



WELCOMING  
REFUGEES

## Welcoming and Integrating Refugee Professionals

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Hannah Carswell: Hi everyone, welcome and thank you for joining us today for this webinar on welcoming and integrating refugee professionals. I'm Hannah Carswell, the program manager of the Welcoming Refugees program here at Welcoming America. Before I get started, I'd like to thank the Office of Refugee Resettlement for providing the funding that makes this webinar and other tools and resources like it possible.

During this webinar today, we'll think about how too often national media focuses exclusively on humanitarian needs of refugees and gives much less attention to the incredible contributions that refugees are able to bring to our communities if they are given a chance.

The refugee story is a complex one and the large number of refugee professionals living in our communities are often a part of the story that remains untold. Today this webinar will be exploring how service providers and communities can do more to unlock the talent of refugee professionals and help tell that deeper story of refugee contributions in the process.

As far as our learning objectives, they are to develop a solid grounding on the problems and opportunities around untapped refugee talent to understand recommendations for leaders and service providers for how to tackle these challenges and to learn about new tools and resources to help address and communicate about refugee professionals. In order to get there, we will hear from four key speakers today, two from IMPRINT, one from Higher and a refugee professional himself, and we'll also allow time for questions at the end. We're recording the webinar and we'll send out the recording and the slides in a few days.

I'll start off by handing it over to Debra Means and Senay Gebremedhin at IMPRINT.

Debra Means: Thank you, Hannah. I hope everyone can hear us okay. We're really excited to be able to present and to talk on this topic. Just to start us from a grounding place, we just want to provide a little bit of a background as to where it is that we work at, and what it is that we do here.

Senay and myself, we work at an organization called World Education Services, WES for short, and specifically we work in a program that's called Global Talent Bridge. Global Talent Bridge is a program that was established in 2011 with a specific purpose and a focus on helping immigrants and refugees fully utilize their talents and education in the United States as well as Canada. Through our program, we join with institutional partners as well as community-based organizations, like many of you on this webinar today, to help skilled immigrants and refugees leverage their training and achieve their career and professional goals.

I encourage you, if you'd like to learn more about the services and the resources that Global Talent Bridge provides, to please visit our site, which contains access to the reports that we'll briefly discuss today as well as a blog which includes relevant information on the work of Global Talent Bridge, WES, and many of our partners in the field.

WES is also a founding member of the IMPRINT Coalition. IMPRINT is the national coalition of nonprofit organizations in the United States that is dedicated to advancing the field of immigrant and refugee professional integration. To learn more about IMPRINT and to participate in the Coalition's efforts to increase opportunities for immigrants and refugees, I also encourage you to visit the website, [ImprintProject.org](http://ImprintProject.org). On the website you can sign on to our campaign, which is focused on supporting the call for immigrant professional integration through a set of key principles. You can also view a first of its kind professional integration mapping project. The map features national programs as well as policies that positively affect the integration of immigrants and refugees. Also on this site, you can download IMPRINT's first of its kind research report, *Steps to Success*, which includes an analysis of the barriers that are faced by college-educated immigrants and refugees.

Skill immigrants, refugees and professionals. Who are we talking about? For the purposes of today's webinar, we are defining this population as refugees with a Bachelor's degree or higher that are seeking to work in a profession that is commensurate with their educational background or seeking to pursue further education so that they can qualify for a professional career in the United States.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, of the 7.6 million skilled immigrants and refugees in the United States, nearly two million are affected by brain waste. That's a really big number. MPI defines brain waste as the number of college-educated immigrants and refugees and native-born adults ages 25 and older who are either unemployed or have jobs that are significantly below their education and skill levels. This under-utilization represents significant social and economic cost, which MPI in its 2016 Untapped Talent Report estimates to result in a combined loss of more than \$10 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue.

