

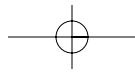
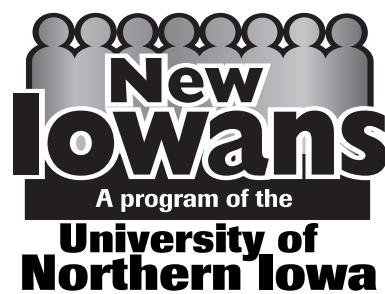
# Welcoming New Iowans

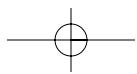
## A Guide for Managers and Supervisors

**The Best Practices of Iowa Employers with Immigrants and Refugees in the Workplace**

Mark A. Grey, Ph.D.  
UNI New Iowans Program

Funding Provided by the  
U.S. Department of Labor





# Welcoming New Iowans

First Edition 2002

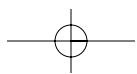
Written and compiled by Mark A. Grey, Ph.D., professor of anthropology and director, University of Northern Iowa New Iowans Program. Campus Box 0513, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0513. Phone: 319-273-3029. FAX 319-273-7104. [Mark.Grey@uni.edu](mailto:Mark.Grey@uni.edu).

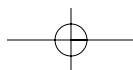
## Acknowledgements

This guide was funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. We want to thank Congressman Jim Nussle and U.S. Senator Charles Grassley for their support of funding for the New Iowans Program and for this handbook.

This book was produced as a part of the outreach and training efforts of the University of Northern Iowa New Iowans Program. The New Iowans Program represents the University of Northern Iowa's commitment to welcoming and accommodating immigrant and refugee newcomers in Iowa. Several UNI administrators supported the New Iowans Program and this handbook. They include UNI President Dr. Robert Koob, Dr. Patricia Gadelmann, special assistant to the president for board and governmental relations, and Keith Saunders, associate director of governmental relations. Others at UNI who supported the production of this book include Randy Pilkington, director of business and community services, Andrew Conrad, business and community outreach coordinator and the staff of the Institute for Decision Making. New Iowans Program staff also supported this book: Dr. Anne Woodrick, co-director and associate professor of anthropology, and James Hoelscher, business and community outreach coordinator.

Special thanks to Dr. Maureen Boyd who conducted much of the research for this handbook under contract with the New Iowans Program. We recognize her substantial contributions to this effort.





## President's Letter



# A message from UNI President Robert D. Koob

According to the experts, too many Iowans are choosing to leave the state. We're at a crossroads. We have two choices. We may choose to grow, or we may choose to continue to stagnate.

It seems obvious that growth is the only realistic choice. But growth comes with a price tag. People, companies and communities will need to make a conscious choice to encourage growth. We must adjust the way we think and the way we conduct ourselves.

It's not all gloom and doom, however. Iowa needs 310,000 new people. That's a great challenge, but it's also a great opportunity—an opportunity for economic and social growth. This is an exciting time.

Iowa's economic future depends on our ability to attract a significant number of new residents. The keys will be to open our minds to new ideas, and to open our hearts to new Iowans. This will take courage. Iowans are courageous people.

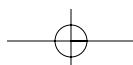
Iowa's business community has a long tradition of innovation. Success comes to those who are willing to think differently and take a chance. This special edition of "Welcoming New Iowans," by UNI professor Mark Grey, will help business leaders recognize and deal with the issues surrounding immigration.

I'm confident that the people of Iowa in general, and businesspeople in specific, will embrace the challenge before them with the courage and insight that has helped make Iowa one of the best places to live.

My thanks and congratulations to Mark for his tireless work on this book, and for helping plant the seeds of knowledge that will help Iowa grow.

Robert D. Koob, President

University of Northern Iowa

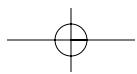




# Welcoming New Iowans

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# A Guidebook for Iowa's Employers



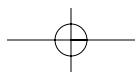
## A Guidebook for Iowa's Employers

This guidebook has been published by the University of Northern Iowa New Iowans Program to assist employers, managers and supervisors with the unique challenges associated with hiring, training and integrating immigrant and refugee workers. Its purpose is to promote proactive engagement of newcomer workers to assure the vitality of Iowa businesses. Successful integration of immigrants and refugees in our workplaces and communities is essential to insure Iowa's long-term economic and social health.

This book provides essential information for human resource directors, trainers, supervisors and others as they meet the challenges and rewards of hiring immigrants and refugees. Of course, no guidebook can provide simple solutions to complex issues in a great variety of workplaces. This is not a "cookbook" with recipes that provide easy answers to challenges facing every company and worker. All employers are unique and approach problems differently. What works in one company might not work as well in another.

To guide your own experience, examples are provided of the best practices of Iowa employers with experience integrating immigrant and refugee workers, based on research in 30 different Iowa companies (see Appendix C). These companies are located throughout Iowa in large cities and small towns. They represent a wide variety of skill and compensation levels among their employees, from high-tech software engineers to hospitality workers. Their experience, combined with our other research and recommendations, will provide managers and supervisors with guidance and encouragement to address their own unique workplace situations.

This book does **not** provide legal advice about recruiting and hiring immigrants or refugees. Find an experienced immigration or labor attorney to assist you with legal and immigration questions.



# Welcoming New Iowans

## Iowa's Growing Immigrant and Refugee Populations

Welcoming immigrant and refugee newcomers is an Iowa tradition. Iowa is a state of immigrants, and without its history of immigration, there would be no Iowa as we know it today. European immigrants settled in Iowa in the 1800s and early 1900s and created its communities, churches, schools and social institutions. They were also the workers who made Iowa one of the world's most important agricultural and manufacturing economies.

Early immigrant and refugee newcomers in Iowa usually came from European countries like Denmark, Norway, Germany, Italy, Greece, and the Czech Republic. But today, most immigrants and refugees come from other parts of the world, especially Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Balkans. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, we welcomed Tai Dam and other Southeast Asian refugees. In the 1980s and 1990s, growing numbers of Latino newcomers arrived. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Hispanics/Latinos living in Iowa grew by 153 percent and they are now the state's largest minority. Iowa has also experienced growth in its Bosnian, Sudanese and Somali refugee populations.

### The Need for Workers in Iowa

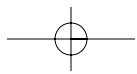
Across Iowa, immigrants and refugees are filling jobs that might otherwise go unfilled. As we look to the future, more immigrants and refugees will be needed to make up for a pending shortage of resident workers. Employers are well familiar with the four general trends that signal the future shortage of available workers:

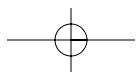
***Iowa's population is aging.*** In 2000 17.8 percent of Iowans were age 60 or older. In 2020, one in every five Iowans will be age 65 or older.

***Iowa's workforce is aging.*** In Marshalltown, for example, people age 60 or older make up 28.8 percent of the town's working-age population. At some Iowa employers, 40 percent of salaried and 50 percent of hourly employees will be eligible to retire by 2005.

***Birth rates have declined sharply.*** Live births in Iowa have dropped from 14.2 per 1,000 in 1990 to 13.1 per 1,000 in 2000. This drop was particular sharp in rural areas. Only 14 Iowa counties met or exceeded the 2000 state average birthrate and only four of these counties were rural. Rural live birthrates as low as 6.9 per 1,000 were recorded in 2000.

- 2 Nearly half of Iowa's public university graduates leave the state.*** In 2000, almost 60 percent of University of Iowa graduates took jobs out of state. In the same year, 46.9 percent of Iowa State University and 30.4 percent of University of Northern Iowa graduates left the state.





# Iowa's Growing Immigrant and Refugee Populations



Availability of labor is one of the most important factors when companies consider expanding or building new businesses in Iowa. Companies need to identify and tap into new sources of labor to expand current operations or build new facilities. The Professional Developers of Iowa have noted that the availability of labor "is among the top three important location factors for businesses considering expansions or relocations." The trade magazine *Area Development* also noted the importance of the growing international nature of the workforce:

Over the past five years, we watched the economy heat up to the point that selected labor resources became very scarce. The scramble for labor became global...Knowing that this situation may very well be revisited as the economy turns around, companies will be looking to better position themselves to compete for labor as an integral part of their business strategy.

Given the demographic trends, hiring immigrants and refugees is a matter of survival for a growing list of Iowa companies. In the 2002-2003 Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) *Workplace Forecast: A Strategic Outlook*, author Dave Patel noted the reason human resource managers and others need to learn how to successfully hire and integrate immigrant and refugee workers:

The pace of change in the business world is so rapid that it seems a blur. A borderless economy—where the transfer of goods, capital, and increasingly labor, occur almost seamlessly—is bringing tremendous changes...Demographic changes, advances in science and technology, globalization, and a seismic shift in geopolitics will alter how and with whom business is conducted. The continued emphasis on innovation, cost reduction and flexibility will force organizations to look for new practices and ideas to attain competitive advantage. Business leaders, and in particular human resource professionals, must be able to recognize larger socioeconomic trends so they can proactively prepare for the future workplace.

