

MARYLAND:

Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Innovation, and Welcoming Initiatives in the Old Line State

In Maryland, there is no doubt that immigrant entrepreneurs and innovators play an important role. Immigrant entrepreneurs bring in additional revenue, create jobs, and contribute significantly to the state's economy. Highly skilled immigrants are vital to the state's innovation industries, and to the metropolitan areas within the state, helping to boost local economies. Furthermore, local government, business, and non-profit leaders recognize the importance of immigrants in their communities and support immigration through local "welcoming" and integration initiatives.

Immigrant entrepreneurs contribute to Maryland's economy.

- From 2006 to 2010, there were 50,028 new immigrant business [owners](#) in Maryland,¹ and in 2010, [21.2 percent](#) of all business owners in Maryland were foreign-born.²
- In 2010, new immigrant business owners³ had a total net business [income](#) of \$2.8 billion, which is 16.3 percent of all net business income in the state.⁴
- Maryland is home to many successful companies with at least one founder who was an immigrant. Research by the Kauffman Foundation shows that immigrants started around [25 percent](#) of all engineering and technology companies in Maryland from 2006 to 2012.⁵
 - Furthermore, their research finds that between 2006 and 2012, [16 percent](#) of engineering and technology companies in Maryland were Chinese-founded, second only to California.⁶
- In 2010, the foreign-born share of business owners was [21 percent](#) in the Baltimore metropolitan area.⁷ In the case of Baltimore, the immigrant business ownership rate was higher than the metro area's foreign-born share of total population.

Highly skilled immigrants are vital to Maryland's innovation industries, which in turn helps lead American innovation and creates jobs.

- Immigrants contribute to Maryland's economic growth and competitiveness by earning degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields from the state's research universities. In 2009, almost [26.6 percent](#) of STEM graduates from the state's research-intensive universities were foreign-born, and almost 54.3 percent of graduates earning PhDs in engineering in Maryland were not born in the U.S.⁸

- In 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor certified 7,533 H-1B labor certification [applications](#) in Maryland, with an average annual wage of \$69,389,⁹ which is within range of Maryland's median household [income](#) of \$72,999, but higher than its per capita income of \$36,056.¹⁰
- An [expansion](#) of the high-skilled visa program would create an estimated 8,300 new jobs in Maryland by 2020.¹¹ By 2045, this expansion would [add](#) around \$3.4 billion to Gross State Product and increase personal income by more than \$3.3 billion.¹² The following are [examples](#) of metropolitan area demand for high-skilled foreign-born workers.
 - The Baltimore-Towson metropolitan area had 3,560 H-1B high-skilled visa [requests](#) in 2010-2011, with 61.4 percent of H-1B visa-holders working in STEM occupations.¹³ Major employers with a need for H-1B high-skilled workers include Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore City Public School System, University of Maryland-Baltimore, HH Medstar Health Inc., and Merkle Inc.
 - The Washington-Arlington-Alexandria metropolitan area, of which several Maryland counties and population centers are a part, had 14,569 H-1B visa [requests](#) in 2010-2011, with 64.4 percent of visa-holders working in STEM occupations.¹⁴ Major employers include several universities in the area.

While the numbers are compelling, they don't tell the whole story.

- Immigrant entrepreneurs not only contribute to large innovative companies, but to small business formation in local communities. In cities across Maryland, immigrant family-owned small businesses contribute to the vitality of their local communities. Although initially aimed at other immigrant customers, many businesses quickly see an expansion of their clientele to include a diverse array of immigrant and native-born customers alike.
 - For example, Sharad and Sonal Doshi, originally from India, employ around 100 people in various [businesses](#), including a Subway restaurant on South Market Street in downtown Frederick.¹⁵
- Maryland also attracts immigrant [tech entrepreneurs](#), as the following examples illustrate.
 - In Baltimore, Johan Sebastian Garcia, from Bogota, Colombia, started a [digital marketing company](#), Eldorado Tech, geared toward developing software for restaurants to reward their clients.¹⁶
 - In Rockville, Yan A. Su, from China, [started](#) GenProMarkers that provides biotechnology services to the Defense Department, the National Institutes of Health and other research centers.¹⁷ Specifically, his company uses biomarkers to measure disease progression to understand what treatments are most effective.