What are some of the factors that are affecting skilled immigrants? Foreign credential recognition, which is something that my colleague Senay will discuss in greater detail in just a bit. Lack of additional US credentials, such as short courses or certificates that are often available through community colleges or local training providers. Lack of social capital, which many of us on the webinar today can probably attest to personally, if we in our own job search have tried to locate a job and realized that we actually found it because we were advised about it through our professional network. A lack of social capital is something that affects a lot of immigrants and refugees, and it can be addressed by providing refugees with access to things such as professional peer mentoring groups. The last fact that we'll talk about a little bit is limited English proficiency, which I would dare say, and I think research has supported, is likely to be the single most powerful step a refugee can take towards his or her future employability. These factors and others are explored in a bit more detail in IMPRINT's Steps to Success report.

This report was published in 2015, and it looks at the issues affecting immigrants and refugees in key cities, Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia, Boston, Seattle and San Jose, but I do want to note that while it's limited to those communities, I'm certain that the key findings are certainly aligned to issues

that you're probably hearing or you're experiencing for your clients in your local areas. This search study found that social capital is really powerful for helping to integrate skilled immigrants into the workforce, that English is really important, that re-skilling boosts employability. It's why there's such an important factor to recognize in making sure that the individuals that we're servicing actually have access to programs that can provide support in these key areas.

Additional recommendations that are included in this report talk about funding existing programs, such as in New York there was a program that was funded through private as well as public dollars that actually was titled Immigrant Bridge, and the focus of it was on integrating immigrants and refugees by bridging the gaps in their foreign education so that they could actually become more employable in the US.

Additional recommendations include improved data collection. The reality is that there's not a lot of data out there that concretely talks about the numbers of skilled refugees that are here, and so what we really want to make sure is happening is that there is actually ways in which the data collection is a bit more robust, and so this report talks about improving data collection and ways in which that can occur.

Connecting mainstream providers and specialized services, as well as identifying opportunities within governments for immigrant professionals to acquire American experience, which I believe that we might actually hear about from one of the individuals on the phone. I believe in Idaho they have actually had some success in trying to get opportunities for immigrants to work in government offices.

Untapped Talent is yet another resource and another tool we certainly want to make sure we're providing you with today on this webinar. In this report it talks about specifically the under-utilization of skilled refugees, and provides information on labor market outcomes, factors linked to skill under-utilization, the estimated cost and foregone earnings and taxes, as well as provides case studies which can provide unique examples of the success that individuals have achieved, of which I believe one of the case studies in here actually is featuring Idaho, which again is one of the participants on our webinar today.

I'm going to pass it on now to my colleague, Senay, who's going to talk a little bit more about some of those unique barriers, starting with credential recognition.

Senay  
Gebremedhin:

Thank you Debra. Finding recognition for education and experience obtained abroad is one of the major challenges that many skilled immigrants and refugees face in the US, as Debra had mentioned earlier. How do you help your clients find credential recognition for their education abroad? What is credential recognition, and when would your clients need it?

As you had seen in one of the reports, about 47% of skilled immigrants and refugees are not hired because they lack US experience. About 39%, they can't find employment because the employer is not recognizing their education from abroad.

To start with, the credential evaluation is often the first step for skilled immigrants and refugees to gain access to educational and professional employment opportunities in the US. Basically what a credential evaluation does is help your clients gain recognition for their previous studies, but considering their country's educational system, the status of the institution they attended, the content of the program they completed their study in, and any entry and graduation requirements. Credential evaluation compares your client's education to a similar degree or diploma in the US and provides a degree equivalency. While evaluation is an assessment of credentials, recognition is the acceptance of the evaluation or the credentials. One is really important. If your client can't find recognition, the evaluation might not be useful to them, right?

Typically employers, licensing boards and universities use credential evaluation to judge the quality and level of academic achievement in comparison to US-educated candidates. Universities use the information to make admissions decision and to award transfer credit or advanced standing in a program, while employers and licensing boards refer to credential evaluation to assess whether or not a candidate meets their academic requirement. These are the two reasons why credential evaluation is key to help your client reenter their profession in the US or continue their education.

