

NEW MEXICO: Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Innovation in the Land of Enchantment

In New Mexico, 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. Furthermore, highly skilled immigrants are vital to the state's innovation industries, and to the metropolitan areas within the state, helping to boost local economies.

Immigrant entrepreneurs contribute significantly to New Mexico's economy.

- From 2006 to 2010, there were 11,440 new immigrant business [owners](#) in New Mexico,¹ and in 2010, [12.6 percent](#) of all business owners in New Mexico were foreign-born.²
- In 2010, new immigrant business owners³ had a total net business [income](#) of \$389 million, which is 8.9 percent of all net business income in the state.⁴
- New Mexico is home to successful immigrant-founded companies, [including](#) two of the state's largest supermarket chains, El Mezquite and El Paisano.⁵

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

- In New Mexico, 45.1 percent of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) [graduates](#) at the state's research-intensive universities are foreign-born, and 60.5 percent of the state's engineering Ph.D. students are foreign-born.⁶
- In 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor certified 653 H-1B labor certification [applications](#) in New Mexico, with an average annual wage of \$71,063,⁷ which is higher than New Mexico's median household [income](#) of \$44,631 or per capita income of \$23,537.⁸
- An [expansion](#) of the high-skilled visa program would create an estimated 1,500 new jobs in New Mexico by 2020.⁹ By 2045, this expansion would [add](#) around \$654 million to Gross State Product and increase personal income by more than \$613 million.¹⁰ The following is an [example](#) of metropolitan area demand for high-skilled foreign-born workers.
 - The Albuquerque metropolitan area had 277 H-1B high-skilled visa [requests](#) in 2010-2011, with 53.7 percent of H-1B visa-holders working in STEM occupations.¹¹ A major employer with a need for H-1B high-skilled workers is the

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 towns across New Mexico, 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.
 - Sergio Bermudez and his brother, originally from Mexico, founded their first El Mezquite grocery store in 1998. Today, El Mezquite is one of the [fastest growing](#) Latino immigrant-owned businesses in the state, with six large market locations around central New Mexico employing more than 220 people and serving around 40,000 customers per week.¹²
 - In Santa Fe, immigrant-owned “mom-and pop” small [businesses](#) are found throughout the city, catering to the culinary, retail, and service needs of a diverse immigrant community. These businesses include the Mendoza family’s furniture store, Muebleria Familiar, on Cerrillos Road, Pedro Solis’ Guadalajara Grill, Sofia Trejo’s Zapatos Gala, Jesus Marquez’s Tortas Chihuas sandwich shop, and Mariola Mendoza’s La Tiendita.¹³
 - In Albuquerque, immigrant small business owners [representing](#) a variety of countries of origin add to the food, retail, and service offerings of the state’s largest city. Such immigrant-owned businesses include Song Choi’s (from South Korea) Hiland Coin-Op Laundry and Cleaners, Vicky Truong’s (from Vietnam) Saigon Restaurant, Gladys Manfredi’s (from Colombia) All the Americas grocery store, Jaime Flores’ (from Mexico) Carniceria Flores, Mahmoud and Manal Manasra’s (from Palestine) Petra Café and Restaurant, and Bounphom Limary’s (from Laos) Ta Lin Wholesale International Foods and Restaurant Supply.¹⁴

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 Partnership for a New American Economy, [“Map the Impact of Immigrants Across America: New Mexico”](#) (New York: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2013).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Office of Foreign Labor Certification, [Annual Report: October 1, 2010 – September 30, 2011](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, “[State & County Quick Facts: New Mexico](#)” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2011).

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 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).

¹² Partnership for a New American Economy, “[Map the Impact of Immigrants Across America: New Mexico](#)” (New York: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2013).

¹³ Barbara Ferry, “[The New Entrepreneurs](#): Immigrants from Mexico and Central America are opening businesses catering to their own growing community in Santa Fe” (Santa Fe, New Mexico: *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 2, 2005).

¹⁴ Debra Dominquez, “[Immigrants Invest in American Dream](#)” (Albuquerque, New Mexico: *Albuquerque Journal*, April 25, 2004).

Immigrant Entrepreneurs in:

New Mexico

*In 2010, new immigrant
business owners generated*

**\$389
million**

*in total net
business income*



12.6%

*of business owners in
New Mexico are immigrants*

Read more at ImmigrationPolicy.org



11,440

*immigrants became new business
owners in New Mexico
between 2006-2010*