- In Silver Spring, Joan Wang, also from China, [launched](#) iDesign Engineering, Inc. over a dozen years ago. Her company works with various private developers in several states as well as contracting with the Maryland State Highway Administration and the Architect of the Capitol.¹⁸
- In Bethesda, Carmen Ortiz Larsen, born of Ecuadorian parents in Rome, Italy, is the [founder](#) and CEO of Aquas Inc., an information technology company.¹⁹ The company [focuses](#) on information technology solutions for public- and private-sector clients in the fields of agriculture and environmental science, healthcare, and transit and infrastructure.²⁰
- Regarding Hispanic-owned [business growth](#) overall, Raul Medrano, a business development specialist at the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development, noted that Census figures show that Hispanic-owned businesses in Maryland grew almost 68 percent from 2002 to 2007.²¹
 - As Medrano [stated](#), “It doesn’t surprise me that the percentages were so high. The entrepreneurship spirit in the Hispanic community is alive and well.” He also noted that immigrant communities are accustomed to “doing more with less...with taking risks...The mindset is to be resourceful, to seek opportunities, to adjust to change, to be flexible.”²²
- In Baltimore, the *Baltimore Sun* [stated](#) that “between 2000 and 2010, when the city’s overall population declined by more than 4 percent, the city’s Latino community grew by nearly 135 percent, according to the Baltimore City Hispanic Commission. In some South Baltimore and Southeast Baltimore neighborhoods, the percentage of Hispanic and Latino residents went from under 5 percent to more than 20 percent.”²³
 - Bill Villanueva, president of the Maryland Hispanic Business Conference, [described](#) how the community’s growing presence allows greater contributions to the local economy. He noted that since 2010, Hispanic-owned businesses in Maryland have increased from 21,000 to 40,000 in 2013, and that they represent the “fastest-growing business component” in Maryland. He also noted that “a city like Baltimore needs our tax base.”²⁴

In Maryland, some localities have begun recognizing and supporting immigration through local “welcoming” and integration initiatives.

- The statewide [Maryland Council for New Americans](#), created in December 2008, is an office of the state government whose goal is to review and recommend “new policies and practices to expedite immigrant integration into the economic and civic life of the State.”

- In August 2009, the Council issued a [report](#) about renewing immigrant integration in Maryland, with a particular emphasis on workforce, citizenship, financial services, and access to government services.²⁵ The Council provides information about a variety of organizations and resources that can help newcomers to Maryland better integrate into their new communities.
- The City of Baltimore is also encouraging ways to attract and welcome immigrants as part of the city's growth strategy. Recent immigrant welcoming work in Baltimore is based on the [findings](#) and recommendations in a [report](#) issued by Baltimore's Abell Foundation in 2002. The report's conclusion noted that "immigration is the key to reversing Baltimore's population decline."²⁶
 - In June of 2010, the Baltimore City Council [approved a resolution](#) opposing the "Secure Communities" federal immigration enforcement initiative. "Citing the city's rich immigrant history and recent progress fostering trust between local law enforcement and immigrant communities," the press release about the action said, "the resolution decries the federal program's record."²⁷
 - In March of 2012, Baltimore's Mayor [signed an executive order](#) to protect new Americans from discrimination. She stated, "Throughout Baltimore's great history, we have strived to be a place that welcomes foreign-born residents to participate fully in civic life, recognizing that our city's ethnic and cultural diversity is a key element to strong and growing neighborhoods."²⁸
- The Montgomery County Charles W. Gilchrist [Center for Cultural Diversity](#), an affiliate of Welcoming America's [Welcoming Cities and Counties](#) initiative, is the county's official welcome center for immigrants and newcomers.²⁹
 - The Center provides services to immigrants through partnerships with other organizations and through skilled volunteers. [Services include](#) information and referral services, English as a second language, workforce development, civic engagement, computer literacy, citizenship, and pro-bono legal assistance.³⁰

Endnotes

¹ Robert W. Fairlie, [Open for Business: How Immigrants are Driving Small Business Success in the United States](#) (New York: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2012).

