



# Unlocking Hidden Value

How Investing in Immigrant Talent  
Benefits Your Bottom Line

## AT A GLANCE

Companies that invest in developing entry- and mid-level talent from immigrant and refugee backgrounds increase business value and worker well-being at the same time. This report lays out the case for unlocking this population's potential. Learn how to use [JFF's Impact Employer Framework](#) to make strategic investments that benefit immigrant and refugee employees and your bottom line.

## AUTHORS

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## About This Report

One of JFF's areas of focus is inspiring and supporting companies to prioritize worker well-being alongside traditional business performance. We do this with a special eye toward populations that have long been left out of the workforce and education systems, including opportunity youth, veterans, and immigrants and refugees. To that end, this report was developed as part of JFF's Corporate Action Platform, which helps to uncover and share talent solutions that enable Fortune 500 companies to address both business and social needs.



# INTRODUCTION

For many of today's Fortune 500 companies, hiring and retaining high-quality talent is a constant challenge, especially when it comes to entry- and mid-level positions. Our country's changing demographics, paired with an increasingly tight labor market, means that companies must develop new pools of talent—and clear career pathways—to meet their workforce needs.

Fortunately, a number of solutions are emerging that have the ability to benefit companies and workers alike. One solution that shows strong results is building underrepresented worker populations into your company's talent strategy. These underleveraged groups include veterans, people with disabilities, young adults who are out of school and out of work, people formerly involved with the criminal justice system, and immigrants and refugees. Companies have historically undervalued these populations and underinvested in developing their talent—leaving both business and social value on the table.

Immigrants and refugees, for example, are a diverse and dynamic workforce that has the capacity to contribute vitally to individual companies and the economy. With their wide range of educational attainment, skills, and backgrounds, immigrants and refugees are well equipped for a variety of business roles.

This report zeroes in specifically on the value this population brings to hard-to-fill entry- and mid-level positions.<sup>1</sup> We focus on that segment of the workforce because 1) there are common, acute business needs for people to fill these positions across a variety of industries; 2) there is evidence of this population's unique value to these roles; and 3) increasing the range of opportunities available to entry- and mid-level workers is central to JFF's mission. That said, we encourage companies to think about this population as an asset across all levels and industries.

This report also shows companies how to meet immigrants' and refugees' unique needs, which is an essential part of retaining these employees and developing their ability to contribute to the business. We look at both through the lens of JFF's [Impact Employer Talent Framework](#), a guide for companies that see employee well-being as an essential part of their business model and actively seek out strategies to help workers thrive.

The framework provides a helpful structure to categorize the findings from our research, which consisted of interviews with more than a dozen leaders from Fortune 500 companies alongside an extensive literature review. We also interviewed experts who provide companies with English language learning support, career pathway design, and refugee recruitment services.

Our research revealed that investing in immigrant and refugee talent offers a wide range of benefits, including improved retention rates, increased employee diversity, and stronger talent pipelines.

The next section of the report provides a foundation of basic facts about immigrants and refugees in the United States and their roles in the U.S. workforce. We build on this foundation in subsequent sections by applying the Impact Employer Talent Framework to highlight the hidden value of these workers in our society and how to make the most out of investing in their talent development. We close with concrete recommendations for next steps for companies that are ready to turn these strategies into reality.



# Immigrants and Refugees Are a Diverse and Dynamic Workforce That Is Full of Potential

When you stop to look at immigrant and refugee populations up close, there's a lot to learn—especially when it comes to how you can best engage, hire, and develop them to contribute to your business. There's no one-size-fits-all strategy for working with this diverse population; this report presents a range of strategies that have been effective for a range of companies. This page begins with some basic facts about immigrants and refugees in the U.S. workforce in order to lay the foundation for how companies can best engage them.

