



Michigan Global  
Talent Initiative

# BRIDGING TALENT BOUNDLESS MICHIGAN

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025



The Michigan Global Talent Initiative (MGTI) was created through a partnership among Global Detroit, Michigan's business community, and the State of Michigan to help achieve the State's Sixty by 30 workforce development goal. While Michigan was the 41st state to adopt a postsecondary attainment target, we were the first to implement a comprehensive immigrant inclusion strategy aligned directly with workforce and economic development objectives. MGTI also ensures that immigrants' contribution to the State's net population growth translates into credential attainment, job placement, entrepreneurship, and long-term economic contribution.

That strategy is delivering results. In the past year, we:

- Engaged over 1,000 international students and employers
- Placed 123 skilled immigrants into high-wage roles, with an average salary increase of \$42,590
- Supported over 1,000 English language learners with industry-aligned instruction

Nationally, MGTI is now viewed as a best-practice model for aligning immigrant integration with statewide workforce strategy. And yet, despite demonstrated outcomes and strong employer participation, MGTI currently has no future state budget allocation.

At a time when Michigan faces labor shortages, demographic decline, and intensifying competition for talent, eliminating investment in one of the state's most scalable, performance-driven workforce strategies is shortsighted. Dollar-for-dollar, there are few — if any — economic development investments that increase postsecondary attainment, fill high-demand jobs, attract venture capital, strengthen population growth, and deliver measurable wage gains.

Sustained public investment in global talent strategy is not optional — it is central to achieving the State's workforce development goals, meeting employer demand, and ensuring long-term economic competitiveness. Michigan has built the framework. The results are clear. The business community is engaged.

Now is the time to secure and expand public investment to ensure that global talent remains a durable economic advantage for our state.

**Shanea Condon**  
MGTI Director





The Office of Global Michigan (OGM) is a proud partner of Global Detroit's Michigan Global Talent Initiative (MGTI). Over the past three years, MGTI has implemented strategies to attract, retain, train, and place skilled immigrants into Michigan's workforce as part of Governor Whitmer's Sixty by 30 initiative.

International immigration plays a vital role in strengthening Michigan's economy by filling critical labor gaps, supporting key industries, and driving innovation. Many immigrant entrepreneurs start small businesses that create local jobs, expand the tax base, and revitalize communities, particularly in cities that have faced population decline.

In addition, international students and skilled workers help Michigan's universities, research institutions, and tech sectors remain globally competitive, bringing new ideas, investment, and talent into the state.

Immigration is essential for Michigan's population growth and long-term demographic stability. By attracting and retaining immigrants, Michigan can stabilize its population, support workforce needs, and build a more sustainable economic future.

OGM is dedicated to supporting immigrant integration through workforce development efforts and is thankful for partners like Global Detroit in the work.

**Poppy Hernandez**

Executive Director of the Office  
of Global Michigan

Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer in  
the Executive Office of the Governor