## Iowa's New Workforce

In Iowa, the consequence of these economic and global trends is workplace diversity. Iowa business must tap into new labor pools to counter the states' demographic trends, while people around the world are being forced to relocate across national boundaries as immigrants or refugees.

The 2002 SHRM Workplace Demographic Trends Survey noted the impact of ethnically diverse populations in the workplace. Twenty-four percent of human resource managers anticipated that ethnic diversity will have a great impact on the workplace in two years, but 32 percent anticipated a great impact in five years. An additional 37 percent anticipated at least some impact in five years. In terms of the changes brought by ethnically diverse workers, 52 percent of SHRM members witnessed an increase in the "need for tolerance by employees of different backgrounds."

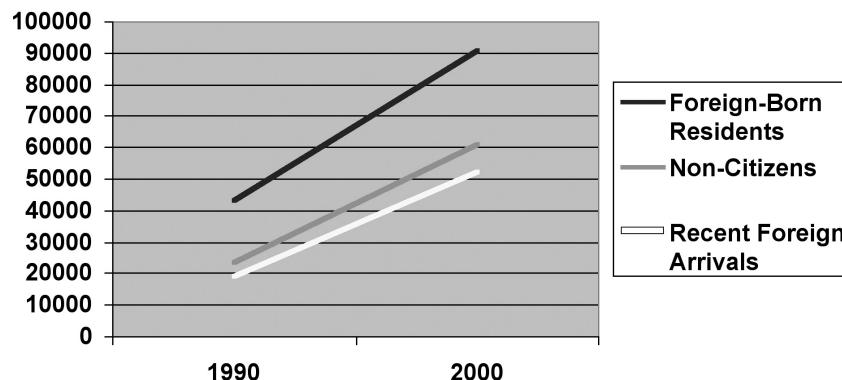


# Welcoming New Iowans

## *Iowa's Population Growth*

The majority of Iowans (96.9 percent in the 2000 Census) were born in the United States, and most (74.8 percent) were born in Iowa. However, the number of foreign-born residents more than doubled between 1990 and 2000. In 1990, there were 43,316 foreign-born people in Iowa, 1.6 percent of the state's total population. By 2000, there were 91,085 (3.1 percent) foreign-born residents. Only 19,273 Iowa residents entered the U.S. between 1980 and 1990, but 52,335 Iowa residents came to the U.S. over the next decade. In 1990, there were 23,324 non-citizens residing in Iowa. In 2000, there were 61,134 non-citizens.

### ***Iowa's Foreign-Born Population 1990-2000***



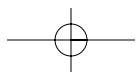
## *New Iowan Background*

There has been a dramatic shift in terms of the home regions of newcomers in Iowa. In the 1990 Census, 42.8 percent of foreign-born Iowans came from Asia, like Tai Dam and Vietnamese refugees, and only 13.9 percent came from Latin America. By the 2000 Census, 36 percent of foreign-born Iowans were from Latin America. In Iowa's Hispanic/Latino population (which includes Hispanics born in Iowa and the United States) the largest group (61,154 or 74 percent) came from Mexico. Others came from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama and other Latin American nations.

According to the Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services, refugees settled in Iowa came from Sudan, Ivory Coast, Somalia and other African nations, Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, Vietnam, Cambodia and other parts of Southeast Asia, Iraq, Haiti, Cuba, and Bosnia and other places in the Balkans. Between 1975 and 1999, nearly 22,000 refugees were settled in Iowa. Between 1997 and 2002 alone, 7,441 refugees were settled in Iowa with the most (5,383) coming from former Yugoslavia. Several thousand more refugees came to the state as "secondary migrants" who were initially resettled in other states but then moved to Iowa.

## **4 Immigrants and Refugees as Workers**

These immigrants come from around the world and bring a variety of skills and experience to the workplace. They may be software designers from India here on H1B visas, Mexican



# Iowa's Growing Immigrant and Refugee Populations



machinists, or Bosnian meatpackers. Immigrants and refugees are unique workers. Of course, most people point to the obvious differences like language and ethnicity, but cultural change, legal status and refugee experiences can create a variety of workplace issues that are unique to these employees.

## *Immigrant and Refugee Employment Status*

People often assume there is no distinction between immigrants and refugees, but the difference is important for economic, social and legal reasons. Refugees are forced to leave their home countries because of war, environmental disasters, political persecution, and/or religious or ethnic intolerance. They come to the United States with a special immigration status that gives them automatic admission into the country and eases their reunification with family members. This status also provides them with a “green card” or work authorization permit. In addition, short-term financial assistance is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through private and state agencies like the Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services. Refugees are “invited” to live in the United States to start a new life.

Immigrants generally come to the U.S. for one of two reasons: they are joining family members who already live in this country, or they are “economic immigrants” seeking work and a better life for themselves and their families.

Immigrants and refugees have a good deal in common. For example, they come to Iowa seeking the things that established-residents like about living here. Iowa provides job opportunities, schooling for children, safe communities and inexpensive housing. For both populations, coming to the U.S. and Iowa also presents similar challenges. For example, they experience new cultures and languages. They are often ethnic minorities who might face open racism or other forms of hostility, regardless of their immigration status. For immigrants and refugees who do not speak English, living in Iowa communities—and working in Iowa workplaces—can cause a tremendous amount of stress. So many activities that English speakers take for granted can be daunting for newcomers. Simple things like following written instructions or filling out forms for their children’s school can lead to a great deal of anxiety.

## *Characteristics of Immigrant and Refugee Workers*

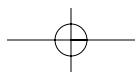
Many Iowa companies hire immigrants and refugees simply because there are not enough applicants from local populations, but there are other reasons as well.

### **Productivity**

Our research among Iowa companies shows that newcomers are reliable, productive, motivated, positive and loyal employees. Some companies had statistics showing that immigrants had lower rates of absenteeism. One company gave merit points for attendance, and Latino workers consistently held most of the top ten attendance records.

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Managers noted that newcomers were hardworking, task-oriented and dedicated. One company’s statistics showed that most Vietnamese and Latino workers were over 100 percent



# Welcoming New Iowans

efficient in their jobs. Indeed, 60 percent of the plant's workers who were at or over 100 percent efficiency were immigrants or refugees even though they made up only 25 percent of the workforce.

## Attitude

Newcomers were also recognized for their motivation. Many were commended for their strong work ethic, eagerness to do jobs and ability to work at top speed. As one supervisor said, "The immigrant community in our organization has a distinct desire to say, 'I am going to work hard and my kids will have a better life.' They are driven. They want more overtime."

Many newcomers were praised for their positive attitude and for enjoying their jobs. One manager said of immigrants and refugees, they "come in, show up every day. They are kind, courteous, and loyal—[I am] happy that I gave them the opportunity. This is a win-win situation that made my job easier. At a time when I had a problem getting workers, they came and were darn happy to be here."

## *Recruiting Immigrant and Refugee Workers*

Finding and recruiting immigrant and refugee workers often requires "thinking outside the box." Our research shows that most newcomers are not recruited in the traditional way by placing advertisements in newspapers. Nor do Internet advertisements work, with the possible exception of high-tech jobs. It cannot be assumed that all immigrants and refugees have access to the Internet or read English well enough to use English-based web sites.

## Word of Mouth

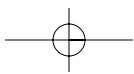
The most important tool to find and recruit newcomers is word of mouth. Information about jobs is often spread among family members, friends, and in some cases, even entire villages in Mexico and other foreign countries. Also, this method of recruitment was most effective regardless of the type of work. Professional, factory, agricultural and hospitality employers all found word of mouth the most effective recruiting tool.

## Organizations

Other ways to recruit immigrants and refugees include contacting organizations that work with newcomers. Some employers contact churches, refugee services, local Iowa Workforce Development Centers, Latino centers and the New Iowans Centers in Muscatine and Sioux City.

## Signs

- 6 In some cases, companies place signs outside the place of employment, particularly for factory positions. These signs can be printed in languages other than English for maximum effect.



# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



## Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers

The results of our research demonstrate that successful employment of immigrant and refugee workers does not happen by accident. There are four essential steps to successfully integrating immigrant and refugee workers into an established Iowa workplace.

- Step One:** *Make a Leadership Commitment*
- Step Two:** *Determine the Company's Readiness for Newcomer Workers*
- Step Three:** *Design and Implement a Program for Integrating Newcomer Workers*
- Step Four:** *Create Methods to Maintain a Diverse Workforce*

### Step I: Make a Leadership Commitment

In New Iowans Program workshops for organizations, communities, churches and employers, we emphasize that **leadership commitment** is the single most important factor in successfully working with newcomer populations. Leadership commitment is crucial for the success of any kind of organizational change, and the integration of immigrant and refugee workers can represent a major challenge to any organization.