Just to give you an idea of what we mean and why we feel credential evaluations are important, this is a sample on the left side, if you can see. It's a transcript from the University of Pune. On the right side is the evaluation, the course by course analysis that WES has done. Now on the red box, if you can see on your screen, it's very hard to read but it says Commercial Mathematics and Statistics and the person has a grade of 69. If you are unfamiliar with the educational system at the university, or the status of the institution, looking at that grade the assumption that you'd make, like any of us, is that this person was a poor student. When in reality, looking at the credential evaluation on the right side, a 69 in that school system and that country is equal to an A.

A credential evaluation not only gives an equivalency, a degree to a degree transfer of a person's education, but rather also puts into perspective the level in which they completed some of the course work that they had done in their home country. Now the US does not have a universal accepted credential evaluation service. The mechanism to assess foreign credentials as a result, many academic institutions [inaudible 00:14:29] and employers use third party credential evaluation agencies like WES to examine official documents.

Before requesting a credential evaluation or before you have your clients go through the process of getting a credential evaluation, it is best to consider contacting the institution that's going to recognize it and find out what the requirements that they have for the credentials that they will accept. Ultimately these institutions make the decision, so if you have clients looking to continue their education, find out what the institution that they're looking into continue their education accept in the formal credential evaluation. If they're going for licensing, most licensing boards either have their own identified credential evaluation agency or they might contract with a third party like World Education Services, so learn what the requirements are for them.

Then for employment, it really depends on the employer. This is a way for clients and you to explain both the academic achievement of your client and how they fit into the position that employer is looking for.

If your clients do not know which credential evaluation agency that they would like to use, or they have not figured out exactly where to get their credential evaluation, googling is not really a good option. When you google for credential evaluation agencies, you will most likely get a lot of credential evaluation agencies or those that claim to do credential evaluation agencies. They might not be reputable, so we always advise that you consult a website called Naces.org, N-A-C-E-S.org. It stands for the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services, and it has a list of 21 credential evaluation agencies, including WES, that are reputable and widely accepted. Now when I say this I always want to refer back to what I had said earlier. It's always better, you should first consult with the accepting agency to find out what they accept and then do the credential evaluation.

As Debra had mentioned earlier, one of the key barriers identified in our research at IMPRINT, as well as other research conducted on brain waste, is a lack of some kind of a US credential. One way to address the barrier is to invest in re-skilling, something that in the research on IMPRINT's research, Steps to Success, came to be known as Made in America Step, where an individual gets additional education or additional course work to fill the gap. In the Steps to Success study, we found that immigrants and refugees who had invested in additional US education were more likely to be employed and successful than those who had only received education from abroad. The key word here being additional. The key finding does not discount the education that skilled immigrants earned abroad and the tremendous value that it holds. It highlights how a US credential can help bridge any gaps that exist in their academic and professional background. Gaps could be anything from language to technical skills, or simply long gaps in education experience that can make it difficult to enter the workforce. It's really a tool that you can help your clients identify as a way to get back to their profession without it being too burdensome both financially or on time.

Now another great resource for additional Made in America stamp for your clients, and they do offer a lot of free services, especially for refugees, is Coursera. Coursera for Refugees, which launched in 2016, is an initiative to provide online education at no cost to refugees around the world. It's a resource for you guys to consider for your clients if they're looking to get additional courses to help fill gaps or help them get additional US credentials.

You can always engage with your community colleges. We have a wonderful partner in CCCIE. They are also a founding member of the IMPRINT Coalition, Community College Consortium for Immigrant and Education. They share best practices and also have a lot of resources in helping skilled immigrants find their profession or get back to their profession in the US.

Additional short term trainings are ways to bridge some gaps in education, and it could be a few months or a year and it could be non-credit bearing and credit bearing courses where your clients could finish and get some sort of credential that they could add to their resume to find employment.

