

Immigration Business Assistance Program

Program Goal

The Immigration Business Assistance Program is a unique effort by the Iowa Department of Economic Development to increase the qualified labor pool by attracting and acculturating diverse populations into the workplace and communities within the state.

Assistance Approach

The Department of Economic Development recognizes recruiting and successfully hiring immigrants can be a lengthy, expensive and confusing process for a business. The Immigration Business Assistance Program provides consultative services to assist individual businesses with successfully recruiting and employing immigrants.

This is accomplished by providing clear, straight-forward information about the immigration hiring process, making referrals to expert resources, and working with key regulatory agencies to resolve barriers.

Program Services

- Anticipate issues impacting immigration and workforce development.
- Develop effective planning strategies for business and industry addressing immigration issues.
- Facilitate working solutions with appropriate groups and resources.
- Recommend needed process change to the immigration hiring system to eliminate negative economic impact.
- Respond to the educational needs of Iowa business and industry and communities with effective tools and information necessary to employ and sustain immigrants in Iowa.
- Continue to monitor and assess key immigration issues and provide recommendations as requested.

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Immigration presentation to Legislature:

A. Introduction

- Adjunct Professor of immigration law and Drake University Law School
- on Iowa Supreme Court commission on Interpreters in the courts
- Working in immigration for past 7 years
- Traveling extensively in Iowa
- Talking to literally thousands of immigrants
- many immigrants - needing help with their immigration papers.
- Immigrants also need help in general areas, like ESL, referrals, information, etc.
- Immigration Legal Project grew out of this need
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B. Gov't severely underestimating the immigration issue

- over 100,000 immigrants in Iowa now
- rural economy dependent of them now
- up to 1/3 are undocumented
- have US citizen wives and husbands and children
- Rural economy collapse without immigrants
- Immigrants are here to stay – and will keep coming
- Mexico largest importer of Iowa Corn
- Mexico economy bad

- Answer to many problems, like where to find ESL and rural teachers
- Pro-active stance by gov't and business and communities (Storm Lake)
- Present gov't policy on immigration lacks direction, commitment, expertise
- No participation by Iowa on the Federal level- other senators shaping Essential Worker bill, so set up for other states' needs, not Iowa's
- Gov't not understand the Immigration Enterprise Zone idea – maybe should be nationwide, but Iowa should at least have a seat at the table
- Not consult with those who have expertise and interest on this issue, but rather consult who will back their plans

C. Main need: Immigration legal services

- Universally agreed that immigration legal services the main need
- Over 100,000 immigrants in Iowa,
- Possibly 1/3 have immigration legal needs for selves, spouse, children, family
- These immigrants like Iowa – good soil, climate, work environment
- Very hard working, just like our own great-grandfathers
- If they can get their immigration papers straight, or their family, then settle down and stay
- If immigration papers okay, then immigrants and the market can take care of other issues, such as housing, job training, ESL, etc.

D. Auxiliary needs: other social services

- As newcomers, may need assistance in finding housing, medical, etc.
- However, not as critical, as when employed, will find what they need
- Some non-profits already in place to serve immigrants
- must strengthen and increase these non-profits

E. First: Establish a central Immigrant Information and Referral office

- Serves Immigrants, employers, communities, and general public
- Bi-lingual staff
- Central information & data collection and referral center
- inventory Iowa, find out where immigrants located and their needs
- find out needs of local communities
- formulate strategies to address those needs.
- **Cannot be a governmental entity**, as immigrants will not go there
- Broad base board of directors – private-public partnership

F. Second: Identify non-profits already working with immigrants

- Determine what services already offered by non-profits to immigrants
- Identify the immigrant groups served
- Assess needs and gaps in services
- Assess needs of non-profits to enhance services
- If non-profit in area, assist in establishing non-profit
- Non-profits can provide immigration legal service under 8 CFR 292.2.

- identify and train non-lawyer immigration service providers
- State is presently in violation of unauthorized practice of law prohibition
- Leverage public funds through targeted grants to non-profits

G. Establish Immigration Policy Commission

- Non-partisan (Gov't, business, labor unions, advocacy, immigrants, immigration experts and attorneys)
 - Set Immigration Policy
 - Set Immigration goals
 - Identify models
 - Direct and Implement services
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