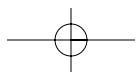
#### *Strategic Decision*

Business leaders themselves must first be convinced that hiring and integrating newcomers is necessary. In other words, leaders and managers must establish the business need for newcomer workers in order to convince their current company employees that hiring immigrants and refugees is "worth" the effort.

In particular, the hiring of immigrant and refugee workers should not be done solely out of a desire to create a "diverse" workforce. There may be compelling reasons to create diverse workforces, but the experience of employers in our research clearly indicates that workplaces should not hire immigrants and refugees just for the sake of diversity. Instead, they all noted first and foremost that hiring newcomers was a business decision, and diversification followed. As one manager said:

We had compelling business reasons to rapidly grow our workforce. There was not an available work pool from traditional sources so we had to approach it in an unconventional way. Once we did this [made the decision to hire Bosnians] internal people were uniquely invested in the success of this and disproportionately undertook efforts to make it work.

Once it is established that there is a business need to hire immigrants and refugees, this decision and the leadership commitment toward making the plan work, must be communicated through *all* employee levels.



# Welcoming New Iowans

## *Resource Commitment*

Besides the effort involved in any major workforce expansion, the transition to a multiethnic and multilingual workplace presents a number of special challenges. Various resources are required to plan and implement a successful program of integration, and there will be stress at every level of the organization as people begin to interact with co-workers from another culture. In most cases, Iowa's newcomers speak languages other than English, and the everyday problems of workplace communication become even more critical—and more difficult—as newcomers must learn their new jobs along with the expectations of a new culture. The commitment of leadership is essential for bringing the business and its workers through difficult times. Management must demonstrate commitment to the program by way of their own personal involvement, as well as with the provision of the staff time and monetary resources necessary to make the transition work.

## *Case Studies*

### **The Principal Financial Group, Des Moines**

The Principal has 21,000 employees and 11 million customers around the world. Successfully working with people from other cultures is a sound business practice. To communicate leadership's commitment to working with diverse populations, The Principal CEO recorded a five minute video in which he explains the corporation's commitment to diversity. This video is shown to all current and new employees.

### **Experian, Inc., Mt. Pleasant**

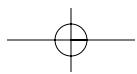
Experian, Inc. in Mt. Pleasant has 500 employees, of whom 25 percent are Vietnamese and Latino. That corporation's commitment to hiring and retaining immigrant and refugee workers was expressed by the HR director this way:

All employees know we are committed to a multi-cultural environment. This is evidenced by the fact that we continue to hire people from other cultures and countries and our support for ESL classes. It is also seen in how we deal with problems with harassment; complaints are investigated and taken seriously.

## Step 2: Determine Your Company's Readiness for Newcomer Workers

As with any strategic planning, simply making a business decision does not guarantee its smooth, successful implementation. Hiring immigrant and refugee workers and integrating them into the workforce is a complicated process. Resources must be allocated, and that requires knowing in advance what those resources might be. Some companies find that they simply do

- 8 not have the necessary resources to successfully integrate a large number of newcomer workers, and they must look elsewhere to supplement their labor pool.



# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



## *The Cultural Audit*

The process to determine a company's readiness to hire immigrant and refugee workers is sometimes called a "cultural audit" or an "environmental assessment." The essential purpose of this audit is to determine the readiness of the workforce and workplace for diverse workers. A cultural audit is an assessment of the workplace that goes beyond productivity measures or a review of policies and procedures. In addition to these aspects of company life, a cultural audit also looks at the **culture** of the workplace.

Culture is a word that is used by many people to mean a variety of things. We often read or hear about "workplace culture" or the "culture of an organization." In any human community, culture can be thought of as the "software" in people's brains that determines their behavior, attitudes, distinguishing right from wrong, faith in God, dress, food and other habits of daily life.

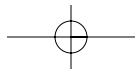
Culture is a set of similar ideas shared by a group of people about appropriate behavior and values. People who share these basic ideas tend to act generally the same, eat and dress the same way, and in many respects, think the same way about life. People usually don't think about their own culture unless they are confronted with another culture. But one way to think one's own culture is by asking this simple question: "What are the things I do in my normal life that seem so natural that I forget them?" These things make up culture.

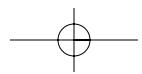
Culture is passed from generation to generation, remaining stable over time and shared by everyone in a community. Just the same, culture is also flexible. Cultures share ideas and values with one another, just as people do. A community can thus change its values and behaviors to better meet a changing environment, or because it is exposed to new and better ways of doing things.

## *Workplace Culture*

Workplace cultures work the same way as the culture of a community. For example, there are shared assumptions about appropriate behavior. People are expected to "just know" things like the importance of arriving for work on time, or how to behave politely in a meeting, or how to approach one's boss. Of course, not all workplace cultures are conducive to productivity. In some organizations, the culture dictates that people arrive at work whenever they feel like it, sabotage each other's ideas in meetings, and disrespect the supervisors.

Nor are all organizational cultures conducive to integrating immigrant and refugee newcomers. For example, many workplace cultures encourage and reward homogeneity among workers. Great similarity in values, experiences, expectations and perspectives is comfortable for most people in these organizations, and the policies and values of the companies make life very uncomfortable for people who express different views. If everyone is very similar, there won't be much conflict about how things are done. However, this kind of workplace culture also tends to discourage creativity and the diverse perspectives that are needed for good problem solving.





# Welcoming New Immigrants

Similarly, many corporate cultures emphasize competition among workers. Individuals are pitted against one another to earn rewards or promotions, and employees are thus discouraged from working in teams. Employees might have lots of incentive to work hard, and there is a good chance that lazy or unproductive workers will quit. However, instead of working together to solve problems, employees in this kind of company try to hide their mistakes to “save face” and protect their own individual rewards.

Strongly homogeneous or competitive workplace cultures might not be welcoming for newcomers who are very dissimilar, or who do not come from individualistic, competitive countries. If such an environment exists in a company, and this kind of behavior is comfortable and assumed to be appropriate, then it is the culture of the workplace. Culture is flexible, and workplace cultures can change, but a company should not expect the integration of newcomers to go well unless the workplace culture is already favorable to the project.

## *Critical Questions*

The cultural audit assesses a workplace’s readiness to accommodate immigrant and refugee workers by seeking the answers to four critical questions:

- Are the company’s **values** compatible with its goals to attract and accommodate immigrant and refugee workers?
- How well is the company’s vision concerning newcomer workers **communicated** to managers and employees?
- What **resources**, personnel and expertise are already in place to support the accommodation of immigrant and refugee workers?
- What **barriers** might hinder successful inclusion of immigrant and refugee workers and their unique cultural perspectives and experiences into the company’s culture?

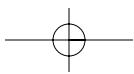
## *Audit Components*

### **Component 1: Internal and External Assessments**

Organization assessments should include both an internal “self-study” and an external evaluation. Internal assessments are critical because they provide an insider’s perspective of the day-to-day operation of the firm. The internal assessment should be conducted by a team that includes executives, managers, supervisors, and workers. If possible, the team should also include immigrant or refugee newcomers. It is critical to include people from management and production. In some cases, union representatives should also be involved. The inclusion of workers and managers sends a signal that the assessment is important. It also means that workers have representation in the assessment and—potentially—programs that result from the assessment. In other words, inclusion of workers (and perhaps union leaders) increases the likelihood of “buy in” by workers.

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External assessments are also critical because they provide the perspective of those on the outside looking in. While external evaluators lack an insider’s perspective, they also don’t have the “baggage” insiders bring to the process. Ultimately, the organizational audit should be a



# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



product that melds both inside and outside perspectives. Private or public sector firms such as universities can provide external assessments. Please see Appendix B for some of these services. Not all of these services are alike. It is important to “shop around” and find an assessment program and method that fits your company’s values and goals.

## **Component 2: Shared Definitions and Key Concepts**

Internal and external studies should complement each other, for example, by using the same terms and key concepts. ***Do not assume*** that all participants (internal and external) in the assessment process share common definitions. Unless key terms and concepts are commonly defined, no assessment can effectively determine the readiness of workers to accommodate newcomer workers. It may also mean that companies may not be able to develop specific goals concerning integration of newcomers and the procedures to meet those goals.

Here are three of the key terms and concepts for which shared definitions should be developed:

### ***Workplace “Diversity”***

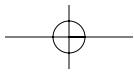
Internal and external assessments must decide upfront on a common definition of “diversity.” A company cannot determine whether it is ready for “diversity” if it cannot even reach a shared definition of what “diversity” is in the first place. Diversity often means different things to different people. How one defines diversity often depends on a number of factors, including their ethnic, linguistic and cultural class background. It may also depend on their place in the company’s power structure. How people define diversity also may depend on their willingness to accept (or at least tolerate) people unlike themselves and their willingness to learn about others. Finally, how people define diversity may depend on their and others’ goals. This is particularly the case in businesses and other institutional settings.