I'm going to share some resources that we have at WES that we feel are very useful to help your clients get back to their profession. A new resource that we've developed and one that we hope to continue with other professions besides nursing, but one that we currently have on our website is the Career Pathways Guide in Nursing. The Career Pathways Guide, Career Pathways basically is building on your education and continuing and specializing so that you could either reenter or grow within your profession. This tool goes through some of the different things that a person coming into the US who might have been a nurse might want to know. It highlights what nursing is in the US, from what a typical nurse does at work to what they could potentially earn in their position, what the different levels of the nursing profession are, what are the requirements to enter those professions. It goes through and explains what the credential evaluation process is for nursing, the educational pathways that are available for folks who have nursing background, the licensing requirement.

Now it doesn't go in detail on specific state nursing requirements, but however it does talk about generally what the nursing requirements are and where to find resources and information for attaining a nursing license in the US. Then also transferable skills or alternative careers for individuals who either find it very difficult to get the licensing in nursing, if they would like to consider alternative careers it has a few suggestions, but also if they would like to take their experience but pursue a completely different career it also helps them understand what some of the transferable skills might be, how to find resources that could help them find out what their skills are and how they could be transferred. It's a wonderful resource, it's free, and I know someone

just uploaded it on the chat feature so please download it and use it. If you have feedback, we would really appreciate any feedback that you might have as we continue to develop more resources.

Another resource that is at WES, again, available for free, as I had mentioned, as you guys had seen earlier, the sample credential evaluation, it's very difficult to know exactly the educational system that each country has so if you have clients that you would like to help but don't necessarily know their educational system and how it could be translated to the US, this is a great resource to learn more about what each country, the educational system is, the grading scale, the profile of their educational system in that country, any research or any findings that we have found that we feel would be useful for you and your clients. It's a free resource that you can access on our website and go through and see what some of the requirements for evaluation are, some of the, again, grading scales and the country profile, educational profile for your client.

Other resources that could be helpful for your client, one is the degree equivalency. This is a free tool. It's a self-reported evaluation where your client or you could fill out a form and find out if the degree's equivalent to a US degree. Now, it's unofficial and it's self-reported, and so it's not one that you could actually take to academic institutions or employers as an evaluation, but it's to give you an idea to show your client's educational level and what they could consider in the US, if for instance they're thinking through alternative careers or if they would like to transfer some of their skills.

The IGPA calculator, especially if your clients are going to continue their education, or even for employment. A lot of times if someone has a 3.0 or above, we recommend they include it on their resume. This is a free way to find out what your client's GPA is and if they should include it.

If they're looking to continue their education, the scholarship finder, again it's a new resource and one that we're building, but one that could be a good start for your clients if they want to get some sort of financial aid to get back to their profession or get back to education to build on what they've already come in from their home country.

Alright, I'm going to pass it on to Nicole at Higher.

Nicole Redford: Thank you so much, Senay. This is Nicole Redford. I am the program manager for Higher, which is another of ORR's technical assistance providers. Just like Welcoming America, we are 100% funded by the Office for Refugee Resettlement. I'm very excited to join the webinar today because every year Higher surveys refugee resettlement programs across the country to see what are the needs in employment programs for clients who are refugees that are looking for their first job or coming back into state programs to look for jobs two, three and four. Or, even their dream job that they want to work in in this country.

I'm really glad that Global Talent Bridge was able to highlight a lot of their resources that exist out there in the field. This year Higher is working to work with employment staff across the country to provide different tools to help them tweak their employment programs to really help those individuals that have come to the United States with vast amounts of talent and resources and skills, but also helping refugees who just want to learn a new trade and are looking for a job upgrade, to bring those that are unemployed or underemployed back into the light and to really up their earning power and potential. It also honors their past professional skills and to really help them move towards their dream job.

Before we move to the next slide, I just want to say that we submitted our slides to be approved for the presentation today, and during that time period before the webinar we actually launched a new website, so Higher has a whole new look on our website and it's so much easier to find all of our tools and resources. I unfortunately don't have a screenshot of it, but I have the information coming up later so please visit our new website. We have a wonderful blog that's featured on the homepage of the website that talks about different job upgrade opportunities, career advancement programming, job development techniques, anything that you might want as a refugee employment professional in the field today. Higher's there to help develop resources for you.