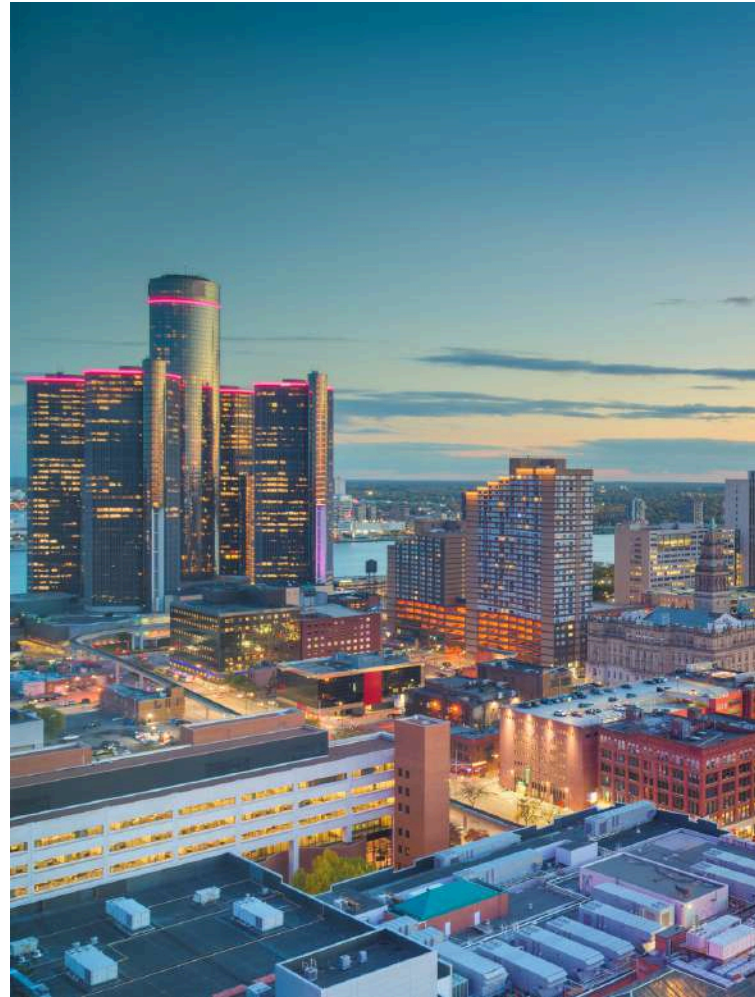


## What Is the Michigan Global Talent Initiative?

The Michigan Global Talent Initiative is a statewide workforce and economic development strategy created by Global Detroit, in partnership with business and state leaders, to help Michigan meet Governor Gretchen Whitmer's Sixty by 30 workforce development goal. As the 41st state to adopt a postsecondary attainment target, Michigan became the first in the nation to pair that goal with a comprehensive immigrant inclusion strategy designed to strengthen its credentialed workforce through the attraction, preparation, and integration of global talent.

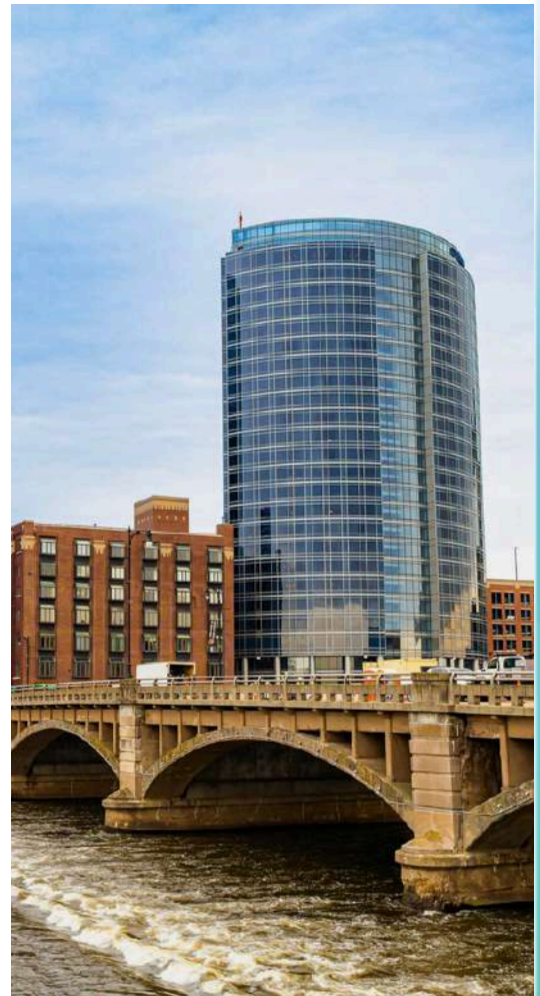
MGTI was built on a clear premise: Michigan's workforce challenges are not driven solely by talent shortages, but by systemic gaps between education, credentials, employers, and regional delivery systems. Immigrants, international students, and globally trained professionals already contribute significantly to Michigan's population growth, labor force participation, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Yet without intentional alignment, this talent remains underutilized. MGTI ensures that global talent is fully integrated into Michigan's labor market through coordinated, data-informed, and employer-responsive strategies.

National organizations and peer states increasingly look to Michigan's model as a best practice in aligning immigrant inclusion with economic competitiveness. Early results demonstrate measurable impact across job creation, business formation, employer engagement, and talent retention. Dollar for dollar, few workforce strategies operate at this scale while delivering returns that strengthen both regional economies and statewide outcomes.