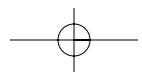
### ***Integration and Accommodation Versus “Assimilation”***

It is critical to define the concepts of integration and accommodation. Some companies may define these in similar ways. By defining these terms, it is easier to determine whether the company’s goal is to integrate or accommodate immigrant and refugee workers. Integration may imply not only inclusion of newcomers in the workforce, but including them in work-based social activities. Accommodation implies that the company and existing workers somehow meet newcomers and their unique languages and cultures “half way.” That is, newcomers are not the only ones who are asked to somehow change in order to fit in. Accommodation recognizes that the workplace and newcomers must work together. It is also critical to avoid using the term “assimilation.” Assimilation implies that newcomers must somehow change who they are in order to “fit in” and that the company does not change to meet newcomers’ needs. Assimilation is a process that insists that newcomers effectively leave their cultural selves at the company door. This is inherently unfair and is not conducive to productive workplaces.

### ***Tolerance***

Companies and communities often express a goal to encourage “tolerance” among their workers and citizens. But caution must be used to determine a clear definition for this term that is compatible with other key terms like diversity and accommodation. It is also important to





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develop a company-wide definition because employees may all have different concepts of tolerance in terms of how much they are ready and willing to work with newcomers and their unique backgrounds. For some employees, achieving the goal of “tolerating” newcomers may mean actively working with them to learn their job and include them in such social activities as lunch or recreation activities outside the workplace. For some other employees, “tolerance” may be “putting up” with immigrant workers while not voicing their true feelings about newcomers.

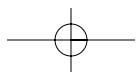
## **Component 3: Employee Surveys**

Employee surveys should provide established workers an opportunity to express their concerns and enthusiasm about the potential to work with immigrants and refugees without fear of retribution. Surveys can be distributed to all workers or to a sample, depending on the size of the workforce. In some cases, it may be appropriate to work with union officials to create and distribute this survey. The fundamental goals of any employee survey are to determine the level of employee concern and commitment to integrating immigrants and refugees and determine the type of training necessary to achieve the company’s goals. The employee survey should include the following fundamental questions:

- What are employees’ biases and stereotypes (positive and negative) towards immigrants and refugees?
- What sources of information do employees use to learn about immigrants and refugees?
- What kind of training would employees find helpful in terms of learning to work with immigrants and refugees?
- Do employees have previous experience working with immigrants or refugees?
- How well has the company’s goals in regard to hiring immigrants and refugees been communicated to workers? How well do they understand the business case for welcoming immigrants and refugees in the workplace?
- What barriers do employees see to working with and integrating newcomers into the workplace?
- What suggestions do they have for overcoming those barriers?
- Which individual employees are willing to work with newcomers to learn their jobs and “fit in”?
- What resources do employees feel they need to help the company achieve its immigrant/refugee workforce goals?
- Workplace surveys can be purchased from private- and public-sector vendors. Some of the same companies and universities that provide workplace audits also conduct employee services. Please see Appendix B for some of these service providers.

## **Component 4: Site Observation**

The observation of company’s culture is usually best undertaken by professionals from outside the firm. Their observations of meetings, production floors, training sessions, break/lunch rooms, and other aspects of workplace life will provide valuable insights into the company’s culture. Often, it is the little things that are routinely overlooked by managers and workers that make



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the difference. For example, most managers will informally reward and discipline employees, but these practices are not part of any official company policy. An observer can determine whether some employees are receiving more than their share of informal recognition and positive comments, while other employers who deserve them are ignored. The cultural assessment might be determined by noting how employees discuss the informal reward system. Outside professional observers can observe the apparent values of workers in the company, the effectiveness of communication networks, the training resources available to workers, and barriers to diversity that might be apparent from interaction among workers.

Again, some of the service providers that provide workplace audits and employee services also conduct observation research.

## **Component 5: Focus Groups**

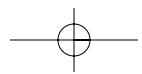
Focus groups are often used to “flesh out” information received from employee surveys and ethnographic observation. Focus groups can often provide more detailed and nuanced information about workers’ experience and expectations. They can also provide valuable insights into the company’s experience. If the company has tried programs similar to their proposed efforts to hire and integrate immigrants and refugees, what worked and what did not work? What lessons can be learned from these experiences?

Focus groups should include managers and workers. In some cases, the focus group could include managers and workers in the same session, depending on the topic. Focus groups should include representatives of all workers in the company, not just those who seem to be directly affected by the potential to work with immigrants and refugees. Focus groups should be run and recorded by professional facilitators.

In focus group settings, you may also identify employees interested in and willing to work with newcomers as mentors and guides.

## **Component 6: Interviews**

Like focus groups, interviews with key managers and workers can bring detail to the more general information gathered in surveys. Interviews enrich the research by providing personal experiences, in-depth descriptions of workplace life, and discussion of how hiring and integrating newcomers might (or might not) work. People are often more willing to share their experience in one-on-one sessions than in focus groups. Workplace cultures are collections of the experiences, interests and goals of all employees. In-depth interviews often provide glimpses into the soul of workplaces through the lens of individual experience. Interviews are particularly helpful in determining the difference between “how things are supposed to be” in terms of the company’s policies, procedures, and goals and “how things really are” in the reality of workplace. In terms of accommodating immigrants and refugees, this distinction can be critical. If there is a significant difference between “how things are supposed to be” in terms of the company’s goals to hire and integrate newcomers and “how things really are” in terms of how



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these workers might be treated on the production floor, then significant barriers exist that must be addressed by appropriate training.

Interviews can be conducted by outside firms, or by employees who have received some training interview techniques. In some cases, interviews are conducted as part of “packaged” services provided by public- or private-sector vendors.

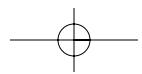
## *The Decision to Implement*

The single most important question any employer must ask when considering hiring immigrants and refugees is “Are we ready?” The purpose of the cultural audit is to allow management to assess the company’s readiness to integrate newcomers. An honest assessment is critical. Even when faced with labor needs, employers cannot automatically assume that hiring immigrants and refugees is necessarily the best course of action.

As with the assessment of any business strength or weakness, employers must allow themselves to acknowledge that they are not ready to pursue a diverse workforce. Hiring and integrating workers from other nations and with different languages offers opportunities, but it also presents a number of challenges. Getting through these challenges is difficult enough when companies *are* ready to accommodate newcomers, but the attempt can create insurmountable business problems when workers and managers are not ready to accommodate newcomers.

In our experience, one of the biggest mistakes companies and organizations make is to hire newcomers prematurely, hiring immigrants and refugees before the company is prepared to meet the challenges associated with their integration into the workforce. In other words, it is better to acknowledge that your workplace is *not* ready for newcomer workers than to be unprepared and hire them anyway. That is a recipe for difficult times.

Outside consultants may provide valuable data and insight into answering the “Are we ready?” question. In some cases, outside consultants may make definitive recommendations about whether a company is ready or not. However, ultimately the decision must be made internally. Hiring outsiders to conduct the workplace audit and/or to recommend a company’s readiness is a good investment, despite the fact that the consultants’ ultimate recommendation—or the company’s ultimate decision—is to hold off or delay plans to deliberately hire immigrant and refugee workers. This type of investment may not always seem to lead directly to increased production, profitability or some other “benchmark” for business progress. This is one indication of the new territory many companies find themselves when it comes to hiring and integrating immigrants and refugees. Despite the tendency for companies to seek clear-cut answers to their problems, no “cookie cutter” approach will work for every firm, particularly given the tremendous variety of issues surrounding newcomer workers. There are no simple answers to the complex questions raised by our changing workforce and population. Yet, as many companies in this research have noted, the uncharted territory upon which they found themselves proved challenging, but ultimately a smart business decision.



# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



## *What If We Are Not Ready?*

If an assessment determines that your workplace is not ready to integrate immigrant and refugee workers, don't quit. Instead, take the process one step further by asking the next question, "What will it take to become ready for immigrant and refugee workers?"

The global economy is changing rapidly, and the business need to recruit, train and retain immigrants and refugees reflects the reality of long-term changes in our population. By 2008, it is estimated that 70 percent of Americans entering the job market will be women or ethnic minorities. Even if you aren't ready now, it makes good business sense to begin preparing yourself to be successful in this new labor market. These shifting demographics also indicate that the markets for your company's products will also include immigrant and refugee consumers. Successful companies will need workers who understand these new markets and know how to reach them.

Long-term planning should be based on the results of the corporate assessment, local, national and international demographic and workforce trends, and the company's long-term market prospects.