## ***Immigrants and Refugees Living in the United States***

As of 2017, there were 44.4 million immigrants living in the United States. That's 13.6 percent of the country's population<sup>2</sup>. Approximately 8 percent of all immigrants are refugees or asylees.<sup>3</sup> While people from Latin American countries currently comprise the largest share of immigrants, people from Asia are projected to become the largest group by 2055.<sup>4</sup>

## **Who Are Immigrants? Who Are Refugees?**

Immigrants are people who come from other countries to live long term in the United States. This population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, people on certain temporary visas, and people who are unauthorized.<sup>5</sup>

Refugees are members of the immigrant population who are eligible for special legal protection in the United States. They are unwilling or unable to return to the countries they left because they were persecuted in those countries or have well-founded fears of persecution.<sup>6</sup>

U.S. immigrants are a tremendously varied group, coming from just about every country in the world.<sup>7</sup> They represent hundreds of different languages and ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup>

## Immigrants and Refugees in the Labor Force

Immigrants and refugees have long been a significant part of the U.S. workforce, and they contribute to the economy in many valuable ways.<sup>9</sup> Between 1990 and 2014 alone, immigrant labor participation boosted U.S. economic growth by 15 percent.<sup>10</sup>

Those contributions will only grow in the future. Immigrants and refugees are projected to add about 18 million working-age people to the workforce over the next 15 years. They will help fill the growing number of jobs in high-demand industries and offset the decline in available workers as more baby boomers retire.<sup>11</sup>

Immigrants and refugees are projected to add about 18 million working-age people to the workforce over the next 15 years.<sup>12</sup>

 = 1 MILLION PEOPLE



While this report zeroes in on the value generated by immigrant and refugee workers in entry- and mid-level roles,

it is worth noting that the economic contributions of immigrants and refugees extend across the entire labor market. For example, 14.7 million immigrants ages 25 and up have a postsecondary degree or other credential, and they are almost twice as likely as native-born U.S. citizens to be entrepreneurs and start a businesses.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Economic Value of Immigrants and Refugees***

Earned wages and salaries are one measure of contribution to the economy. An analysis by the Economic Policy Institute found

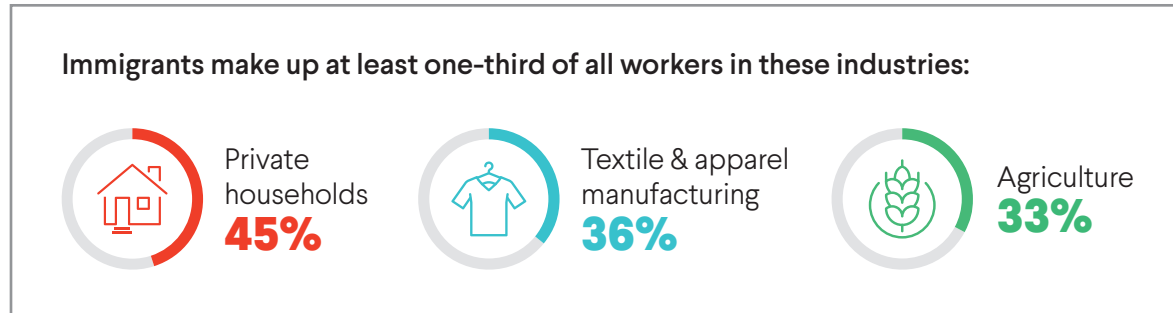
In 2016, immigrants added  
**\$2 trillion**  
to the U.S. GDP.

that immigrants generated more than \$700 billion in U.S. wages, salary, and business income from 2009 to 2011. That's 14.7 percent of the total, which is higher than immigrants' share of the population over that same time period.<sup>14</sup>

In 2015, 2.3 million refugees earned a total of \$77.2 billion in household income and paid \$20.9 billion in taxes.<sup>15</sup> The following year, immigrants added \$2 trillion to the U.S. GDP.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Immigrants by Industry***

