



WORLD EDUCATION SERVICES

EMPOWERING INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED INDIVIDUALS TO ACHIEVE

WORLD EDUCATION SERVICES
ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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JAIPUR, INDIA

India is one of two Asian population giants that send substantial numbers of immigrants and students abroad. Urban centers like Jaipur are home to a growing and increasingly mobile middle class.





WORLD EDUCATION SERVICES

Founded in 1974, [World Education Services Inc.](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people with international education to achieve their higher education and professional goals.

OUR MISSION

WES advances the global mobility and integration of people into academic and professional settings by evaluating and advocating for the recognition of international educational qualifications, and enabling individuals to fully utilize their education.

Since 1974, WES has sought to enable individuals to fully utilize their international educational qualifications and skills in new contexts. 2018 was a year in which the organization's long, deep commitment to this work began to come to life in new and exciting ways. These included:

- The successful implementation of a yearlong Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) to help communities across the U.S. enable skilled immigrants to find employment that makes the most of their education and training
- The launch of the WES Gateway Program in Canada to validate and assess the education of individuals who have been displaced by political unrest, conflict, and natural disasters and who are thus unable to obtain access to their educational documents
- The launch of WES digital badges, a tool to help our clients securely and easily share their academic qualifications via LinkedIn and other online platforms
- Preparation for the launch of the high-impact USD\$30 million WES Mariam Assefa Fund to support efforts to dismantle the barriers that impede the professional integration and economic advancement of immigrants and refugees

These efforts were all fueled by a steady heartbeat: our day-to-day work of evaluating academic credentials for individual clients from all over the world. We received more than 400,000 applications for credential evaluation in 2018—a 39 percent increase over the year prior. These evaluations are tangible proof that highly skilled and ambitious individuals are increasingly mobile and willing to seek opportunities

anywhere that their education and talent is valued and welcomed. WES is proud to serve as the portal through which their qualifications are recognized, and proud to help to enable them to pursue their goals and dreams.

For WES, 2018 also represented a year of change in leadership, both at the board and the executive staff level. In July, Shamira Madhany joined us as Managing Director of WES Canada. Mariam Assefa announced her retirement later in the summer, kicking off a search for a new leader who will, beginning in 2019, steward WES through its next phase of growth in impact and operations. These shifts have prompted us to look back with pride at WES' long history, and with gratitude for longtime staff who have shaped our mission—and to listen to new voices and ideas about all that WES can do in the years ahead.

Sincerely,



MARIAM ASSEFA
Executive Director and CEO



HANS DE WIT
Chair, WES Board of Trustees



THE PEOPLE WE SERVE CANADA

1.03 MILLION

Projected target for immigration to Canada between 2019 and 2021, according to 2018 numbers from the national government

4.4 MILLION

Estimated number of immigrants to Canada, age 25 and older, with a post-secondary diploma or college degree



Almost half of all immigrants between the ages of 25 and 64 hold a bachelor's degree or higher.



1 in 5 Canadians is born outside of Canada.

I joined WES Canada in July 2018, at a time of some exciting developments both inside and outside our organization.

Canada was in the process of signing two international agreements that will guide the treatment of immigrants for years to come. The Lisbon Recognition Convention obliges signatories to recognize qualifications of immigrants, even those without official documents. The UN's Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, meanwhile, is the first globally negotiated cooperative framework aimed at "making migration work for all."

In the meantime, the daily business of WES Canada continued to expand: The numbers of applications we received for credential evaluations grew by 75 percent in just one year. This growth is based on a reputation for rigorous standards of quality, integrity, and dedicated service. WES Canada broke new ground with the launch of the WES Gateway Program, a bold step toward overcoming barriers faced by refugees and displaced individuals who lack full documentation of their academic credentials. The Gateway Program is opening doors previously closed to those who could have ended up in low paying jobs or on social assistance.

As we continue to push this work forward in 2019 and beyond, we have an opportunity – even an obligation – to build on this momentum. More than ever, we're called upon to anticipate the evolving needs of the highly skilled immigrants we serve, evaluate how we serve them, and monitor and analyze the environment in which we do our work. This means, crucially, identifying new ways of bridging gaps between skilled immigrants and potential employers, and exploring new ways of assessing competency and skills – an effort that WES Canada has begun.