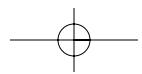
## Step 3: Design and Implement a Newcomer Program

The outcomes of a cultural assessment will provide a blueprint for designing a program to integrate an immigrant or refugee workforce. Often, employers will have discovered that they already have some of the resources, personnel, and expertise in place to accommodate Iowa's newcomers. Combined with the commitment of corporate leaders, an employer might determine that it is "ready" to accommodate newcomer workers. Being ready, however, does not mean that careful planning won't be required to insure that all the necessary steps are taken to allow workers and managers to achieve their workplace goals.

Designing and implementing programs to hire and integrate immigrant and refugee workers begins with determining the employer's strengths and weaknesses and appropriate targets for change. Prudent planning will lead to slow, but incremental progress. The program's goals will be clearly defined and communicated to managers and employees. In addition, program design will anticipate some of the challenges associated with hiring immigrants and refugees. It is also beneficial and cost-effective to learn from the experience of employers who have "been there, done that."

### *Communication Practices*

By far the greatest challenge is **communication**. IBP, Inc. which employs thousands of Latinos, Bosnians, Lao and other newcomers in Iowa has a motto all employers will find helpful: "Everything counts because everything communicates."



# Welcoming New Iowans

## Language Barriers

Immigrants and refugees often do not speak English well and managers and established-resident workers seldom speak the languages of newcomers. Often, the language barriers must be addressed in order to adequately train and supervise a newcomer workforce. Companies have found a variety of ways to solve the language problem, and your company might be able to use a variety of methods to establish good communication practices.

**Bilingual Supervisors:** Some companies have hired bilingual supervisors to attract workers from certain language and ethnic groups. Others promoted bilingual workers from within the company.

**Interpreters:** Other companies hired full-time interpreters to help train newcomers and provide training in English for newcomers and “command” language for traditional workers. This training helps them learn some essential words and phrases to communicate with immigrant and refugee workers.

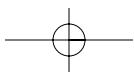
**Group Hiring:** When first hiring immigrants and refugees, some companies preferred to hire a “critical mass” of workers from the same linguistic and ethnic population. There are several benefits to this approach. One is that individual immigrants or refugees will not feel deeply isolated in the workplace. Another benefit of this approach is that there will be a group for orientation and training. In addition, it is more efficient to communicate with a group of people than with several individuals who might speak two or three different languages.

Almost all the companies in our research began with four or five employees of the same ethnic background. To one manager, this meant “a manageable amount to accommodate and if it didn’t work out there would not be an *en masse exodus* and so the company would not be devastated by the loss.” Another manager said,

It is important to have groups of same language speakers: they provide support for each other; they are self-generating in that the word-of-mouth recommendation recruits workers, and because they are a group it is easier to provide language support, and systems are easier to facilitate.

Once the infrastructure and processes are set up to accommodate newcomers of certain cultures and languages, it will be easier and cost effective to hire more of these workers. Experian in Mt. Pleasant discovered yet another advantage to this approach. According to the HR manager, “We still hire Vietnamese and Hispanics because infrastructure is in place so we *can hire the best candidate independent of language.*”

**Bilingual Workers:** Most companies do not have full-time interpreters. Instead, they often rely on bilingual workers. All companies hired a bilingual speaker (or someone with at least some English) in their initial group of immigrants or refugees. These workers were typically not paid extra for these services, although companies may choose to provide stipends or extra pay for these abilities.



# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



Even though bilingual workers might be available, it is important to remember that some employees are uncomfortable serving as interpreters. This can be because there are members from extended communities working together; tensions might already exist among family and friends. Sometimes there are members from the same language groups but from rival communities and this could create an environment that is not conducive to productivity. There were some problems with interpreters being accused of prejudice or of lying. Many managers felt certain that interpreters "edited" as they relayed what was said between workers and managers. Managers must also keep in mind that bilingual workers have a great deal of power in their ethnic groups. In some cases, bilingual workers use their relationships with bosses to assure or deny jobs to individuals or they might threaten to expose workers to English-speaking managers for inappropriate behavior that could lead to dismissal.

Finally, being bilingual is not sufficient to be a good interpreter. One manager we interviewed emphasized that the bilingual employee's first duty is to the company and not their ethnic peers:

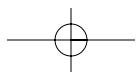
This person would have to be a good communicator in English and Spanish (written and oral), the ability to train workers, and be professional. There has to be trust in product: we need written guidelines and procedures and need to trust verbal communications are accurately translated. Trust in product is more important than entrée into the cultural community. Cultural competence is an added bonus.

Of course, there is no guarantee that bilingual employees will be available to act as interpreters. Bilingual employees are not always interested in the promotion that is offered or implied in the interpreter role. Some immigrants and refugees do not want the added responsibility of more complex tasks or the pressure of reading and writing in English. Some newcomers are uncomfortable giving orders to older people from their home culture. Others are aware of cultural discomfort about men receiving orders from females and will refuse to put themselves or their colleagues into a potentially embarrassing situation.

One company found itself in a different dilemma. It promoted so many refugees that the reported question among established-resident workers was "How can I get promoted if I am not Asian?" In any event, the managers we interviewed said that promoting immigrant and refugee workers as interpreters or supervisors showed the newcomers that they were welcome and that there were growth opportunities for them in the company.

## Conversation Rules

It is sometimes uncomfortable for workers who do not speak other languages, but it is critical to allow newcomers to communicate with one another in their "home" languages. Never make or enforce rules that prohibit languages other than English in the workplace. Such rules not only contribute to a sense of isolation among newcomers, they curtail creativity and problem solving and can also compromise safety.



# Welcoming New Iowans

## Documents and Signs

All signage and policy and training materials should be translated into all languages in the workplace. All signs at Experian are provided in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. All meetings, training and benefits enrollment sessions take place in these languages as well.

Many firms translated their standard forms for daily use. This practice exposed all employees to all languages and was recommended by several managers. This includes personnel forms, insurance forms, and benefits applications. In some companies, the entire employee handbook, complete with policies and procedures, was printed in Spanish. All safety signs and materials must be translated. These include tornado and fire routes, essential information about hazardous materials, and safe equipment usage.

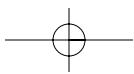
ACT, Inc. in Northwood provides its employee handbook and quality control information in Spanish. In a few short years, this company changed from having an English-speaking workforce to one that is now 35 percent Latino and Spanish speaking. The HR director told us, “As our company has grown from being a completely English-first-language company to bilingual, what we need to maintain the company, we will do” including translation of employee manuals and hiring a bilingual HR assistant.

The longer a same-language group of New Iowans was with a company, the more documents were translated. Managers reported that some paperwork was not translated because it varies from job to job, and employees need to understand English to perform certain tasks.

## Communication Across Cultures

Even when the language issues have been addressed, communicating with people from other cultural groups can be a challenge. Here are employers’ recommendations about communication with immigrant and refugee workers:

- Use explicit language. Communicate with a specific focus; show as well as tell, repeat as many times as necessary, and don’t try to complete people’s sentences.
- Take time to deal with issues in a timely and direct manner. Some issues might seem petty but issues can grow quickly.
- Be firm and consistent in how you handle matters. Perceived fairness among all workers is very important.
- When using an interpreter, an “outsider” is preferred. When an issue is important use an interpreter.
- Provide on-site language training. Content of language programs should be relevant and communicative.
- Educate management. Be sure that all managers know how to use an interpreter and how to explicitly communicate.
- Offer practical intercultural training for all employees. Make sure the training is relevant to the company, and include up-to-date information on the state of Iowa.
- Be open about why newcomers are hired. Invest everyone in the process of making things work.



# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



## Resources

### **Training and Education**

Managers in our research emphasized again and again that investing in training was essential to successful integration of immigrant and refugee workers. Training should be provided for immigrant workers, established workers, and managers.

**Buddy Systems:** Basic on-the-job training for immigrants and refugees was accomplished through interpreted orientation and training reinforced through a “buddy system.” In addition, newcomer workers were typically given more time for training before their formal evaluations were undertaken. In this regard, managers recommended “settling in” the first small groups of immigrants or refugees before hiring more newcomers. The better trained the first group is, the more able they are to train others. One manager recommended this:

Go real slow... when I felt training was going well I hired more [Hispanics] onto the second shift. Then I hired from within a bilingual supervisor –one of the initial five hired Hispanics... then because it was working out I expanded to third shift. At one time this shift was 50 percent Hispanic.

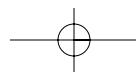
The “buddy system” was a major strategy for training the second and subsequent groups of newcomers. Newcomers were paired up with experienced same-language speakers. As more same-language newcomers joined one company a bilingual supervisor was promoted from the initial group. Training for the first group of newcomers for the third shift began by buddying up workers with experienced same-language workers on second shift. When training was complete the new workers reverted to the shift for which they were hired. One manager was succinct about the benefits of the buddy system:

[The company] has some formal procedures to support New Iowans. Materials are translated—signage for example—but functionally it is the buddy system training/showing factor that has taken care of the job of translations.

