Immigrant Workers, Human Capital Investment, and Strengthening Regional Economies

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The majority of immigrants are concentrated in the prime working ages.

Source: Brookings analysis of 2010 ACS 1-year estimates; microdata, accessed via IPUMS.org
While slightly more than half of the native-born population are 20-64,
79 percent of the foreign-born are in that age group.
Immigrants are a growing part of the labor force

Foreign-born share of total population and labor force, 1970 – 2010

- Civilian labor force, age 16 – 64
- Total population

Immigrants are nearly as likely to have a Bachelor’s degree (or more) but are much more likely to lack a high school diploma.

Source: Brookings analysis of 2010 ACS 1-year estimates; microdata, accessed via IPUMS.org
Regions are seeking strategies to grow jobs and expand economic opportunities: Investing in human capital key

Advertised job openings in metros require more education than average adult has (Rothwell, 2012)

Carnevale et al (2010) project by 2018, nearly 2/3 of job openings will require some post-secondary training

Baby boomer retirement will create shortages
Even among the high-skilled, 26 percent do not consider themselves to be proficient in English.

Source: Brookings analysis of 2010 ACS 1-year estimates; microdata, accessed via IPUMS.org
Among recent arrivals more than one-third of high-skilled and two-thirds of mid-skilled immigrants are not proficient in English.
Nearly half of high-skilled immigrants are overqualified for their job.

Overqualified high-skilled workers in the U.S., 2006-2008

- Natives: 36%
- Immigrants: 49%
- Newly arrived immigrants: 53%

Source: Brookings analysis of 2006-2008 estimates from the ACS. Overqualification is measured by comparing workers’ level of education compared to national occupation-specific means using data from the ACS. A worker is considered overqualified if their education attainment is one or more standard deviations above the mean education for their occupation. Newly arrived immigrants are those who came to live in the U.S. ten or fewer years ago.
Building Immigrant Skills

- Regional assessments identify **shortages**

- **Partnerships** between nonprofits organizations, educational institutions and employers to build skills of immigrants and others to fill labor shortages

- Programs that **integrate skills acquisition** along with English language training for jobs

- Programs that **create clear career pathways** so that workers and employers see the benefit
Unlocking Immigrant Skills

- Initiatives aimed at immigrant professionals to transfer skills (licensing requirements, teach US-specific professional language, and US-style job search)

- Connect back to immigrant communities with specific language and cultural needs

- Connect with employers: market immigrant professionals (includes global business practices)