Canada is at a moment in history that presents great opportunity, great responsibility, and some risk to those of us who work on issues related to immigrant integration. Canada's labour force is aging, and the supply of skilled labour is dwindling. As more people are displaced by conflict, political unrest, and natural disaster, the profile of immigrants evolves; so, too, do the needs and expectations of potential employers. At the same time, recent and potential political change at all levels of government may impact labour, immigration, and post-secondary education policies. The role of technological innovation – in terms of emerging capabilities around secure digital delivery of academic credentials and technology-enabled document authentication – adds yet another layer of complexity.

In this environment of change, WES Canada will ground its work in the true needs of our clients. Research and advocacy must sustain and drive everything we do. To craft effective policy and programs, we need to explore ways to monitor and assess value to stakeholders, and to ensure effectiveness in building understanding of how immigrants contribute to Canada's economy.

I am confident that WES Canada is well served by the energy, expertise and dedication of a diverse, committed, and growing team. I'm excited and energized by the possibilities of the coming year, and I look forward to building our capabilities and working with our colleagues in Canada and the U.S.



SHAMIRA MADHANY

Deputy Executive Director and Managing Director,
WES Canada



There are
2 million
underemployed
or unemployed
skilled immigrants
in the United
States, according
to the Migration
Policy Institute.

If there's one term to describe the experience of WES Global Talent Bridge in 2018 it would have to be *momentum*. We witnessed momentum in the growth of the quantity *and* quality of our interactions with partners; momentum in our engagement with the state, local, national, and global policy worlds; and momentum in the development and rollout of resources for skilled immigrants.

The best part of all this momentum? Every bit of it was focused on helping newcomers leverage their training, achieve their professional goals, and contribute their talents to their full potential in their new communities.

Last year eight communities across the country received customized technical assistance from WES Global Talent Bridge and our expert national partners as part of a pilot of the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program. Each community took on one or more tasks to help optimize their work of integrating skilled immigrants. The pilot was a resounding success. The communities addressed their local goals and developed and strengthened partnerships with like-minded organizations on a national level.

This year a second cohort of eight communities is now receiving training and focusing on similar tasks, while those from the pilot year (we proudly call them "alumni") continue their progress. They will help us build what we envision will be a community-by-community, state-by-state *national* approach to achieve meaningful skilled immigrant integration.

One of our long-held objectives is to survey and codify the field of skilled immigrant integration. To help accomplish this goal, we host IMPRINT, a coalition of practitioners, educators, and

advocates who help immigrants fully establish themselves in the U.S. The coalition engages with employers, policy makers, and others to fully utilize immigrant talent.

In addition to ongoing web-based seminars on a variety of topics for immigrants and the professional community that helps them, we produce several essential resources developed expressly for new Americans. Our *Pathways* series provides guidance to internationally trained professionals seeking to use their education in the U.S. Each of the guides explores career pathways related to a field, as well as alternative and related careers, and academic options. The guides feature strategies for achieving career success; licensing and certification requirements; interactive worksheets and guides; and links to helpful resources. In 2018 we began to research the fields of architecture, accounting, pharmacy, dentistry, information technology, and allied health. We expect to release guides for each of those fields in 2019. They will accompany existing guides in nursing, education, and engineering.

All of this momentum comes at an especially critical time in the United States. As federal efforts to fully integrate immigrants have come to a near standstill, we are especially grateful to be able to continue our work on behalf of new Americans. We look forward to expanded efforts in 2019 and beyond.