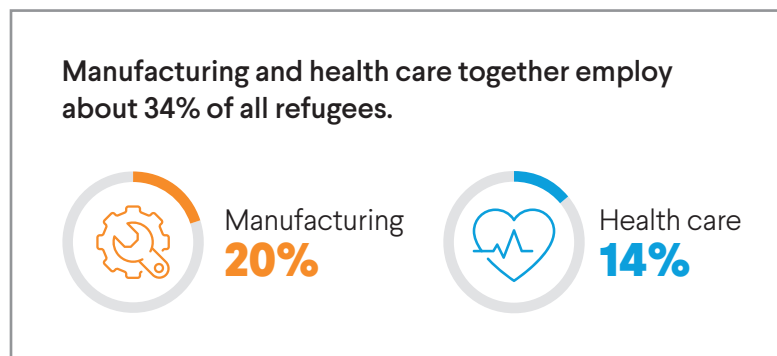
Certain industries rely heavily on immigrant talent. Immigrants make up 45 percent of the people who work in private households, 36 percent of the workers in textile and apparel manufacturing, and 33 percent of those in agriculture.<sup>17</sup> But these industries are not the largest employers of immigrants by total number.



Several larger industries employ proportionally fewer immigrants but greater numbers overall. For example, retail employs 10 percent of authorized immigrants, and the educational services and health care services sectors employ 8 percent and 7 percent, respectively.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Refugees by Industry***

Refugee employment trends differ slightly from those of the overall immigrant population. Health care and manufacturing employ the highest percentages of refugees. In 2015, 20.3 percent of refugees worked in manufacturing and 14.2 percent worked in health care.<sup>19</sup>



# Businesses That Invest in Immigrant and Refugee Talent Unlock Hidden Value

Hiring and advancing immigrant and refugee workers enables companies to drive value for business, workers, and society. Smart, strategic investment in this talent pool maximizes these benefits. But employers need an understanding of the unique needs of this population in order to unlock the immense value they can offer.

Read on to learn more about talent strategies that work best for this population through the lens of the six levers of our Impact Employer Talent Framework (*see box and Figure 1*).

## JFF's Impact Employer Talent Framework

For more than 35 years, JFF has focused on helping the United States to create economic opportunity and mobility for all. In today's rapidly changing economy, businesses are fundamentally redesigning how they think about attracting, developing, and retaining employees. At JFF, we are applying our expertise to inspire and support companies to join a growing corporate movement to prioritize worker well-being alongside traditional business performance.

We call these companies "Impact Employers," and we developed the "Impact Employer Talent Framework" to guide their development. The framework is based on traditional components of corporate HR strategy—like recruiting, retaining, rewarding, and advancing talent—and it expands these elements to include people-focused benefits.

Each of the six components, or levers, of the framework represents an area of the business that companies can focus on to achieve high-impact returns by modifying their existing practices. The levers are Corporate Culture, Workforce Planning, Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, Total Rewards, and Offboarding.

Each is described below in the context of investing in workers from immigrant and refugee backgrounds.



Company investment in immigrant and refugee talent across the Workforce Planning, Talent Acquisition, and Total Rewards levers has been shown to produce unique business value—above and beyond blanket investment in all entry- and mid-level workers across these same areas.

We also found business benefits resulting from investments in immigrants and refugees across the other three levers of our framework—Corporate Culture, Talent Development, and Offboarding. While compelling, this evidence is either more anecdotal than the evidence associated with the three other levers or consistent with investment in entry-level and middle-skill workers as a whole.



**Figure 1. Impact Employer Talent Framework.**

# Workforce Planning

Globalization, automation, and the rapid pace of innovation in areas like artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics are a few of the massive forces reshaping industry and work. Corporations that take an active, strategic approach to preparing their employees to adapt to—and succeed in—this evolving landscape are less likely to be disrupted and are better positioned for long-term success.

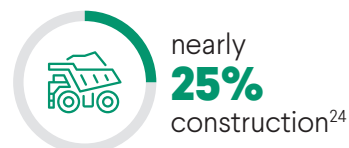
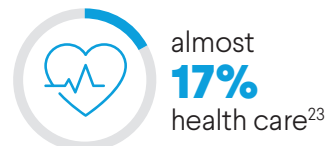
Impact Employers incorporate immigrant and refugee talent into their workforce planning strategies. They see this talent as critical to efforts to fill gaps in the labor supply left by retiring baby boomers, and to develop a workforce that can grow with the company as it expands and changes.