MGTI operates as a cross-system connector. It aligns employers, higher education institutions, workforce development agencies, economic development organizations, and state and local partners around shared talent objectives. By addressing barriers related to credential recognition, language access, employer awareness, and workforce navigation, MGTI transforms fragmented pathways into clear, scalable routes to employment and entrepreneurship.

The initiative is structured around three core functions: Attraction and Retention; Training and Credentialing; and Connecting and Placing. Together, these pillars support a



portfolio of statewide programs that help attract skilled talent to Michigan, align education with industry demand, and connect job-ready individuals directly to employers and innovation ecosystems. This integrated structure allows MGTI to address workforce challenges holistically, from entry and preparation to placement and long-term retention.

MGTI is implemented through the Michigan Global Talent Coalition, a statewide network of regional economic development organizations, chambers, workforce agencies, colleges and universities, and industry partners. By leveraging regional expertise and

local delivery, the initiative ensures that strategies are responsive to community-specific needs while contributing to shared statewide metrics.

Despite demonstrated success, MGTI currently has no dedicated future state budget allocation. Sustaining and scaling this work will require continued philanthropic investment, regional partnership support, and renewed public funding. For stakeholders committed to Michigan's long-term economic competitiveness, the path forward is clear: maintain and expand the strategies that are already delivering measurable results.

## MGTI Statewide Programs

### Attraction and Retention

Michigan Attraction Initiative

Global Entrepreneurs  
in Residence

### Training and Credentialing

Credential Evaluation,  
Upskilling, and Reskilling

Contextualized English  
Language Learning

Community College Immigrant  
Student Success

Welcome Back Center  
for Health Care Careers

### Connecting and Placing

Global Talent Retention  
Initiative

Skilled Immigrant Integration  
Program

MGTI's strategies focus on (1) attracting and retaining high-skilled New Americans, international students, and entrepreneurs to Michigan while leveraging their skills, degrees, and experience; (2) training and/or credentialing new residents as well as those already here, and (3) placing this skilled and credentialed workforce with Michigan companies to fill unmet talent needs, establishing Michigan as a center for global prosperity.

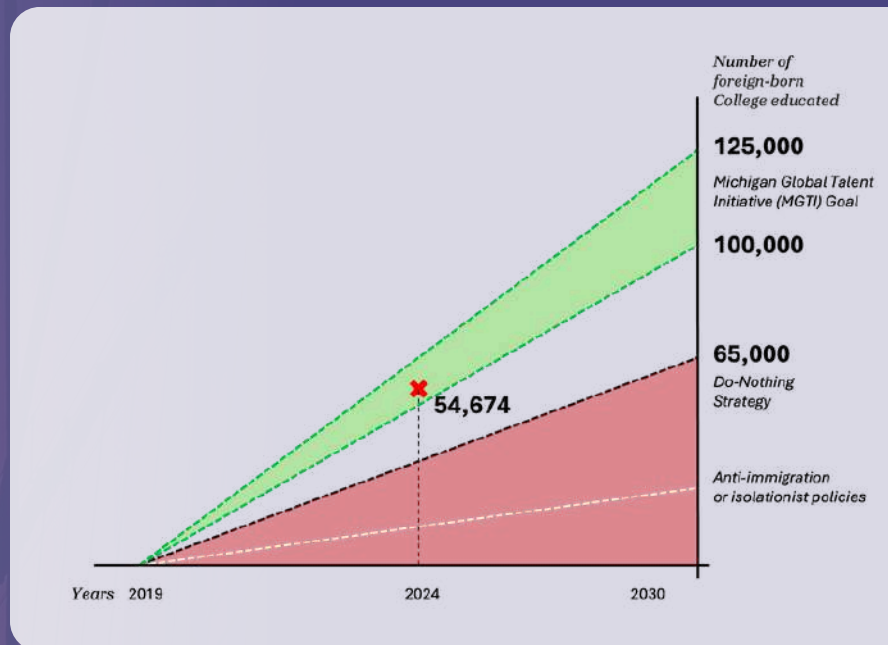


## 2024 Census Immigration Data Reveals Michigan Global Talent Initiative (MGTI) on Track to Help Meet Ambitious Sixty by 30 Goals

According to American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 estimates, **44% of foreign-born adults in Michigan have a bachelor's degree or higher.**

More recent population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2024 have the advantage of an improved methodology for calculating international migration, resulting in an increase in the estimated number of people migrating to Michigan from other countries in 2023 and 2024. In 2024, there was an estimated 67,608 net increase in international migration to Michigan.

