

February 2014

**WYOMING:
Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Innovation in the Equality State**

In Wyoming, there is no doubt that immigrant entrepreneurs and innovators play an important role. Immigrant entrepreneurs bring in additional revenue, create jobs, and contribute to the state's economy. Additionally, highly skilled immigrants are vital to the state's innovation industries, and to towns and cities within the state, helping to boost local economies.

Immigrant entrepreneurs contribute to Wyoming's economy.

- From 2006 to 2010, there were 809 new immigrant business [owners](#) in Wyoming,¹ and in 2010, [2.6 percent](#) of all business owners in Wyoming were foreign-born.²
- In 2010, new immigrant business owners³ had a total net business [income](#) of \$60 million, which is 3.3 percent of all net business income in the state.⁴
- Wyoming is home to successful companies with at least one founder who was an immigrant or child of an immigrant, [including](#) well-known companies such as the Nebraska-based Kiewit Corporation. The Kiewit Corporation has two large mining subsidiaries based in Wyoming, Black Butte and Buckskin Mining Companies, who employ more than 2,000 people.⁵

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

- Immigrants contribute to Wyoming'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 percent](#) of STEM graduates in the state were foreign-born.⁶
- By 2020, Wyoming may be short more than 3,500 registered nurses. This [shortage](#) would leave 63 percent of nursing positions in the state vacant. Physician shortages are also a possibility in Wyoming, with access to primary care in rural areas a particular point of concern.⁷
 - Immigrants are already helping alleviate healthcare workforce gaps and may play a crucial role in stemming shortages in the state's healthcare workforce in the future. In 2010, for example, around [11 percent](#) of physicians in Wyoming were graduates of foreign medical schools.⁸

- In 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor certified 97 H-1B labor certification [applications](#) in Wyoming, with an average annual wage of \$83,934,⁹ which is higher than both Wyoming's median household [income](#) of \$56,573 and its per capita income of \$28,858.¹⁰
- An [expansion](#) of the high-skilled visa program would create an estimated 620 new jobs in Wyoming by 2020.¹¹ By 2045, this expansion would [add](#) around \$252 million to Gross State Product and increase personal income by more than \$244 million.¹²

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 Wyoming, 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.
 - In Casper, Alex Rosales, [originally](#) from Mexico,¹³ [started](#) Tacos Mexico in 2000. In 2010, he opened Panaderia Mexico, the first Mexican bakery in Casper, offering a variety of traditional pastries and breads.¹⁴ Rosales also [opened](#) Crossroads 307, a bar and dance venue.¹⁵
 - Also in Casper, in addition to Rosales' Mexican cuisine, the town has seen a growth in the number and variety of immigrant and [ethnic restaurants](#), including Dsasumo, House of Sushi, Lime Leaf Vietnamese, Monsoon Indian Cuisine, Lai Thai, and Shanghai Palace.¹⁶
 - In Jackson, Mario Suella, originally from Peru, in addition to his day job in the office of a landscaping company, [started a business](#) designing and building websites for various business clients. Also in Jackson, Carmen Rodriguez, originally from Chile, opened Alterations by Carmen, a tailoring business, in 2012.¹⁷
 - In Cheyenne, the state's capital, Yong Hamilton, originally from Korea, has [opened](#) several small businesses over the last few decades. One of Hamilton's latest business ventures includes a bridal boutique.¹⁸

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: Wyoming](#)" (New York: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2013).

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- ⁶ Information Technology Industry Council, [*Help Wanted: The Role of Foreign Workers in the Innovation Economy*](#) (Washington, D.C.: Information Technology Industry Council, 2013).
- ⁷ Partnership for a New American Economy, [*Map the Impact of Immigrants Across America: Wyoming*](#) (New York: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2013).
- ⁸ Ibid.
- 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: Wyoming*](#) (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 Associated Press, [*Hispanic dances popular pastime in Casper*](#) (Gillette, WY: *Gillette News Record*, November 5, 2013).
- ¹⁴ Joshua Wolfson, [*Restaurateur finds interest in Mexican bakery specialties*](#) (Billings, MT: *Billings Gazette*, October 16, 2010).
- ¹⁵ Associated Press, [*Hispanic dances popular pastime in Casper*](#) (Gillette, WY: *Gillette News Record*, November 5, 2013).
- ¹⁶ Joshua Wolfson, [*Ethnic restaurants on the rise in Casper*](#) (Billings, MT: *Billings Gazette*, December 7, 2010).
- ¹⁷ Associated Press, [*Latino entrepreneurs on the rise in Jackson*](#) (Billings, MT: *Billings Gazette*, May 4, 2013).
- ¹⁸ Wyoming Tribune-Eagle, [*Dress success for Korean Immigrant*](#) (Cheyenne, WY: *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle*, April 15, 2013).

Immigrant Entrepreneurs in:

Wyoming

*In 2010, new immigrant
business owners generated*

**\$60
million**

*in total net
business income*



2.6%

*of business owners in
Wyoming are immigrants*

809

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

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