## The Evidence

Immigrants and refugees are particularly well positioned to fill the void left by retiring baby boomers.

- By 2030, more than 20% of the U.S. population will be older than 65.<sup>20</sup>
- Over the same period, immigrants and their children will drive growth in the working-age population. They are projected to add roughly 18 million working-age people to the U.S. workforce between 2015 and 2035, thus offsetting the expected decline in the working-age population caused by boomer retirements.<sup>21</sup>

They're a population that's growing alongside and within some of the fastest-growing industries. Immigrants and refugees account for the following shares of key labor markets:



- A large percentage of the workers involved in the gig economy, which is projected to grow to \$455 billion by the end of 2023, adding more than 5 million jobs to the economy<sup>25</sup>

**Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) had a workforce disconnect that was hurting its business.** Before the Boston-based hospital launched its talent pipeline development programs in 2004, it had a 28 percent vacancy rate among surgical technologists and a 15 percent vacancy rate among medical laboratory technicians. The hospital was in a bind and needed to develop new middle-skill talent fast.

BIDMC created a new unit called the Workforce Development Department to manage workforce planning initiatives, including efforts to meet the ongoing need for skilled workers in nursing and allied health positions, such as surgical technologists and medical lab technicians. To address the staffing challenges, the new department took a two-pronged approach that involved 1) supporting the career advancement of incumbent frontline workers so they could move into middle-skill roles and 2) recruiting members of nearby communities (many made up of immigrants and refugees) to be part of new talent pipelines for available jobs.<sup>27</sup>

BIDMC now has seven talent pipeline programs that prepare employees to advance to high-demand, higher-paying careers. For immigrants and refugees who speak little English, the curriculum can begin with English language instruction. High school equivalency classes are also available. Such programs enable the hospital to support all workers who have potential. More than 1,000 employees participate in BIDMC's workforce development programs each year to learn new skills to further their own advancement. To date, 207 employees have moved to new roles as the result of a pipeline program.<sup>28</sup>

# Talent Acquisition

Companies are struggling to find, hire, and retain people who have the skills needed to fill their open positions. With low unemployment across the United States, a company can reduce hiring time and gain a competitive advantage by pursuing talent from new and nontraditional sources. This approach taps into the vast potential of underrepresented populations.

Impact Employers seek out immigrants and refugees to help build a robust talent pipeline for hard-to-fill roles across a variety of industries. They see value in the population's higher-than-average retention rates and ability to gain skills and advance within the company.

## The Evidence

Immigrants bring unique assets to hard-to-fill roles.

- They are more likely to work in jobs for which companies find it particularly hard to recruit, hire, and retain employees.<sup>29</sup>
- They have unique assets—including cultural capital, language skills, grit, and entrepreneurial mindsets—that are critical for success at work given the ways automation is changing jobs.<sup>30</sup>
- They have greater openness to new experiences and more agency than the native-born population.<sup>31</sup> This often translates to a willingness to take initiative and an eagerness to learn new skills.

Immigrants and refugees have higher-than-average retention rates.

On average, refugee turnover rates were

**7-15% lower**

than the turnover rate for the overall workforce across industry sectors.<sup>32</sup>

In the high-growth field of manufacturing, the refugee turnover rate was

**less than half**

the industry average.<sup>33</sup>

## Spotlight Solutions: McDonald's<sup>34</sup>



McDonald's is a massive employer of high school and college students.

The company has invested heavily in branding itself as offering “America’s best first jobs.” To fully live up to this label, and to continue to drive business value, some franchise owners are considering ways in which they can fill their “first job” pipeline more explicitly from the communities they serve to offer an even better customer experience.

For example, in areas where many Spanish-speaking immigrants live, some franchise owners see a Spanish-speaking staff as a competitive advantage because it allows them to more effectively serve their local customer base. At one franchise in Southern California, approximately 80 percent of the employees across five locations either speak only Spanish or are bilingual. Many are immigrants.