In total, we estimate that **between 2019 and 2024, Michigan has seen a net increase of 54,674 foreign-born adults with a bachelor's degree or higher,** which contributes significantly to MGTI's goal of adding 100,000 to 125,000 foreign-born Michiganders to the workforce by 2030.



### What's the Bottom Line?

Immigration has been the source of all of Michigan's net population growth, whether one looks back five or 25 years. The Michigan Global Talent Initiative represents one of the nation's most impressive and admired state immigrant talent strategies to add high-skilled immigrants to a state's workforce. With broad participation and support, MGTI is helping Michigan exceed projected skilled immigrant growth rates to reach its workforce and talent needs. The 2024 Census numbers suggest the program is on target to help the state reach its goals by nearly doubling the growth of college-educated immigrants working in the state.



[READ THE FULL ISSUE BRIEF](#)

## Michigan Global Talent Coalition (MGTC)

MGTI is championed by the Michigan Global Talent Coalition, a group of 25 local chambers of commerce, business, industry and local economic development organizations from across the state of Michigan. Members of the Michigan Global Talent Coalition support local implementation of programs.



Map of MGTC Member Locations

## Michigan Global Talent Coalition Members



# Attraction and Retention

Attraction and Retention form a foundational pillar of MGTI's work by addressing how talent enters Michigan's workforce and, critically, why it stays. In a competitive national and global labor market, attracting skilled individuals is only effective when paired with clear pathways to employment, entrepreneurship, and long-term economic participation. This pillar focuses on positioning Michigan as a place where globally trained and educated talent can build careers, launch companies, and establish lasting ties to the state's economy.

Through targeted initiatives such as the Michigan Attraction Initiative and the Global Entrepreneurs in Residence (Global EIR) program, MGTI strengthens the bridge between global talent and Michigan's employers, innovation ecosystems, and regional economies. These efforts align outreach, employer engagement, and ecosystem support to ensure that attraction leads to integration and retention leads to growth. Together, these programs reinforce Michigan's ability to compete for talent while converting that talent into job creation, innovation, and sustained economic impact across the state.



## Global Entrepreneurs in Residence (Global EIR)



Michigan's innovation economy depends on the ability to translate high-growth ideas into companies that create jobs and attract investment. The Global Entrepreneurs in Residence strategy bridges internationally trained founders with Michigan's startup ecosystem by aligning global entrepreneurial talent with local capital, institutions, and market opportunities. By anchoring immigrant-founded startups in Michigan, this strategy strengthens regional innovation capacity and drives job creation across the state.

**Immigrant Tech Founders ↔ Michigan's Innovation Ecosystem ↔ Job Creation and Investment**



## GLOBAL EIR BY THE NUMBERS



# 194

jobs created  
throughout  
Michigan and the  
United States



# \$38.3

MILLION

in venture capital  
raised by our  
Global EIR  
companies to date



# 8

**Michigan universities engaged in formal Global EIR partnership.**

(College for Creative Studies, Grand Valley State University, Lawrence Technological University, Michigan State University, Michigan Technological University, University of Detroit Mercy, University of Michigan, and Wayne State University).



# 22

founders/co-founders  
and 20 startups  
supported by Global EIR  
across Michigan to date



# 50%

of founders are Black,  
Latino, or Middle Eastern



# 100+

community mentors, advisors, and partners  
mobilized in support of Global EIR programming,  
events, monthly syncs, etc.



# 90%

of all founders are  
persons of color



# 25%

of all founders are  
women



All startups are in emerging tech fields, such as AI, electric and autonomous vehicles, mobility, biotech, robotics, fintech, etc.



## FEATURED VOICES

# Shiva Sundaram, a Global EIR Story

"I've faced the complexities of building a robotics company from the ground up while also dealing with U.S. immigration hurdles," reflects Shiva Sundaram, Global Detroit's Emerging Talent 2025 awardee and Global Entrepreneurs in Residence participant. "By focusing on solving real customer pain points and staying committed to the vision, I've been able to turn obstacles into opportunities for growth."