A lot of our new resources that are coming out this year will be featured on Higher's Online Learning Institute, which you can find on the homepage of our website or any of the menu options on the website. Signing up for our

Online Learning Institute is free and you'll have access to courses that can help you in your professional development, that you can use in your job readiness classes, and soon we will even launch all of our webinars and future resources on the Online Learning Institute as well.

I'm going to move on, because I have the privilege of introducing to you a refugee professional working in the US who is here today to tell his story and how he started off in one career and ended back up to something that he had studied in in his home country. Mohammed [al Shiraq 00:27:23] is a microbiologist from Iraq. He holds a Master's degree of zoonotic diseases from the University of Baghdad. That's probably the first time I've ever heard of that Master's degree, so it sounds really fancy but he basically worked as a veterinarian back in Iraq and knows all of the different microbiologist techniques for animals specifically.

Mohammed and his family were resettled to Boise, Idaho in March of 2015. He came with his wife and his three children. Upon arriving in Boise, Idaho, he started work in his first job as a medical interpreter. Today we're going to talk to Mohammed about his journey over those first years in country to try to get him back into the field. Mohammed had the help from Global Talent Idaho and the Department of Labor and their resources to help him get back into this career.

Because Mohammed is so amazing and worked so hard in his new job as a senior microbiologist at Idaho Bureau of Laboratories, we have not actually met or had the opportunity to speak, so this is some cutting edge journalism right here and I will be talking to Mohammed for the first time. Mohammed, do you want to say hi to the audience?

Mohammed: Hi Nicole and audience, how are you?

Nicole Redford: Good. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Mohammed: Yeah, it's very amazing that you know everything about me.

Nicole Redford: I know, I know, and you know nothing of me.

Mohammed: Right.

Nicole Redford: Mohammed, I just want to start, when you first arrived to the country in March of 2015, what was your first impression of your new home? Did you think Boise, Idaho was anything like the America that you had learned about before coming here?

Mohammed: Well it was a very good advice from my brother-in-law to come in Boise. I had many relatives that knew of New Jersey and everywhere in America, but they advised me to start here and they were right. Here is everything. Everything is nice, people nice and helpful, and as you can see I got my dream job here in Boise. My family love it as well.

Nicole Redford: Oh, that's so wonderful. Mohammed, I had a chance to kind of look at the statistics for your career, and it looks like the United States is very much in need of people in your profession, especially with your background so we're so excited that you were able to come to this country and contribute towards our careers in microbiology so thank you so much and welcome to the United States.

Mohammed: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Thank you.

Nicole Redford: Mohammed, I just wanted to ask you, when you first arrived in the country, did you expect that you would be able to start up in the exact same career that you had in Iraq for your first job?

Mohammed: Actually no. No, I was expecting to do like any other thing, yeah, like a driver or a baker or anything else. When I started the medical interpreting and I started looking for jobs I got this and it was amazing for me actually.

Nicole Redford: That's so great. Mohammed, you were first resettled by the International Rescue Committee. Are they the ones who helped you find your first job?

Mohammed: Yes. They started helping me with that. I got very important information through their job advisor and through their job classes. They did many job classes and I got many important and new information for me about how to search jobs and how to apply, how to do my resume in the USA way and the

cover letter and all of this stuff. They even paid me to get my certificate as an interpreter. Then they referred me to the GTI, Global Talent of Idaho, and these people continue helping me with the Department of Labor. I completed the online training with the GTI. Then they continue doing interviews, trainings and they talk to my employer now when I first got to the internship with them.

Nicole Redford: That's wonderful. It sounds like you got a lot of great help and advice.

Mohammed: Yeah, exactly.

Nicole Redford: Especially in that first referral from the IRC to Global Talent Idaho. It looks like it took a lot of community partners to help you get along your path.

Mohammed: Oh yeah.

Nicole Redford: What would you say is the most helpful part of the process to reenter your profession that you went through?