“It helps put the customer at ease when they don’t have to struggle to communicate, and it makes the whole experience more enjoyable,” said Veronica Gonzalez-Soto, who owns and operates the franchise.<sup>35</sup>

One way McDonald's recruits potential employees is by promoting its benefits, including the [Archways to Opportunity](#) program. This initiative offers tuition assistance, high school equivalency coursework, English language classes, education and career advisement, and more.<sup>36</sup>

Lea Cagadas, a McDonald's manager in Honolulu who participated in the company's English Under the Arches program, had this to say: “Attending English Under the Arches was very beneficial for me with having English as my second language. With the knowledge I gained . . . it not only improved how I speak but also made me better at handling the people department.”<sup>37</sup>

To date, 125 of Gonzalez-Soto's employees have gone through the English language learning curriculum. Many had started out in frontline roles with limited English proficiency and are now in managerial or senior-level operating roles. Gonzalez-Soto takes enormous pride in their advancement, recognizing that it is good for the workers and good for the business.

**“ We are trying to hire and attract [immigrant and refugee workers] because we want our customers [many of whom are also immigrants and/or exclusively Spanish speakers] to feel that this is a restaurant for their community.”**

—Veronica Gonzalez-Soto,  
*McDonald's franchise owner, Southern California*<sup>38</sup>

## Spotlight Solutions: M Health Fairview



**M Health Fairview is tackling a recruitment problem.** The Minnesota-based health care provider has more than 34,000 employees. Every day, it has an average of 1,400 open roles across 12 hospitals and 100 clinics. The positions range from entry-level to middle-skill jobs, everything from medical assistants to surgical technologists. It's imperative for Fairview to have well-oiled talent pipelines that churn out a steady flow of strong candidates for the wide variety of openings.<sup>39</sup>

Fairview uses multiple recruitment strategies, all focused on a “grow your own” approach, investing both in incumbent employees and the people who live in the neighborhoods near its facilities. One of its strategies is to build talent pipelines from under-resourced communities in the region.

For example, after successful outreach and trust-building efforts, Fairview made headway recruiting employees from an East African immigrant community in North Minneapolis with a traditionally high unemployment rate.

This strategy helps Fairview address its huge number of job vacancies and creates opportunities for a workforce that has been traditionally left out of the labor market.<sup>40</sup>

**“As our population continues to grow and change, especially with the number of new Americans living in the Twin Cities, it's more important than ever that our workforce mirrors the population it's serving.”**

—Laura Beeth,  
*Vice President, Talent Acquisition, M Health Fairview*<sup>41</sup>

# Total Rewards

Worker loyalty, engagement, and retention are key drivers of productivity and business performance. “Total Rewards” strategies tap into the intangibles that motivate workers above and beyond their paychecks. Forward-looking companies actively seek innovative ways to help their employees lead more balanced lives. Such efforts go beyond a narrow focus on compensation, traditional benefits, and workplace perks. They may include educational programs to help workers advance, on-site child care, adaptable and flexible scheduling, financial support, and other offerings.

Impact Employers recognize that immigrant and refugee workers have a unique set of needs, and they invest in their stabilization by providing benefits like English language instruction and financial support earmarked for child care, transportation, and housing. In doing so, they’re able to unlock the unique business value this population can provide to the companies that employ and support them.

## The Evidence

Basic skill development opportunities offered as part of a company’s benefits package, such as English language instruction, can have an exponential impact on both the business and immigrant workers themselves.<sup>42</sup>

Company investments in adult basic education have been shown to yield better than

**123% return**

in the form of increased productivity and reduced turnover.<sup>43</sup>

- Adult basic education programs, including English language instruction, have direct economic and social benefits, including increases in tax revenue and consumer spending.<sup>44</sup>
- English language proficiency is associated with increased wages, promotions, and performance.<sup>45</sup>

**“Language learning gives companies the unique ability to promote workers from within to fill vacant roles, surfacing all new talent pools that would otherwise be out of reach in such a tight labor market.”**

—Katie Nielson,  
Chief Education Officer, Voxy<sup>46</sup>

## **Spotlight Solutions: Total Rewards<sup>47</sup>**

One of the country's largest food manufacturers needed more robust internal career pathways to help fill ongoing vacancies that were damaging production. The pathways would address persistent talent gaps across a handful of roles and also provide meaningful career progression for current frontline workers—the majority of whom are immigrants or refugees.