Through “buddies,” employees learned both the formal, “how things are,” and the informal, “how things *really* are,” ways of functioning in the workplace.

**Formal Training:** Immigrant and refugee workers were also generally given more time for orientation and training, before assessment, and for training for work related written skill tests. Managers reported that they preferred spending time on workers that would likely stay with the company (like newcomers with very high productivity and low turnover) than continually training employees who would be more likely to leave within six months.

**Established Worker Training:** Managers in our research consistently reported that traditional workers need to be trained about reasons to hire newcomers, and working with people from other cultures.



# Welcoming New Iowans

## **Reasons to Hire**

It is critical to keep established workers “in the loop” in terms of the company’s plans to hire and retain immigrants and refugees. When workers are kept informed of the business argument to hire newcomers and how their jobs benefit from hiring newcomers, they are more likely to do their part. Here is the experience of one manager we interviewed:

Make sure that the white people know the Hispanics aren’t going anywhere – they’re here to stay. Point out new figures about turnover. Before I started hiring all of them [newcomers], we were working only six days because I could not get enough operators. [We had a] history; workers KNEW we couldn’t keep operators before we started hiring Hispanics. This was not just my decision. [It had the] support of president and vice-president ‘this is the way things are going.’ Because of low turnover rates, [we have] a lot of top management support, and supervisors knew this. We had meetings, announcements: ‘We’re going to hire Hispanics.’ [At] mid-management level meetings, [we told] supervisors, ‘we’ve got to make this work.’...Traditional workers knew I couldn’t keep operators; they saw it all.

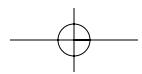
## **Culture in the Workplace**

Traditional workers need to be educated about immigrants and refugees and their lives and cultures. They need to be made aware of common intercultural exchanges between the ethnic groups and Iowans. For example, several managers discussed the different cultural role of families in the workplace, especially since there were so many extended family workers in one workplace. In one company the traditional workers were under the misconception that immigrants received extra government compensation. There need to be practical intercultural workshops that educate all employees. These workshops need to be relevant and focused on real experiences.

**Management Training:** Employers should not assume that managers have more experience working with immigrants and refugees than workers. Indeed, many managers reported that the current group of immigrants and refugees was their first experience and that they had learned a great deal. Either through experience or effective workshop training, educating managers is key because managerial discretion plays a critical role in developing accommodations for newcomers. Manager understanding of newcomers and their cultures shapes how managers deal with challenges and opportunities as they arise.

**A Training Checklist:** Regardless of the kind of training used, successful managers offered a list of topics that must be included in a company’s training and education plan:

- Provide traditional employees with information about Iowa’s need for more workers. Provide information on turnover and performance statistics.
- Provide all workers with lists of anticipated challenges and strategies and answers to Frequently Asked Questions about newcomers, their home countries and cultures.
- Educate ALL personnel (management, traditional employees and newcomers) on intercultural communications. Provide concrete information on the cultures of all employees. Provide information on the cultural exchanges experienced by other Iowa companies.



# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



- Educate newcomers about the company's mission, organizational structure, and the role of management.
- Educate management on strategies to communicate with non-English speakers and on how to use an interpreter.
- Offer language training to all personnel, including English classes for newcomers.

## Step 4: Maintaining a Diverse Workforce

While a careful program to recruit, hire and train immigrant and refugee workers is crucial to expanding an employer's workforce options, it will have been a wasted effort if those workers cannot be retained, and even promoted into long-term career positions.

### *Long-Term Cultural Change*

A cultural audit might indicate that a workplace is able to accommodate newcomers as employees, but many companies find that the long-term success of employees from diverse language and ethnic groups still requires a long-term commitment to a new kind of corporate culture.

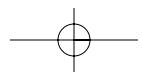
Despite management commitment to change, at the deepest level a workplace culture might encourage and reward homogeneity among workers. Unfortunately, this kind of workplace discourages diverse perspectives and will be a place that employees from diverse cultures find uncomfortable in the long term. Similarly, companies that emphasize competition among employees will find that they are subtly discouraging workers from cooperatively helping each other adjust to their new culture and from developing productive long-term relationships with their Iowa-born colleagues.

Employers who expect to retain a large number of diverse employees will need to develop ways to encourage a workplace culture that accommodates fresh approaches to old problems and does not create barriers to the full integration of newcomers in the workplace. The process can involve long-term change, but the goals of a diverse employer should be to:

- Provide a flexible, employee-centered work environment that encourages teamwork.
- Provide the time and resources to encourage creative growth and working with newcomers.
- Provide appropriate awards and recognition for newcomers who successfully integrate and the traditional workers who helped them.
- Provide cross-cultural training for all employees and managers.
- Provide mentoring for established and newcomer workers.
- Monitor the progress of newcomers by evaluating accommodation programs and modify them as needed.
- Recognize success in formal and informal ways.

### *Focus on Similarities*

Despite obvious differences in terms of languages, foods, dress, etc., the differences among human cultures are not be as important as the similarities. For example, an immigrant might not



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speak English well, and he might eat foods that are different from what most Iowans eat. Nevertheless, the newcomer will probably place the same value on providing for his/her children's future as Iowans do, including the desire for safe communities and schooling. When people get past communication barriers, they generally find that they have much more in common than previously assumed.

## *The Role of Human Resources*

In our research, we found that the single most important factor in the successful integration of immigrant and refugee workers is the orientation of human resources (HR) managers. They are well placed in the organization to be the “change champions” who make a new program successful, and they are key to establishing a comfort zone wherein newcomers can learn new practices and integrate into the workforce. The discretion of HR managers plays a critical role in developing the accommodations provided to newcomers and assuring their successful performance.

HR managers know their company and their employees. There is no set formula for success. According to one manager, the most important thing he can do is to

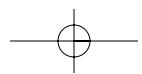
visit and watch...don't raise your voice...be consistent... [The HR managers] actually work with the people. They have the authority to help them and take care of them (or not), I can break a rule or make an accommodation...The orientation of the manager is key to treatment and success of hiring immigrants.

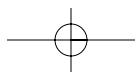
Managers should take the time to listen, understand and respond to employees. The perception of being heard was almost as important as the practice. HR managers emphasized that presence on the floor or “walk-arounds” were a crucial part of their job. Whether the communication was a smile, a word in the first language of a worker, a directive, an email, or a workshop on how to buy a house, this relationship building was critical. Being explicit in what management expected was also crucial. Taking the time to be specific and to *show* as well as tell was important to beginning learners of English, but being specific about expectations was also important for professional newcomers who already speak English. Articulating corporate culture and social norms is necessary for a smooth transition.

The HR manager should also work with the community to facilitate community-wide support for non-work related areas such as schools, housing, classes, churches, and social resources. This builds rapport with organizations that support newcomer workers and their families, and can even result in additional job applications. The outreach can also provide a good way to promote the company, communicating the business-based reasons to hire immigrants and refugees and the positive effect it will have on the community.

## **A Profile of a Successful HR Manager**

**22** The following profile of a HR manager illustrates the dynamic and responsive nature of managerial discretion and its potential to accommodate success integration of New Iowans into the workforce. We will call this manager “Beth.”





# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



Beth works in a factory that was in need of workers when a new group of refugees arrived in the community. Most of them were in the community for around six months. When several applied for work, Beth was inclined to “give it a go.” To do so she had to “work around” the entrance written math and language test in English: “They are not going to get the test, so why give it to them and embarrass them? I don’t believe in placing people in embarrassing positions.”

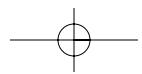
Beth was also prepared to “give them six months.” During this period she was prepared to not count anything against them unless it was absolutely blatant like fighting or stealing. The workers that made it through the initial six-month period continued to be employed at the facility two years later. This was accomplished without an interpreter (she looked into it, but found it too expensive). However, this “bending of the rules” did not occur without complaints from traditional workers. Beth met with complaining workers and explained why she was granting a six-month grace period: the company needed reliable operators and was prepared to train them.

The company had no written policies or procedures to accommodate New Iowans. Instead, managerial discretion dictated policy. The orientation process normally took six hours, but for this New Iowan group it took two days. Beth said, “One of the areas that is so scary during immigrant orientation is an understanding of their benefits. So many of those terms are so new to them: the co-pay, the PPO providers.”

Beth took the time to explain benefits. Indeed, she went out of her way to try to persuade one Bosnian employee, who wanted to be home while his wife had their baby, not to leave, but to take a leave of absence so his family would not lose benefits. After several attempts using interpreters, and even after involving another male manager in case this employee would listen better to a man, Beth gave up. The employee resigned, lost his benefits and was left with a large medical bill. He returned to the company and she offered him a job, but company policy required that he enter at a lower wage and on temporary status.

