

Assimilating a Diverse Commonwealth



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Project Outline

- Keys to Successful Integration
- VEC Recruitment Experience
- Recommendations
- Conclusion



Keys to Successful Integration

“...the United States has the best-educated taxi drivers and home health aides in the world.”

Lev Golinkin, Washington Post, 22 Oct 2016

Keys to Successful Integration

- *Steps to Success: Integrating Immigrant Professionals in the U. S. (2015)*
- Survey of 4000 successful immigrant professionals in 6 metro areas – what were keys to their success
- Consistent identification of 5 key elements – **English, social network, their credentials, our credentials, time**
- VDOE, VCCS, SCHEV, VEC, Immigration Services, Community-Based, Faith-based...



Keys to Successful Integration

Recommendation #3: “...we encourage *public agencies to look within government to identify potential opportunities for immigrant professionals to acquire valuable American work experience*

VEC Recruitment Experience

- Senior Economist Search
- Three Separate Recruitments
- Ten Interviews
- Ideal Candidate
- Immigration Barriers
- Resources to Assist Limited
- Suspended Search

Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

- Prohibits discrimination based upon citizenship status
 - No inquiries about applicant's immigration status prior to job offer
 - Must verify applicant's immigration status after job offer
- Prohibits hiring only U.S. citizens

Challenges for State Agencies

- Immigration Law -- Recognized specialty not currently available in the OAG
- DHRM manual on immigration issues -- $\frac{3}{4}$ of one page
- Agencies -- Little guidance on immigration legal and process requirements

Key Proposal

- Create the Office of the Immigration Ombudsman within the Dept. of Human Resource Management
- Relatively modest cost - 3 FTEs, including one experienced Immigration attorney
- Work directly with state agencies, not with individual immigrants
- Provide immigration education and information to state agencies
- Provide legal guidance to agencies in specific cases

Recommendations

- First Step: Needs Assessment Survey of State Agencies
 - ▶ Determine scope of the problem
- Addresses resource gap in state agency recruitments of immigrants
- Aid the transition from student visa to permanent work visa to citizen

Conclusions

- Immigrants constitute a growing share of the economy & electorate – 1 in 9 Virginians
- Account for hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue & consumer purchasing power
- Immigrants contribute to the strength of the Commonwealth
- Promoting success is complex and multidimensional
- Essential that we develop a welcoming environment
- Essential that we minimize social barriers (us vs. them) and enhance cultural understanding