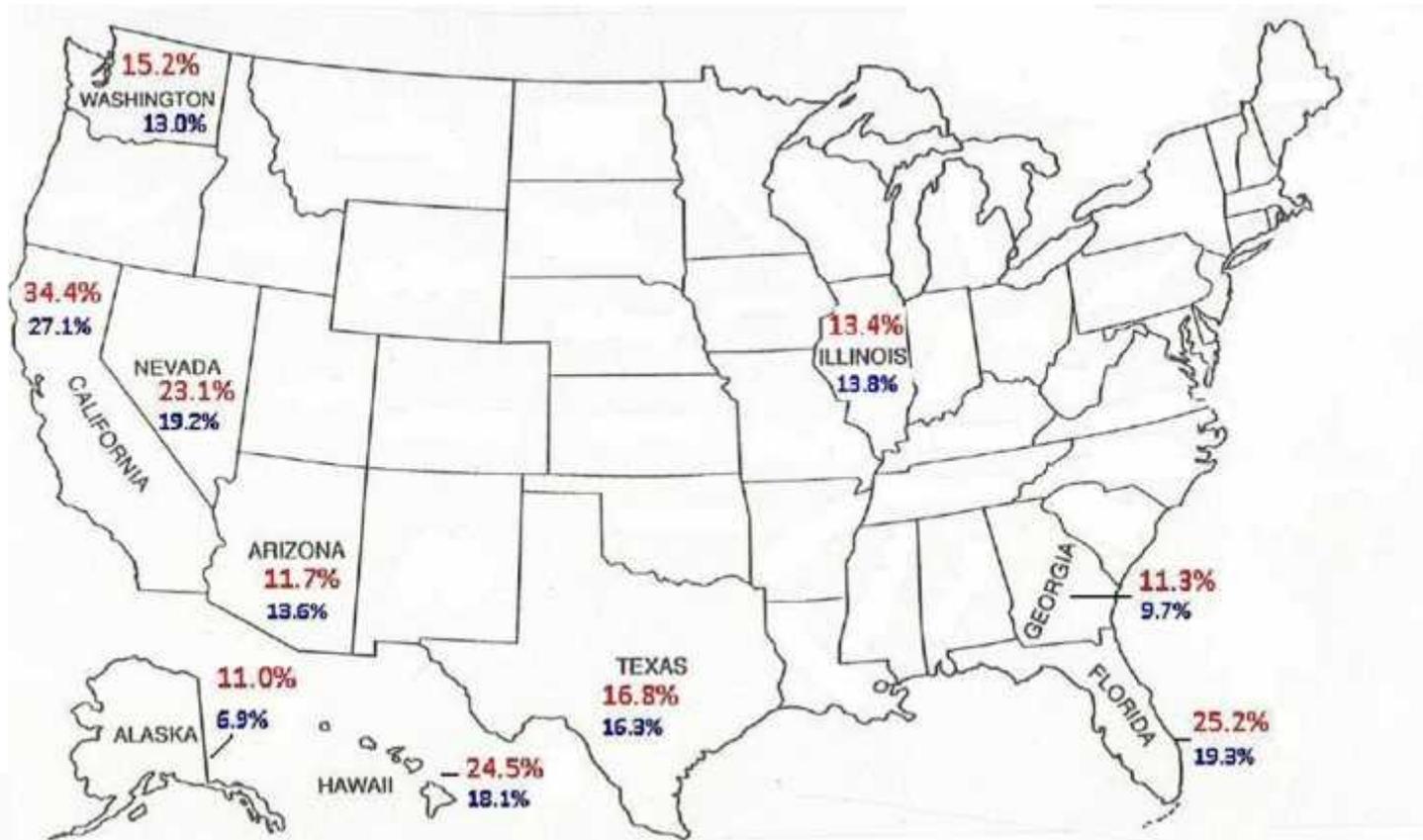
# Lower-Skill Occupations

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- 22% of nursing, psychiatric and home health aides
- 19% of elder care workforce
  - Fast growth projection due to aging U.S. population
  - Significant “Gray Market” probably exists