**Shiva Sundaram**

**US AMR**

Shiva credits the Global EIR program with helping him return to the U.S. and continue building his startup, providing not only a pathway to legally work on his company but also access to an invaluable support network. Looking ahead, he says, "I see myself scaling USAMR into a leading provider of mobile robotic solutions while creating high-quality manufacturing jobs in Michigan."

model 

**Global Detroit program helps immigrant entrepreneurs grow Michigan's tech economy**

“

Through its Global EIR program, the organization connects foreign-born entrepreneurs with Michigan universities, enabling them to receive H-1B visas while they build their businesses full-time. In return, participants take on part-time university roles such as mentoring students or supporting entrepreneurship programs.

**Read More**



<https://modelmedia.com/global-detroit-program-helps-immigrant-entrepreneurs-grow-michigans-tech-economy/>



**Case study: Michigan Tech's Global Entrepreneurs in Residence Program creates jobs and attracts investment**

“

The Global EIR program is rare in rural communities, where institutions may already be doing similar work without realizing it has an official framework and national support network. Through a partnership with Global Detroit and funding from the State of Michigan, Michigan Tech offers a compelling example of how to leverage the Global EIR program as a transformative economic development opportunity.

**Read More**



<https://ruralinnovation.us/blog/case-study-michigan-techs-global-entrepreneur-in-residence-program-creates-jobs-and-attracts-investment/>

## Michigan Attraction Initiative



Achieving Michigan's long-term workforce goals requires not only retaining existing talent, but also attracting new, college-educated professionals to meet current and emerging employer demand. The strategy to attract high-skilled immigrants from other parts of the country seeks to align digital outreach, data-informed messaging, and coordinated support systems. This strategy positions Michigan as a destination where talent can build careers, contribute economically, and put down long-term roots.

**Global Skilled Talent ↔ Michigan Employers and Regions ↔ Long-Term Workforce Growth**



## MICHIGAN ATTRACTION INITIATIVE BY THE NUMBERS



# 97%

of employers  
willing to hire  
international  
students in next  
3 years



# 1 in 5

Michigan jobs  
are unfilled  
due to lack of  
qualified talent



Michigan is  
associated with

# 7 of the TOP 10

industries of greatest interest



Hosted

# 3 Welcoming Michigan convenings

focused on how to accomplish welcoming in Michigan: through regional collaboratives, economic inclusion, civic engagement, and through practice.

These convenings brought together existing and prospective WM members, and provided a welcoming, safe space to showcase welcoming work throughout the state, ask questions, and share best practices.



# Connecting and Placing

Connecting and Placing serves as the operational bridge between talent and opportunity, ensuring that skills, credentials, and readiness translate into real employment outcomes. Even when talent is present and prepared, workforce systems can fail without intentional connections to employers and clear hiring pathways. This pillar focuses on aligning talent supply with employer demand by reducing friction in recruitment, placement, and workforce integration.

Through the Global Talent Retention Initiative and the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program, MGTI connects international students and skilled immigrant professionals directly to Michigan employers via structured engagement, talent matching, and employer-informed workforce pathways. These programs strengthen hiring pipelines, reduce time-to-hire, and improve retention by ensuring that talent is not only qualified, but also visible, understood, and integrated into Michigan's labor market.



# Global Talent Retention Initiative (GTRI)



Michigan currently educates 40,000+ highly skilled international students each year, yet too many leave the state after graduation due to disconnected pathways between education and employment. The Global Talent Retention Initiative addresses this gap by building durable bridges between international graduates and Michigan employers, ensuring that talent educated in Michigan is retained, integrated, and activated within the state's workforce.

**International Students ↔ Michigan Employers ↔ Long-Term  
Workforce Retention**



### GTRI BY THE NUMBERS



**907** international students registered and/or attending scheduled events



**1,020** employers attending scheduled events



**8** job fairs organized



**37** employer events organized



**31** university partnerships



**6** Global Talent Accelerator (GTA) cohorts





## FEATURED VOICES

# Global Talent is a Competitive Advantage

“Global talent isn’t just a business strategy—it’s a mission,” says Brandon Byrd, Director of Foreign National Talent Management at Populus Group, an employment solutions firm. Having led the company’s foreign national program for more than a decade, Byrd emphasizes that international students and globally trained professionals bring critical skills, resilience, and long-term commitment to the workforce. In a competitive labor market, he notes, global talent has become essential to meeting employer demand and sustaining business growth.