Company leaders recognized that developing these pathways would require an investment in the frontline workforce that went above and beyond the technical skills training that the HR department offered. They also needed to address the unique needs of the largely immigrant front line. The company decided to invest in adult basic education and offered English language instruction, GED preparation, and U.S. citizenship coursework on site before and after shifts.

The program has been a huge success—both for the business and the workers. More than 1,000 employees in several states have enrolled in classes and have logged more than 125,000 instructional hours. Comparing the retention rates of program participants with those of employees who didn't participate, the company determined that the investment in education yielded an ROI of 123 percent. It is now working to offer expanded career pathways for frontline workers in 2020 and beyond.



# Corporate Culture

Both customers and prospective employees favor companies that have positive social missions and explicitly prioritize worker financial well-being as part of their culture. Moreover, businesses that demonstrate a strong social commitment to their workers have higher rates of employee engagement, retention, and productivity.

Impact Employers recognize their immigrant and refugee workers as a critical part of company diversity and culture, and they take active steps to integrate them into the workforce. They see this as a way to communicate the company's values both internally and externally. A corporate culture that is inclusive of immigrants and refugees will encourage those employees to be more engaged in and committed to their work, thereby creating a fertile environment for other talent investments (such as training and advancement programs) that the company makes, ensuring those programs are also successful.

## Spotlight Solutions: Chobani

## Chobani®

Chobani may be the Fortune 500 company that's best known for actively employing and investing in immigrant and refugee workers. Founder Hamdi Ulukaya is deeply committed to advancing the well-being of immigrants and refugees, and to doing so in a way that benefits the business and is interwoven into the way the yogurt maker operates. He has famously said, "From the beginning, my goal at Chobani was not to build just a product—but to build a culture. To build tomorrow's company."<sup>49</sup>

Today, the \$1.5 billion company builds immigrant and refugee workers into its talent strategy by ensuring that it has hiring, advancement, and engagement strategies that work for everyone, regardless of background. Chobani also makes a deliberate effort to connect all workers to the company's success through a profit-sharing program, which increases motivation and builds equitable buy-in. The company has seen high rates of retention and promotion among immigrants and refugees and high job satisfaction among employees overall. Workers report a true sense of community at some of the company's oldest and largest U.S. plants, where nearly 30 percent of the workers are immigrants and refugees.<sup>50</sup>

**"If you want to build a company that truly welcomes people—including refugees—one thing you have to do is throw out this notion of 'cheap labor.' That's really awful. They're not a different group of people. They're each just another team member. Let people be themselves, and if you have a cultural environment that welcomes everyone for who they are, it just works."**

—Hamdi Ulukaya,  
Founder and CEO, Chobani<sup>48</sup>

# Talent Development

It's more effective to build the skills of incumbent employees than it is to recruit and onboard new talent. Companies that focus on developing internal talent see higher rates of productivity, engagement, and retention than their competitors. These companies also benefit from reductions in recruiting costs, and they avoid drop-offs in productivity that occur when trained people leave and their positions are left open for days, weeks, or even months.

Impact Employers consider investments in educating and training immigrants and refugees to be an integral part of their overall talent strategy for advancing entry- and mid-level workers. They also recognize that efforts to develop employees' skills must be paired with investments in employee stability and inclusion so that workers from diverse backgrounds can fully take advantage of advancement opportunities. Companies that focus on developing their internal talent in these ways are more likely to see higher rates of productivity, engagement, and retention than their competitors.