Training accommodations are also managerial discretion. Beth said, “As far as once they are placed out on the floor – I try to place them with a person who speaks English and Bosnian very well. Often times, if they need a person on a line that does not have a Bosnian, then I assign a full-time U.S. person to the buddy system. For example, we had a Bosnian male. On the first day on job that did not take a break all day – did not know what it meant when everybody walked away. So that’s when we initiated the ‘buddy system’ type thing.”

Beth got a Bosnian dictionary and ESL conversation textbook and took lots of extra time to communicate with the new employees. “[I] noticed slang phrases [e.g. idioms] such as ‘keep it up’ were confusing Bosnians, so I went through and presented some of the things they might hear.” She also took time to explain acronyms. Her office was “open” to communication. She reported that on one occasion it took ten minutes for a newcomer employee to tell her that she had not received a merit bonus that she had earned. In fact, the employee was correct; she had been overlooked. Beth took the time to listen and then acted to set it straight.



# Welcoming New Iowans

Beth also arranged to provide extra time during specialist exam training:

Typically in training [newcomers], we go at a slower pace. We do not have a separate class for Bosnians – do not want them to feel separated from co-workers – part of the fun – the group mentality – but they stay longer and we stay with them. We read each question instead of them reading it and draw more pictures. Basically – like you would if you were tutoring someone – you'd read it at a slower pace. Bosnians are very eager to take classes but it is very frustrating for them – but I've never had one not wanting to get involved. All of our Bosnians have moved to at least Spec 1 level – except for one Bosnian – her husband is also an employee here and I think he does not want her to.

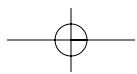
In some cases “training” involves communicating with traditional workers to “tell them how it is.” One instance involved Beth fielding worker complaints when a Bosnian employee purchased a fancy new car. She arranged a meeting with just the traditional workforce and explained that this employee did not have a family and worked two full-time jobs – “this was his American dream.” In the process, she was able to draw upon her knowledge of her traditional workers and to point out that some workers had other financial responsibilities, such as child support payments, and this prevented the purchase of a new car. She also was able to refute the voiced complaint of traditional workers that the New Iowan workers were also receiving support from the state.

Beth responded in a similar direct way to newcomer behaviors. On another occasion she called all the Bosnian workers in to discuss their treatment of one Muslim Bosnian worker and the taping of an Osama Bin Laden picture to his locker. She emphatically informed them that this type of behavior should not happen again. In her role as HR manager, Beth emphasized her belief that taking the time to be proactive and addressing issues in a firm but straightforward way was crucial to a fair and inclusive working environment.

## **Recommendations for Human Resources Managers**

Based on the experience of “Beth” and many of the human resource managers we interviewed, here are some general recommendations for human resource managers dealing with immigrant and refugee workers:

- The HR manager should attempt to communicate with ALL employees. Communication with non-English speaking employees can be non-verbal, through an interpreter, or a word or two in the other language. When dealing with important issues, use an interpreter. Keep trying until you find or create a system that works in your situation.
- The HR manager should attempt to educate all employees, including workers and management.
- New Iowan workers should be provided with opportunities to receive training necessary to help them be successful. This training often includes additional time and explanation during training, buddying up with a same first language worker, and language support including interpreting, translating and ESL classes.



# Successful Immigrant and Refugee Workers



- Traditional workers should be educated as to why New Iowans have been hired and the role newcomers can play in the company future, and provided with information to help understand cultural differences.
- Management should be educated with regard to intercultural communication and the effective use of interpreters.
- The HR manager should directly and immediately address issues. No issue should be considered too trivial to address, and important issues are not necessarily just workplace issues.
- There should be a perceived fairness in treatment. Take time to explicitly communicate to both newcomers and traditional workers why practices are the way they are.
- HR managers should continually review training practices and respond to worker needs. Managers should have authority to make adjustments in practices and expectations, even if they must modify the standard operating procedure.
- The HR manager should review benefit packages to determine whether and how they meet the needs of all workers from all cultures. The HR manager should help workers understand the concept of benefits, stipulations and requirements of the company's benefits, and how to access them.
- The HR manager should liaise with the community. The HR manager should facilitate community-wide support for non-work related areas: schools, housing, classes, and available resources.

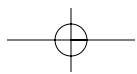
## *A Cross-Cultural Attitude*

Manager commitment, worker and supervisor training, and Human Resources involvement all play a role in successfully managing a diverse workforce. For the long haul, however, every member of the organization has a role in creating an atmosphere in which everyone thrives. Based on our experience and research in workplaces, organizations and communities, we have four general recommendations for everyone in a company that employs immigrant and refugee workers.

### **Be Patient with Each Other**

Remember that moving to a new country with a new language and culture is an extremely stressful and difficult thing for immigrants and refugees. So many of the everyday things established residents take for granted—like enrolling children in school or getting a driver's license—present daunting challenges to newcomers. Getting and keeping a job is, of course, a matter of survival for newcomers. Life in the United States might not feel "normal" for several years—if ever—and the same might be said of the workplace. Immigrant and refugee workers require more time and patience, but the managers and workers in our research clearly indicated that newcomer workers are worth all of the extra time and effort.

It is also essential to be patient with established American workers. The presence of immigrants and refugees will present a number of challenges to them, particularly if the newcomers do not speak English well. Be patient with established workers. Much of this will be new to them as



# Welcoming New Immigrants

well. No one can force people to change, and workers might become resentful when management attempts to force them to do so. Both traditional and newcomer workers need to be involved in the “buy in,” committed to hiring immigrants and refugees and expanding the company culture.

## **Never Make People Apologize for Who They Are**

One of the most humiliating things people can go through, regardless of culture or language, is to be forced to apologize for being who they are, to be made to feel inferior because of language, religion, ethnicity, or immigration status. It is critical to guard against placing either newcomers or established workers in a position in which they feel obligated to apologize for their identity, cultural perspectives, language, or background. This is not only disrespectful treatment; it will lead to discord in the workplace and lower productivity.

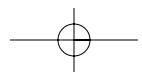
## **Create a Diverse Workforce on Your Own Terms**

Every member of the organization is a part of the company’s approach to immigration issues. There are a number of sound business reasons to hire immigrant and refugee workers, but do so on your own terms and at your own pace. Do not let outsiders dictate these terms for you. After a thorough assessment of your company’s ability to integrate newcomers, it’s OK to acknowledge that your firm is not ready.

A reasonable follow-up procedure is to determine what it will take to become ready and an appropriate timeline for moving forward. Some consultants will attempt to chide firms into sweeping and sudden diversity efforts, implying that a failure to do so represents a shortcoming on the part of company managers and workers. Don’t let them! Set your own diversity agenda and schedule.

## **Focus on the Business Decision**

First and foremost, hiring immigrants and refugees should be a business decision, not one based solely on a desire to “diversify” the workplace. Hire newcomers because you need them to maintain productivity, replace lost workers, make up for shrinking worker populations, and keep the company running. “Diversity” will follow. In the companies we visited, diversity was not the primary motivation behind hiring immigrants and refugees, although every company underwent a process of diversification when immigrant and refugee workers came on board. Diversity yields a number of benefits and opportunities to companies and communities. However, hiring newcomers for the sake of diversity is like putting the proverbial cart before the horse. All managers, workers, community leaders, and citizens should be informed that hiring immigrants and refugees has been made as a sound business decision and one that might even be necessary to assure the continuation of the company and the economic vitality of the community.



## Resources

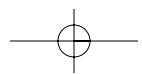


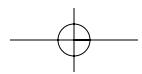
## Resources

This book includes lists of services and agencies that employers may find helpful as they work with immigrant and refugee employees. Of course, as soon as any list is printed, we run the risk of that list becoming out of date. However, the New Iowans Program updates the resource lists found in this book on the New Iowans website:

[www.bcs.uni.edu/idm/newiowans/](http://www.bcs.uni.edu/idm/newiowans/)

This site also provides access to other New Iowans publications and services. Two other handbooks are available as PDF downloads from this web site: *Welcoming New Iowans: A Guide for Citizens and Communities*, and *Welcoming New Iowans: A Guide for Christians and Churches* co-sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Iowa.