Mohammed: Well, the support. They were like guidance for me to tell me what to do and when to do and as a new refugee it's not easy to have the language, so I got the [inaudible 00:33:16] English internship through the Global Talent Idaho by the Boise State University and it was very helpful for me to improve my language.

Nicole Redford: Oh, wonderful. What else did the internship help you learn in your journey to go back into your career?

Mohammed: You mean the English classes?

Nicole Redford: No, the internship that you had.

Mohammed: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I got that internship and it was a six-month, full paid by the Department of Labor and my employer got a very good chance to test me to see exactly what experience and what skills I had. When the six months finished, immediately my employer now provided me, or invited me to a part-time job. I accepted that position and after awhile I applied for a full-time job with them and then I got it.

Nicole Redford: That's so wonderful.

Mohammed: Yeah.

Nicole Redford: I'm sure you had a great impression on your employer.

Mohammed: Yeah, I have.

Nicole Redford: Mohammed, was there any point in time when you were trying to go back into your career that you kind of felt like it was a very difficult process and that it was taking longer than you had thought?

Mohammed: Well, the entire system is new for me. I mean, not only the language, it's about the networking, it's about the procedures, the technical support, but as a veterinarian you know I have to be a good diagnostics and I have to know how to do good lab work, so that helps me. I'm doing what I used to do in Iraq.

Nicole Redford: Mohammed, there are many refugees that will be coming and arriving to the country this year and there are refugees that are already in this country that are working those entry level positions, kind of what you had talked about as a driver or working in a warehouse, but they have skills and they have certificates back from their home country and they also have a dream to reenter those professions. What kind of advice would you give to refugees who are in that same position as you were when you first arrived?

Mohammed: Yeah, I just want to tell them or to ask them notice around and to keep looking and to keep working with people like GTI or IRC to get more opportunities and to try to get better jobs like a more useful job for them.

Nicole Redford: Wonderful, and did you have a lot of support from your family to take these additional steps?

Mohammed: Yeah, I had my wife and she is working at the Boise State University and she has almost the same of my story. Same people helped me, helped her actually to get what she has now.

Nicole Redford: Oh, that's wonderful. Congratulations to you both.

Mohammed: Yeah, both of us before we come to USA, a friend of ours advised us to evaluate our degrees by the WES, the World Education Services, and we sent them our documents and paid them and we got our credits before we come to the USA. My employer now, the Department of Health and Welfare, they considered these numbers and these credits when they hired me for the last time now.

Nicole Redford: That's really wonderful that you bring that up, Mohammed. I think one of the greatest assets that refugees have are the networks that they come into if they're joining family. The information that refugees can pass to one another about what resources exist in the community, and kind of why we wanted to pull together this presentation today so that we can get that information out there so that all refugees have access to these different pieces and organizations in their community that can help them get back into their profession, so thank you so much Mohammed for talking about your experience today. Did you have anything else that you wanted to share before we move on?

Mohammed: Yes, I'd just like to thank you and thank all the auditors for being here today.

Nicole Redford: Well thank you so much, Mohammed. It sounds like you're a busy man doing some really important work, so we're so excited that we could meet literally just a couple minutes ago and I hope one day that I can be in Idaho and come stop by your lab.

Mohammed: I really hope so.

Nicole Redford: Well thank you so much, Mohammed. I'm going to turn it back now to Hannah from Welcoming America.

Hannah Carswell: Thank you all. That was a lot of great info and just a really inspiring story. I'm going to go to a few of the questions that we've been getting in the chat box, and if you have questions feel free to just chat them in where the group chat box is.

One question that we're getting over and over is what to do when a client holds a professional degree or diploma but does not have the documentation because the documents were destroyed because of war or just the nature of why refugees come to this country? What would be an option for them when they don't have that documentation? I guess I'll turn to you, Senay, or Debra.