² Ibid.

³ The sample of new immigrant business owners during this time period includes individuals who do not own a business in the first survey month and report starting a business in the second survey month with 15 or more hours worked per week.

⁴ Robert W. Fairlie, [Open for Business: How Immigrants are Driving Small Business Success in the United States](#) (New York: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2012).

⁵ Vivek Wadhwa, AnnaLee Saxenian, and F. Daniel Siciliano, [Then and Now: America's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Part VII](#) (Kansas City, MO: The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2012).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ David Dyssegaard Kallick, [Immigrant Small Business Owners: A Significant and Growing Part of the Economy](#) (Washington, DC: Fiscal Policy Institute, 2012).

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- ⁸ Partnership for a New American Economy, “[Map the Impact of Immigrants Across America: Maryland](#)” (New York: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2013).
- ⁹ Office of Foreign Labor Certification, [Annual Report: October 1, 2010 – September 30, 2011](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).
- ¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, “[State & County Quick Facts: Maryland](#)” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2011).
- ¹¹ Frederick R. Treyz, Corey Stottlemeyer, and Rod Motamedi, “[Key Components of Immigration Reform](#): An Analysis of the Economic Effects of Creating a Pathway to Legal Status, Expanding High-Skilled Visas, and Reforming Lesser-Skilled Visas” (Amherst, MA: Regional Economic Models, Inc., 2013).
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Neil G. Ruiz, Jill H. Wilson, and Shyamali Choudhury, [The Search for Skills: Demand for H-1B Immigrant Workers in U.S. Metropolitan Areas](#) (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2012).
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Nicholas C. Stern, “[Asian businesses on rise in Frederick Co.](#)” (Frederick, MD: *The Frederick News-Post*, February 27, 2012).
- ¹⁶ Maria-Pia Negro, “[Maryland, a hotbed for immigrant tech entrepreneurs](#)” (College Park, MD: *Capital News Service*, November 2, 2012).
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Kevin James Shay, “[Larsen applies physics to growing Bethesda business](#)” (Gaithersburg, MD: Post Community Media, LLC/Gazette.net, May 17, 2013).
- ²⁰ Aquas, Inc., “[Welcome to AQUAS](#)” (Bethesda, MD: Aquas, Inc., 2013).
- ²¹ Tami Le, “[Hispanic-owned businesses are on the rise in state](#)” (Easton, MD: *The Star Democrat*, October 3, 2010).
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Kevin Rector, “[At Latino Fest, fast-growing community takes stock](#)” (Baltimore, MD: *The Baltimore Sun*, June 25, 2013).
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Maryland Council for New Americans, [A Fresh Start: Renewing Immigrant Integration for a Stronger Maryland](#) (Baltimore, MD: Maryland Council for New Americans, 2009).
- ²⁶ Bruce A. Morrison and Paul Donnelly, [Attracting New Americans into Baltimore’s Neighborhoods: Immigration is the Key to Reversing Baltimore’s Population Decline](#) (Baltimore, MD: The Abell Foundation, 2002); Nancy Scola, “[The Rise of the New Baltimoreans](#)” (Philadelphia, PA: *Next City*, November 19, 2012).
- ²⁷ City of Baltimore, “[Baltimore Hispanic leaders commend city council for taking leadership against failed immigration enforcement program](#)” (Baltimore, MD: City of Baltimore, June 14, 2010).
- ²⁸ Caron A. Brace, “[Mayor Rawlings-Blake signs executive order to protect new Americans from discrimination](#),” (Baltimore, MD: City of Baltimore, March 2, 2012).
- ²⁹ Montgomery County Government, “[Montgomery County Charles W. Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity](#),” (Wheaton, MD: Montgomery County Government, 2013).
- ³⁰ Ibid.

Immigrant Entrepreneurs in:

Maryland

*In 2010, new immigrant
business owners generated*

**\$2.8
billion**

*in total net
business income*



50,028

*immigrants became new business
owners in Maryland
between 2006-2010*

21.2%

*of business owners in
Maryland are immigrants*

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