**Maryland Skilled Immigrants Task Force: Financial Literacy & Assistance Subcommittee**

Monthly Meeting: January 18, 2017

*Present*: Sue Rogan, Augustin Ntabaganyimana, Adrien Bristol, Ron Jennings, Amanda Olmstead, Daniel Koroma

1. **Background of Skilled Immigrants Task Force** (Augustin)
   1. MORA led a group of stakeholders, including Montgomery College, City of Baltimore, DLLR, and International Rescue Committee, and submitted a letter of interest to attend White House Institute on Skilled Immigrants in June 2016
   2. Institute on Skilled Immigrants brought 17 states that showed passion about immigrant integration and dedication to ensuring communities capitalize on skills of immigrants to meet local workforce needs
   3. MORA’s letter proposed creating a Task Force for Skilled Immigrants due to issues of unemployment/underemployment
      1. Task Force designed to look at barriers to employment, including English skills/availability of English classes, lack of networking, lack of social capital, lack of access to mainstream workforce system, and difficulties with professional licensing and credentialing systems
   4. Formerly met as Task Force in July 2016 and decided to break into 5 subcommittees: Capacity Building, Financial Literacy & Assistance, Professional Licensing, ESL/Adult Education, and Business Engagement & Networking
   5. Subcommittees meet monthly and have developed mission, timeline, and how to reach goals
   6. Task Force is not mandated and not funded, but there is public support (Executive Director of Governor’s Workforce Development Board is on Task Force)
   7. Potential outcomes: policy recommendations, building capacity for mainstream workforce providers to serve skilled immigrants well, increased access of skilled immigrants to financial assistance, etc
   8. First year report to be published in July, so deadline for short-term goals is July 1
2. **Mission of Task Force**
   1. Group members decided to stick with original mission of subcommittee: To create an environment in which foreign-trained individuals have access to resources to seek and obtain employment in their career fields
   2. For reference, this is the Original Vision Statement: *Ensure skilled immigrants have access to financial resources necessary to attain education and training that they need to achieve their career ambitions (or choices) (*added by Amanda)
3. **Potential Goals to Achieve by July 1**
   1. Guide of currently available resources (Augustin)
   2. Assessment of what is already being done to help individuals – what organizations are serving this group, what financial education are immigrants already getting, what needs can be further strengthened (Sue)
   3. Assessment of where skilled immigrants are currently accessing financial assistance resources – to make sure we reach the intended audience (Amanda)
      1. Look into non-profit websites, government websites, newspapers (Ron)
      2. Strategic locations – community colleges, ESL programs, resettlement agencies, Asylee Women Enterprise, ethnic based organizations (Augustin)
      3. Big question: How do we make this information easily accessible? (Augustin)
   4. Partner with groups who are already providing services – eliminate trust issue amongst immigrants and help immigrants launch out into other areas/resources. Also can build on capacity of local non-profits/immigrant-serving organizations (Adrien)
      1. Perhaps can start with Office of Community Partnerships in Montgomery County (Ron)
      2. Montgomery County is well-organized around issues relating to immigrants – potentially easier to identify resources and ways to disseminate information. Alternatively, could start with Mayor’s Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs in Baltimore or refugee resettlement agencies (Augustin)
      3. Note that partners we work with will vary depending on counties (Sue)
   5. Small business resources
      1. Resources around owning own business (many immigrants come with skills of owning a restaurant, barbership, etc) (Augustin)
      2. Look at cultural issues of owning a business (customer service, etc) since there are different protocols in different countries (Ron)
      3. Look at issues of licensing and permits (Sue)
4. **Discussion of who is a “skilled immigrant”** 
   1. This task force is focused on immigrants who have skills to fit labor shortages (Augustin)
   2. Skilled immigrants – individuals who have acquired extensive education and/or work experience abroad ready to work in Maryland but often face barriers (Ron)
   3. National discussion of how refugees have revitalized neighborhoods/cities because of entrepreneurship/business owner background - could broaden our definition of ‘skilled’ from heavy/sole emphasis on educational attainment to previous work experience
5. **Action Steps**
   1. Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 8 from 3:30-4:30pm
      1. Each member should come prepared to share their individual contribution toward developing the Resource Guide
      2. Will look at how to divide up the work (location, type of resource)
   2. Amanda will send out Letter of Interest submitted to White House to all participants for more background information as well as Maryland Council of New Americans report