Senay  
Gebremedhin: That's a question that we get a lot, and it's a frustration that most people have and we completely respect it. Because we're a credential evaluation agency, and again pointing to the institutions that recognize their credentials, if they don't accept what we're offering them as equivalent, then it's very difficult and the only way that we could ensure that the documents that we're receiving are authentic is to get them from the institution that produced these documents. It is really a way to verify that [inaudible 00:40:22]. As most of you might be aware, we did have an alternative credential evaluation process that was piloted in Canada. There are plans at the moment to start it in the US, but it's so early that sharing anything would really be a disservice. But it is in the blog and you could learn more about it. Debra had sent a link.

Debra Means: Yeah, I was just going to say to address that question, while we're actually developing a plan to implement the program that Senay mentioned, the pilot program that was in Canada, in the US, I believe that currently there's a feasibility study that's being conducted. There is a link that I'll make sure is re-shared on the chat box so that people if they'd like to look at, it's titled A Way Forward for Refugees, Findings from the WES Pilot Project. People can certainly read that and in that report are some examples of the ways in which we're trying to address that barrier that when individuals have to flee their country, they usually don't have their documents with them so what are the alternatives that are available? That report provides some information from our neighbors above.

Hannah Carswell: That's great, thank you. Another question that we're getting is for Mohammed. People are asking to know a little bit more about the internship that you completed. Was it a state or federal internship?

Tara Wolfson: Mohammed, this is Tara Wolfson with Global Talent Idaho and the Idaho Office for Refugees, and Mohammed just pointed at me. We're sitting together. Through a job-driven national emergency grant we partnered with the Idaho Department of Labor and that is who funded the internship program for Global Talent Idaho and we also are continuing to partner with them through WIOA funds and what we were able to do is to classify refugees as dislocated workers, so even though their dislocation happened outside of the country, they lost their job through no fault of their own so when they arrived they were considered a dislocated worker.

Hannah Carswell: Okay, great. Thank you for sharing that. Another question, just for anyone who has any ideas about it, is there any kind of coordination for some way for agencies across the US to share employment resources and contacts? Does anything like that exist?

Nicole Redford: I'm sorry Hannah, can you repeat that question?

Hannah Carswell: Oh yeah, sure. Do you know of any coordination or organizations that coordinates between agencies to share employment resources and contacts for helping refugees get back into the professions that they had in their home country?

Senay Gebremedhin: Hi Hannah. Some states do that, and it really depends on how involved some of their employment coordinators or the workforce [inaudible 00:44:03] centers are with the other service providers, but I don't know of any national resources that speak to that.

Nicole Redford: Hi Hannah, this is Nicole at Higher. I'm not sure if the question was related to WIOA-based employment programs or refugee-based employment programs, but at Higher we do connect different offices across the country. We do have a database of staff that we've worked with and encountered in the past. Then we also work at a federal level with the Department of Labor to bring together WIOA agencies in each of those states. It's not a database, but we kind of work as the connector between those parties and share any best practices or information from programs in different states.

For example, there's a couple states like Maryland where we're based where the Department of Labor has a very close relationship with the refugee resettlement agencies and they're working together to plan out intakes into employment programs and to partner with community colleges for English classes, and then also have apprenticeship with different employers across the state. I'm not sure if that gets completely at what the question was originally, but Higher is there for anyone employment-related.

Hannah Carswell: Okay great, thank you.

Debra Means: This is Debra. Sorry, just one other thing that I wanted to share, and we'll make sure to include the link in the chat box. One thing that we did actually develop at IMPRINT is basically a national map that is interactive to which you can filter it by the states in which you reside and the community in which you represent, and you can see whether or not there are programs or services that actually might be able to provide the level of support for your refugee client. We'll include the link, but certainly that's a resource that we also have that's available that may be of assistance in finding out which organizations in your area are actually servicing the clients you're working with.

Hannah Carswell: I think we have time for a couple more questions, so another question I see is do any of you have advice for managing the professional expectations of new arrivals, so helping them get through the process and realizing that it's going to take some time to get back to their previous careers?