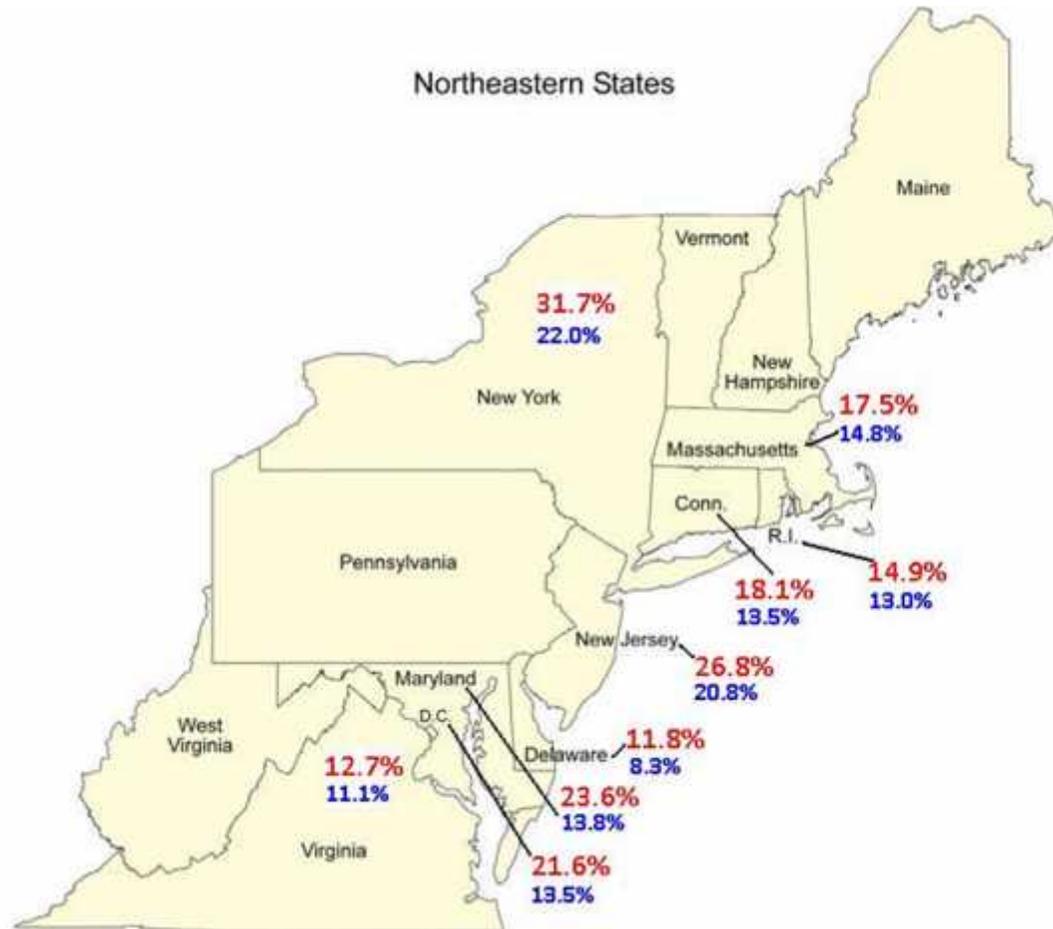


# Health Care Providers



Red numbers = immigrant share of medical professionals; blue numbers = immigrant share of population  
Source: Institute for Immigration Research, George Mason University

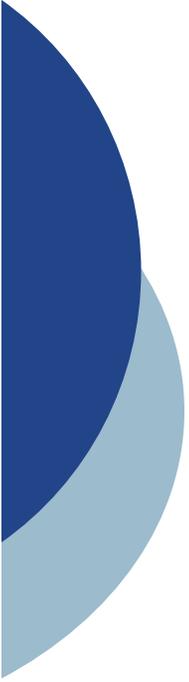
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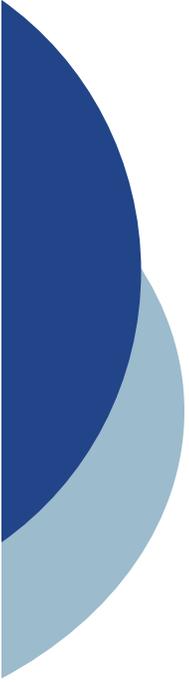


# Your Community

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- Who is staffing your hospitals?
- Who is staffing your nursing homes?
- Who provides in-home care?
- Who is working in the pharmacies?
- Who is in the medical research centers?





# Key Messages

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- Innovations to improve human health
- Skilled labor
  - Physicians/surgeons
  - Pharmacists
  - Physician assistants, nurse practitioners
- Culturally competent care
- Taking care of elders in our families



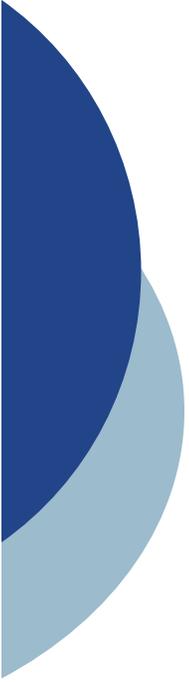


# Getting Started: Checklists/Hints

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- Expanded list of characteristics, traits and contributions
- Connect to values likely held
- Getting started
  - Finding immigrant-owned businesses in your community
  - Getting to know the businesses
  - Getting stories
  - Looking at staffing in health care





# Telling the Story

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- Incorporating into community activities and venues, e.g.:
  - Business award categories
  - Work-related and career awareness activities at high schools
  - Community activities to celebrate diversity
  - Stories in bulletins and on websites

**See guidelines and checklists to get started**



# Resources

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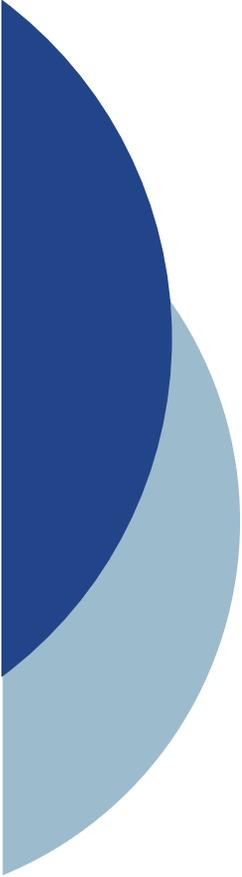


Food, Transport and Building Services in the U.S. with a focus on Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New York

Download our studies and view our  
Immigrant Entrepreneur Hall of Fame + Video Interviews:  
[www.ilctr.org/promoting-immigrants](http://www.ilctr.org/promoting-immigrants)

All contemporary immigration research:  
[www.immigrationresearch-info.org](http://www.immigrationresearch-info.org)





Thank you

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