# Welcoming New Iowans

## Appendix A: Iowa Immigration and Refugee Resources and Services

New Iowans Program  
Seerley Hall 119  
Campus Box 0513  
University of Northern Iowa  
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0513  
Phone: 319-273-3029  
Fax: 319-273-7104  
E-Mail: [Mark.Grey@uni.edu](mailto:Mark.Grey@uni.edu)

Barbara Bobb  
New Iowan Centers Program Director  
Iowa Workforce Development  
Phone: 515-281-5387  
e-mail: [bobbera@quest.net.com](mailto:bobbera@quest.net.com)  
[www.iowaworkforce.org](http://www.iowaworkforce.org)

New Iowans Center-Muscatine  
Multicultural Center  
Muscatine Center for Strategic Action  
312 Iowa Avenue  
Muscatine, IA 52761  
Phone: 319-263-9018  
FAX: 319-263-8906

New Iowans Center-Sioux City  
Iowa Workforce Development Center  
2508 4th Street  
Sioux City, IA 51101  
Phone: 712-277-8540

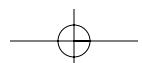
CASA Center for Assistance, Service, and Advocacy  
Nancy Visser and Ardith Lein  
Sioux Center Chamber of Commerce  
303 N. Main Ave  
Sioux Center, IA 51250  
Phone: 712-722-3324; 712-722-0195  
E-mail: [Ardith.Lein.scchambr@mtcnet.net](mailto:Ardith.Lein.scchambr@mtcnet.net)

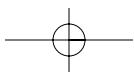
Des Moines Public Schools  
Park Avenue School Welcome Center  
3141 SW 9th  
Des Moines, IA 50315  
515-246-8170  
Hispanic Information Center  
1413 Broadway  
Denison, IA  
712-263-8022  
FAX: 712-263-8022  
[alma@pionet.net](mailto:alma@pionet.net)

La Casa Latina  
715 Douglas Street  
Sioux City, IA 51101-1021  
Phone: 712-252-4259

La Amistad  
206 West 5th Street, Suite 4-A  
Storm Lake, IA 50588  
Phone: 712-732-2809

Southwest Iowa Latino Resources Center  
604 4th Street  
Red Oak, IA 51566  
Phone: 712-623-3591





# Appendix A



Emily Frommelt  
Immigration Case Worker  
210 Walnut Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Phone: 515-284-4574  
FAX: 515-284-4937  
[emily\\_frommelt@harkin.senate.gov](mailto:emily_frommelt@harkin.senate.gov)

Karen T. Kinkel  
Caseworker, Congressman Leonard Boswell  
709 Furnas, Suite 1  
Osceola, IA 50213  
[Karen.kinkel@mail.house.gov](mailto:Karen.kinkel@mail.house.gov)

Mary Klemmesrud  
Immigration Business Assistance Specialist  
Iowa Department of Economic Development  
200 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Phone: 515-242-4808  
FAX: 515-242-4776  
[Mary.klemmesrud@ided.state.ia.us](mailto:Mary.klemmesrud@ided.state.ia.us)  
[www.smart.state.ia.us](http://www.smart.state.ia.us)

Iowa Department of Human Rights  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Phone: 515-242-6171  
FAX: 515-242-6119  
[www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/](http://www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/)

Iowa Division of Latino Affairs  
Liz Salinas-Newby  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Phone: 515-242-4070  
FAX: 515-242-6119  
[www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/la/](http://www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/la/)

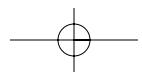
Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services  
1200 University Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50314-2330  
Phone: 1-800-326-2780  
[www.dhs.state.ia.us/Homepages/dhs/refugee/](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Homepages/dhs/refugee/)

Iowa Civil Rights Commission  
211 East Maple Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Phone: 1-800-457-4416  
FAX: 515-242-5840  
[www.state.ia.us/government/crc/index.html](http://www.state.ia.us/government/crc/index.html)

Carmen Sosa  
English as a Second Language/  
Limited English Proficiency Consultant  
Iowa Department of Education  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Phone: 515-281-3805  
[Carmen.sosa@ed.state.ia.us](mailto:Carmen.sosa@ed.state.ia.us)

Donna Eggleston  
Migrant Education Programs  
Iowa Department of Education  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Phone: 515-281-3999  
[Donna.eggleston@ed.state.ia.us](mailto:Donna.eggleston@ed.state.ia.us)  
[www.state.ia.us/educate/programs/title1/migrant\\_ed.html](http://www.state.ia.us/educate/programs/title1/migrant_ed.html)

Proteus  
Central Administrative Office  
175 NW 57th Place  
Des Moines, IA 50306-0385  
Phone: 1-800-372-6031  
FAX: 515-244-4166  
<http://showcase.netins.net/web/proteus/>



# Welcoming New Iowans

Immigration Study Circles  
Wallace House Foundation  
756 16th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
Phone: 515-243-7063  
FAX: 515-243-8927  
[www.wallace.org](http://www.wallace.org)

Immigrant Rights Project  
American Friends Service Committee  
4211 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50312  
Phone: 515-274-4851  
FAX: 515-274-2003  
E-Mail: [afscdesm@afsc.org](mailto:afscdesm@afsc.org)

Ed Leahy, Organizer  
Iowa-Nebraska Immigrant Rights Network  
3605 Q St.  
Omaha, NE 68107  
Phone: 402-689-4249

Iowa Immigration Legal Project  
2912 Beaver Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50310  
Phone: 515-271-5730  
FAX 515-271-5757

United Action for Youth  
Gladis Chaisson-Cardenas  
410 Iowa Ave.  
Iowa City, IA 52240  
Phone: 319-338-7518

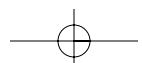
National Conference for Community and  
Justice (NCCJ)  
Jesse Villalobos, Program Director  
1227 25th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50311  
Phone: 515-274-5571  
[Nccjiowa@aol.COM](mailto:Nccjiowa@aol.COM)

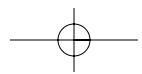
Refugee Cooperative Ministry  
(Lutheran/Catholic Social Service)  
3116 University Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50311  
Phone: 515-277-4476  
FAX 515-271-7454  
<http://www.lssia.org/>

Justice for Our Neighbors Clinic (Des Moines)  
Alison Brown  
Grace United Methodist Church  
PO Box 41006  
Des Moines, IA 50311  
Phone: 515-277-4719

Iowa Coalition against Domestic Violence  
Sonia Parras  
2603 Bell Ave, Suite 100  
Des Moines, IA 50310  
Phone: 515-244-8028  
Fax: 515-244-7417

Sam Carbajal  
Hispanic Outreach Worker  
Youth and Shelter Services of Marshall County  
130 W. Main St.  
Marshalltown, IA 50158  
Phone: 515-752-2300





## Appendix B



# Appendix B: Institutions and Venders that Provide Workplace Culture Audits and Consultation

New Iowans Program  
Seerley Hall 119  
Campus Box 0513  
University of Northern Iowa  
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0513  
Phone: 319-273-3029  
Fax: 319-273-7104  
E-Mail: James.Hoelscher@uni.edu

Center for Social and Behavioral Research  
University of Northern Iowa  
Cedar Falls, IA 50614  
Phone: 319-273-2105  
Fax: 319-273-3104

Iowa Council for International Understanding  
Hotel For Des Moines  
1000 Walnut Street, Suite 1105  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Phone: 515-282-8269  
Fax: 515-282-0454  
E-Mail: info@iciu.org

Sherry Gupta  
Performance Matters LLC  
515-988-7903  
E-Mail: sherry@a-t-g.com

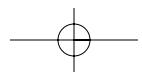
Laura Hamilton  
2145 Prairie View East  
Ames, IA 50010-4555  
Phone: 515-233-5455  
Fax: 515-233-9570  
E-Mail: Laurahamil@aol.com

Nipproca Associates  
2516 W. 90th Street  
Leawood, KS 66206  
Phone: (913) 901-0243  
Fax (913) 901-0244  
E-Mail: Dianne@nipporica.com

Additional resources and services can be found at:

DiversityInc.com  
[www.diversityinc.com/public/2028.cfm](http://www.diversityinc.com/public/2028.cfm)

Society for Human Resource Management  
[www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org)



# Welcoming New Iowans

## Appendix C: Companies and Organizations Included in This Research

**Advanced Component Technologies, Inc.**, Northwood

**Armour Swift Eckrich, Inc.**, Mason City

**Sedona Staffing Services**, Cedar Falls

**Experian**, Mt. Pleasant

**Heatilator**, Mt. Pleasant

**Des Moines Marriott Hotel**, Des Moines

**Principal Financial Group**, Des Moines

**Hon Industries**, Muscatine

**Rockwell Collins**, Cedar Rapids

**ABC Virtual Communications**, West Des Moines

**John Deere Professional Engineering Center**, Waterloo

**Fawn Enginneering: The Wittern Group**, Clive, West Des Moines

**Skogman Realty**, Cedar Rapids

**Red Oak Greenhouses**, Red Oak

**Sunbest-Papettis Farms**, Villisca

**Minsa Corporation**, Red Oak

**Quality Chef**, Cedar Rapids

**Victor Plastics**, Victor

**Fort Dodge Animal Health**, Fort Dodge

**IBP/Tyson**, S. Sioux City, Nebraska

**Argosy Belle Casino**, Sioux City

**John Morrell Company**, Sioux City

**USG – United States Gypsum Company**, Fort Dodge

**Metokote**, Cedar Falls

**Powers Manufacturing**, Waterloo