Nicole Redford: This is Nicole at Higher. That's a really great question, and I think that ORR has done a really good job of pushing all of their programs to do a lot more of the short and long term career planning with clients, and I think it's really about a conversation in the initial beginning of a program when you're having that assessment and intake process to really sit down with clients and to talk about where they're coming from, what kind of jobs they worked in their home country, what kind of education that they had, or didn't have access to, what kind of skills that they're bringing with them into this country, and then to really map out a plan for that person over their first five years in the country, especially with refugee resettlement agencies that are able to work with them over those five years.

Really being real about the fact that they will have to take an entry level job because it is such a fast-paced employment program in the United States, but that their first job is not their last job and that in a way to honor the skills that they bring with them, you're laying out this plan that acknowledges what their ultimate goal is over those five years or what their ultimate career goal is in their life. Then to really break down all of the steps that one would need to take to get back to that goal.

I always like to talk about how long it would take a regular person in the United States to go after a particular job, and as someone with a Bachelor's degree in the US, at this point in time it's taking between 12 and 14 months to find a job so the process takes a long time and there are different steps that are involved and it could be re-credentialing, it could be re-certification, it could be taking new classes, and often times it could just be going through and improving your English. I think really taking the time to lay out that plan with a client in the beginning, and then working with them over the course of five years. Maybe not at every step, but to refer them to the best possible partnerships in your community to work with.

Senay Gebremedhin: Just to add to Nicole's advice, I think if you, again, the nursing guide is the only one out now for WES, but as we develop more of them, you could use them to help your clients who have different professions. A general resource that we've included, and it will be included in all of the career pathway guides, is a SMART goal. It's to help your clients identify and plan where they would want to end up and how to get there. One of the ways to manage expectations again, a credential evaluation costs money, going back to school costs money and time. It's really to help them see their steps to achieving their goals and so I think the best way to manage expectation is to help them identify how to get to where they would like to be and I think in the nursing guide and in the future other guides, we will definitely include a SMART goal and you could use that tool to help your clients plan for their career.

Hannah Carswell: All right, thank you both for that answer. I'll do one final question. Someone asked, "Do you have any advice for helping clients with no high school degree? Is there a GED program equivalent for refugees?"

Senay Gebremedhin: The only thing that I could say to that, and there isn't really much, I don't know if this is a response, but if your client has a diploma, a high school diploma or a degree, we always advise that they move forward, it's just a matter of finding recognition for it. If you know that your client has some document or if your client is able to prove that they've finished high school or some level of college, then just advise them to find a way to get recognition for their work and then move beyond what they've already achieved. Never to fall back.

I don't believe there are any resources specifically dedicated to refugees in helping them obtain a GED or an alternative high school diploma.

Nicole Redford: Just to add to that answer, I would say that your best bet is to seek out your local community college because I think that what you're kind of getting at is GED courses for low English proficient adults, and community colleges often have different kinds of GED courses that work with low English proficient adults and are offered at different points in time throughout the day or on the weekends that can accommodate a working adult's schedule.

Hannah Carswell: Thank you all for those answers. Now I'm just going to move on through a little housekeeping before we close the webinar. I wanted to briefly mention how this webinar fits into the Welcoming Standard, which is a new framework that Welcoming America has developed to help communities think through what they can be doing to create a more welcoming community, so this would fit into economic development portion of the Welcoming Standard, and these are the buckets that are covered in this standard, civic engagement, connected community, economic development, equitable access, education, government leadership and safe communities.

Coming up, Welcoming America will be hosting Welcoming Interactive and Welcoming Economies Convening in Louisville, Kentucky June 18th through 20th, so if you want to look into it, we'd love for you to consider attending.

Here is contact info for the speakers we heard from today. I want to thank all of the speakers for coming and presenting and sharing such a wealth of helpful information. I really learned a lot today myself, so thank you for taking your time to share with us.

Thank you all for attending. It was really a joy to see the conversations unfolding in the chat box and the connections being made. We really appreciate you taking the time to attend, and we'll be sending out a copy of the webinar recording and slides within the next few days. Thank you again, and have a great rest of your day.