**Brandon Byrd**



Populus Group has translated that vision into action by building one of the country’s most established foreign national workforce programs. Since beginning sponsorship efforts in 2005, the company has supported thousands of H-1B petitions, permanent residency applications, and international students through Optional Practical Training. Through its partnership with Global Detroit and GTRI, Populus Group continues to strengthen pathways that connect international talent to meaningful employment.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

### The Long Arc of a Scientist Who Refused to Stay Small

“I didn’t come here knowing exactly where I would end up, but I knew I didn’t want to limit myself,” Yamini Kotriwar, an international student at MSU reflects. “Each step, from navigating a new country to finding the right mentors and opportunities, pushed me to think bigger about what was possible.”

Read More



<https://michiganlobaltalent.org/the-long-arc-of-a-scientist-who-refused-to-stay-small/>

### From Toy Cars in India to Global Manufacturing Leadership in Detroit

“I didn’t have a backup plan. I didn’t know what was going to happen. I just knew I couldn’t give up,” says Arjun Venugopal, reflecting on his path from growing up in India to building a career in advanced manufacturing in Detroit. “Global Detroit didn’t just help me find a job. They helped me find my place.”

Read More



<https://michiganlobaltalent.org/from-toy-cars-in-india-to-global-manufacturing-leadership-in-detroit-arjun-venugopals-journey/>

# Michigan Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP)



Michigan's workforce includes a significant number of internationally trained and educated professionals whose skills remain underutilized due to fragmented credential recognition, limited employer familiarity, and disconnected career pathways. Think of a pharmacist who is driving for Uber or working in a restaurant because they are unable to navigate licensing or credentialing barriers, or have difficulty in understanding the job search process in the U.S. The Skilled Immigrant Integration Program addresses these barriers by rebuilding bridges between experienced global talent and Michigan employers, aligning skills, credentials, and market demand to accelerate workforce reentry and long-term employment.

**Internationally Trained Professionals ↔ Michigan Employers ↔  
Credential-Aligned Workforce Participation**

### SIIP BY THE NUMBERS



**420** program applicants



**123** job placements



**\$42,590**

The average salary increase of placed clients



**\$61,277**

The average starting salary of placed clients



## FEATURED VOICES



Chrys Lo

"This program, along with my career coach, has made my journey so much easier. I gained the skills to tailor my résumé for the U.S. job market and to deliver strong, well-structured responses during interviews."



A. Thomas

"What is the most valuable skill or insight I gained from the SIIP program? This program helped me with a more tailored approach, engaging in informational interviews, and gave me more confidence."



Martha Glz.

"The impact of the Michigan Works! program was enormous. This program helped to be confident that I deserve a job according to my career."

”







# Training and Credentialing

Training and Credentialing represent the connective infrastructure that enables skilled individuals to fully participate in Michigan's workforce. Many immigrants and newcomers arrive with education, experience, and professional expertise, yet face barriers related to credential recognition, targeted upskilling, language access, or system navigation. This pillar focuses on aligning existing skills with employer expectations by translating credentials, closing targeted gaps, and ensuring that education and training lead directly to workforce opportunity.

Through programs including Credential Evaluation, Upskilling and Reskilling, Contextualized English Language Learning, Community College Immigrant Student Success, and the Welcome Back Center for Health Care Careers, MGTI rebuilds pathways between education systems, training providers, and high-demand industries. By coordinating credential alignment, sector-specific language support, and workforce-connected education, this pillar reduces underemployment, accelerates workforce entry, and ensures that talent already in Michigan can contribute at its full potential across critical sectors of the economy.



## Credential Evaluation, Upskilling, and Reskilling



Many immigrant professionals possess the education and experience Michigan employers need, yet face barriers related to credential recognition, licensure, and targeted skill alignment. The Credential Alignment and Upskilling strategy removes these barriers by connecting internationally earned credentials to U.S. standards and supporting focused upskilling where needed. By aligning talent qualifications with employer expectations, this strategy accelerates workforce entry and maximizes the value of existing human capital.