**“You have highly talented people, and once they develop [English language] fluency or gain more [work] experience, they make great candidates for professional advancement.”**

—Gideon Maltz,  
*Executive Director, Tent Partnership for Refugees*<sup>51</sup>

## Spotlight Solutions: Walmart<sup>52</sup>



In recent years, **Walmart** has shown a commitment to the development of their frontline talent. As the immigrant population in America grows, the demographic makeup of Walmart's national workforce is mirroring that trend. This requires the company to pay thoughtful attention to the evolving training needs of frontline employees. Walmart offers educational programs to all frontline associates, regardless of background, as well as targeted resources for immigrant and refugee workers.

The foundation of talent development investment at Walmart is Walmart Academies, the company's main training program for frontline retail workers. Academies was developed in 2016 and is available for free to all frontline employees who want to move

into management roles. The curriculum includes advanced retail skills like merchandising and how to motivate employees. Many associates pair this with educational offerings provided through Walmart's Live Better U, which offers English language classes and high school completion programs at no cost. College courses preparing for or leading to a degree are available for just \$1 per day.<sup>53</sup>

As of March 2019, Walmart had trained more than 800,000 employees in Walmart Academies and promoted 215,000 people to higher-wage jobs through the program.

Walmart also has invested in targeted resources for immigrant and refugee employees to help them integrate into the U.S. workforce and apply their full talents to American society. Walmart has partnered with the National Immigration Forum (NIF) to provide access to the organization's New American Workforce Portal. The portal is an aggregation of resources that help immigrants navigate the U.S immigration system, including guides for various visa application processes, personalized immigration options, and connections to legal services. To date, roughly 1,400 Walmart associates and family members have used the portal. Many are now naturalized citizens or on a pathway to become one.

The stability and support this portal provides, paired with talent development opportunities available to all Walmart associates, enables immigrant and refugee workers to develop their skills and advance within the company, building value both for themselves and the business.<sup>54</sup>

# Offboarding

Despite the high-growth post-recession economy, layoffs are still not uncommon. Looking to the future, globalization, automation, and the rapid pace of innovation in areas like AI and robotics could result in regular cycles of corporate reorganizations that lead to job loss. Companies that manage worker offboarding through initiatives like reskilling programs are better positioned to mitigate the costs, lost productivity, and brand damage often associated with layoffs.

Impact Employers actively plan for and invest in the “outskilling” of employees for whom there is no clear growth pathway within the company. This applies to workers of all backgrounds, including immigrants and refugees. Impact Employers recognize that the jobs they provide help immigrants and refugees stabilize their lives and generate value for the company, but they also know that many of these employees may have career aspirations that won’t be actualized within the business. If handled responsibly, offboarding practices can benefit the business and its workers in both the short and long terms.

## Spotlight Solutions: Postmates



# Postmates

**Postmates** has over 400,000 “fleet” members, or couriers, working an average of three to five hours a week. Approximately 20 percent were born outside the United States. For most people, being a fleet member is a transitional job.

Postmates understands the dynamic nature of the jobs it offers and, where possible, works to connect fleet members with opportunities to transition to new opportunities when the time is right. These efforts are designed to help ensure that fleet members are offboarded responsibly in ways that benefit their career trajectories; they also pave the way for new talent to become fleet members, allowing for continued growth and revenue.<sup>55</sup>

To make these important transitions a reality, Postmates partners with JVS, edX, Upwardly Global, and other organizations around the country. The company’s Job

Search Accelerator trained 30 people in its first year and six accepted full-time jobs with other companies. Now in its second year, the program is expanding to accommodate more fleet members and more partners. This deliberate, strategic offboarding strategy will continue to be a big part of the company's talent practices moving forward.<sup>56</sup>

"The people earning on our platform didn't necessarily grow up wanting it to be a career. They are doing this because they need money. They need it now," said Claire Sands, director of fleet community communications and engagement at Postmates. "I am so proud of this platform that allows for that, but it is not enough and we can and should do better."<sup>57</sup>

**"The people earning on our platform didn't necessarily grow up wanting it to be a career. They are doing this because they need money. They need it now. And I am so proud of this platform that allows for that but it is not enough and we can and should do better."**

—Claire Sands,  
*Director, Fleet Community Communications and Engagement, Postmates*<sup>58</sup>

# CONCLUSION

Immigrant and refugee workers have tremendous value to add to business and society. As this report details, investing in their development and treating them as a vital part of your entry- and mid-level talent strategy will help your company succeed into the future.

As we note in our foundational report *Become an Impact Employer*, every company is unique, and there is no single place to start with these new types of talent investments. If you're eager to turn the above strategies into tactical realities starting tomorrow, here are five initial steps you can take:

- 1 Know your workers.**  
Take the time to understand your incumbent employee base. What percentage of them come from immigrant or refugee backgrounds, or other populations that may be underleveraged? Do you have underemployed immigrants or refugees in entry-level jobs who could be easily advanced into middle-skill roles, adding value to their careers as well as the business? Challenge yourself to approach this question in new and creative ways.
- 2 Better understand your talent gap as you forecast future workforce needs.**  
Can the growing immigrant and refugee population help you fill that gap? Understand and identify the steps you need to take today to lay the groundwork for that to happen—whether it's tomorrow or five years from now.
- 3 Unpack your average retention rate for entry- and mid-level roles.**  
Consider tapping into immigrant and refugee workers to find high-quality talent that will stay with your company longer than average. A variety of nonprofit organizations across the country can help with recruitment at the local level.

**4**

**Invest in benefits like English language training that can produce exponential ROI for immigrant and refugee workers and the business.**

Research shows investing in this basic skill development can go a long way to drive profit for your company and deliver value to employees themselves. There are many resources and experts at state and local levels to help you get started.

**5**

**Share your story.**

If your company is investing in hiring and retaining immigrant and refugee workers, we want to hear about it. JFF's Corporate Action Platform elevates examples of companies that are leading the way with talent practices that benefit workers and business, and brings companies together to share their successes and challenges. We'd love to highlight the work you're doing for these valuable populations as part of this broader effort.

We urge you to consider [JFF's Corporate Action Platform](#) as a resource for digging deeper into talent investments like these that benefit workers and business. We're here to provide best practices, tools, connections to partners, and a community of like-minded business professionals who share your commitment to all company stakeholders—your profits, your people, and society.

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- **Lauren Crain**, senior program manager, WES Mariam Assefa Fund
- **Mark Espinoza**, senior director of public affairs, Walmart
- **Sarah Hooker**, associate director, JFF, Working Group for Immigrants and Refugees
- **Rachel Kamen**, community engagement coordinator, Postmates
- **Monica Munn**, senior director, WES Mariam Assefa Fund
- **Joanne Pokaski**, senior director of workforce development, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
- **Maggie Snyder**, consultant, JFFLabs



## About JFF

JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For 35 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. Join us as we build a future that works.

[www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)



## About World Education Services (WES) Mariam Assefa Fund

WES is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping international students and professionals achieve their educational and workplace goals in the United States and Canada. Founded in 1974, WES evaluates and advocates for the recognition of international education qualifications. Launched in 2019, the WES Mariam Assefa Fund supports catalytic efforts to build more inclusive economies for immigrant and refugee workers in the U.S. and Canada and ensure they have the skills, knowledge, and supports to succeed.

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# ENDNOTES

- 1 This report uses the terms *entry-level jobs* and *mid-level jobs* because they are the terms that are most familiar to companies, the main audience for the report. We are using these terms as synonyms for low-skill jobs and middle-skill jobs, which may be more familiar to other readers. To ensure that all readers understand what we mean, we want to make it clear that we define *low-skill jobs* and *middle-skill jobs* in this way: Low-skill jobs require a high school diploma or less education. They account for a large segment of the labor market in the United States, and they are often hard to fill roles with retention challenges. Middle-skill jobs require education beyond high school but not a four-year college degree. They make up the largest part of the labor market in the United States and each of the 50 states. But key industries are unable to find enough sufficiently trained workers to fill these jobs. National Skills Coalition, “Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: State by State Snapshots,” (Washington, DC: National Skills Coalition, n.d.), <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/fact-sheets>.
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