**International Credentials ↔ U.S. Standards ↔ Employer-Recognized Qualifications**

## CREDENTIAL EVALUATION, UPSKILLING, AND RESKILLING BY THE NUMBERS



20

job seekers that attain professional certification or credential

### Examples of Upskilling Resources Accessed

Medical Front Office Administration Specialist

Java Developer Program

Lean Six Sigma Green Belt (CMU)

SHRM

CDA Preschool Teacher Assistant

Dental Board Exam Prep Course

Sterile Processing & Surgical Technician





# Contextualized English Language Learning



Limited access to industry-specific English instruction can prevent skilled immigrants from fully contributing in the workplace, even when their technical qualifications are strong. The Industry-Contextualized Language Access strategy bridges this gap by aligning English language support with the real-world demands of Michigan industries. Through digital, sector-specific, and employer-informed approaches, this strategy strengthens communication, improves job performance, and supports long-term workforce advancement.


**Workplace Language Demands ↔ Skilled Immigrant Workers ↔  
Employer Productivity and Retention**




### CONTEXTUALIZED ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING BY THE NUMBERS




**1,095** licenses onboarded across 25 programs throughout the state



**75%** of learners are passing achievement tests, which indicates domain mastery and proficiency growth



Learners have completed a total of **3,043** units, covering topics like navigating the computer, medical assistant, early childhood education, and OSHA  
(425 unique units)



**370** learners have enough proficiency and achievement test data to assess proficiency improvement, and **78%** have improved

#### FEATURED VOICES



“**Francois** with **Literacy Center of West MI** (Healthcare pathway) spent 32 hours on the platform.

“It was very good - this program developed my knowledge about health in the English language - it increased my knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and listening. It's definitely a good program. Now it is better for me to use my English in my job.”

“**Nancy** with **Macomb Community College** spent 30 hours on the platform and took 9 group classes.

“If you are spending time on EnGen it is easy and helpful to improve. If you use it properly you can achieve your goals.”



## Welcome Back Centers



Healthcare systems across Michigan face persistent workforce shortages, even as many internationally trained medical graduates and immigrants with professional healthcare experience remain underutilized due to licensing, credentialing, and system-navigation barriers. The Welcome Back Centers strategy explores the feasibility of a healthcare professional-focused center that bridges internationally trained talent with healthcare employers by aligning credential recognition, career navigation, and workforce integration supports. This approach aims to strengthen healthcare staffing capacity while improving access to care, ensuring that skilled professionals can reenter the field and contribute meaningfully to Michigan's health system. Adding these foreign-trained medical graduates to Michigan's healthcare workforce not only fills critical talent gaps, but diversifies the staff of providers, expanding language access and cultural competence of Michigan's healthcare industry, ensuring that the state's growing immigrant and ethnic communities receive the quality of care they need.

**Internationally Trained Healthcare Professionals ↔ Welcome Back Centers  
↔ Healthcare Workforce Pathways**

## WELCOME BACK CENTERS BY THE NUMBERS

### Completed Welcome Back Center implementation study with Melanie Brim Consulting



Launch of regional Welcome Back Center in West Michigan, led by Literacy Center of West Michigan in partnership with West Michigan Works!



Launch of regional Welcome Back Center in Southeast Michigan, led by ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services)

### The three priorities to advance the Welcome Back Centers

Convene a Multi-Sector,  
Statewide Coalition

Fundraise

Advance Coordinated Policy to  
Support Relicensure



Hosted convening at MHA (Michigan Health & Hospital Association), reviewing report recommendations and next steps.







## Michigan Global Talent Initiative

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[michianglobaltalent.org](http://michianglobaltalent.org)

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 [michigan-global-talent-initiative](https://www.linkedin.com/company/michigan-global-talent-initiative)

The Michigan Global Talent Initiative has developed inclusive talent strategies rooted in research and best practices adopted across Michigan. Our programs have been developed through deep collaboration with business, economic development, government and national experts.

MGTI depends on active collaboration with coalition members, business, community stakeholders, economic development entities, universities, local government and more. By building awareness, fostering engagement, and bolstering support for MGTI across the state we can ensure that Michigan builds upon the growing contributions of its immigrant communities in ways that expand prosperity for all.