PAUL FELTMAN

Deputy Executive Director
Global Talent Policy
and Programs



THE PEOPLE WE SERVE UNITED STATES

14.7 MILLION

Estimated number of immigrants to the U.S., age 25 and older, with a post-secondary diploma or college degree (2015)

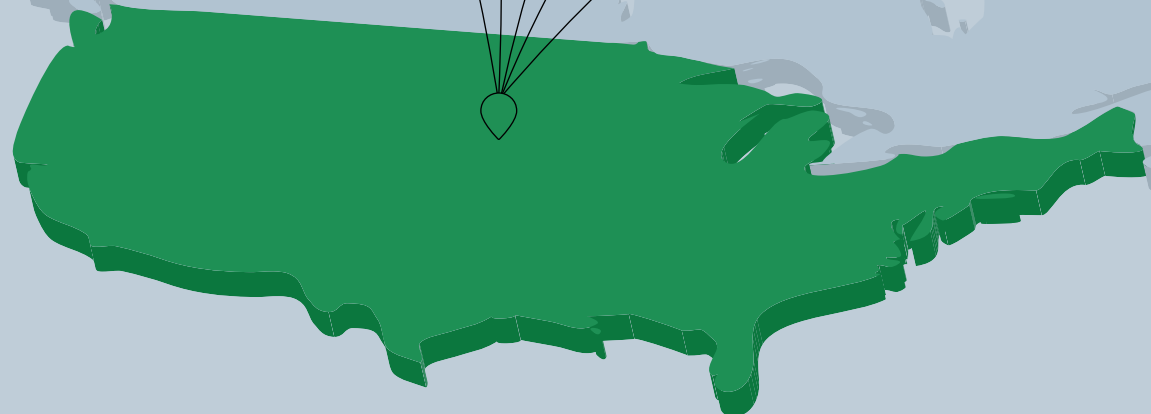


1.09 MILLION

Estimated number of international students enrolled in higher education in the United States in 2017/18— a 1.5 percent increase over the previous year

2 MILLION

Number of underemployed or unemployed skilled immigrants in the U.S.



Our Work



SOUND POLICY: THE KEY TO CUSTOMERS' ABILITY TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THEIR ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL GOALS

World Education Services provides our customers with a simple document – a credential evaluation report – that stands as credible proof of academic accomplishment, no matter where in the world their studies were completed.

Employers, higher education institutions, licensing bodies, and governments – all recognize that a WES credential evaluation report attests to the quality of the credentials claimed by an applicant. They use the reports to make admission and hiring decisions. They trust our evaluations.

We have earned that trust by completing nearly two million credential evaluations over 45 years. And we work to renew it every day through research, the use of standardized policies, and ongoing environmental scanning to monitor and respond to developments in the field.

Our staff members in the Knowledge Management and Training Department are responsible for this work. They monitor incoming documents for patterns of irregularity. They compare irregularities against samples in our proprietary database of more than 45,000 academic institutions, one million courses, and 1,600 grading scales from around the world. They contact the issuing institutions or far-flung ministries of education to learn more. They consult with staff members who have deep expertise in the affected education system.

If warranted, new policies are put in place to address the emergent pattern of irregularities. The goal is to suppress the proliferation of fraudulent academic credentials and protect both credential evaluation applicants and the institutions, employers, and others who receive and rely on WES credential evaluations.

This process helps to ensure that our credential evaluations are current, accurate, and fair, that they are trusted, and that our customers can move forward with their academic and professional goals.

CREDENTIAL APPLICATION VOLUME

Nearly eightfold growth in credential evaluation applications from 2010 to 2018 is testament to the fact that WES credential evaluation reports are widely trusted, valued, and used.

413,000
2018

297,000
2017

70,000 2013
56,000 2010

OUR TECHNOLOGY: ENABLING PRIVACY, GLOBAL MOBILITY, AND WES CUSTOMERS

Effective use of technology is integral to the WES mission. The WES IT Department seeks to continually improve the quality and efficiency of WES services and the experience of our clients across a range of projects.

Credential evaluation has historically been – and continues to be – a very paper-intensive operation, although one for which digital technologies hold enormous potential. WES has long seen a substantial opportunity for innovation in the secure transmission of digital documents directly from issuing authorities in the many countries that WES applicants come from.

In 2018, we made substantial progress toward recognizing that opportunity by building a secure digital portal that allows the Chinese Ministry of Education (CHESICC) to upload Chinese applicants' qualifications directly to WES. This tool – eUpload – enables WES to streamline document receipt and acceptance processes from one of our top sending countries. It also considerably shortens the time that these customers wait for evaluations, and paves the way for expansion into other major markets.

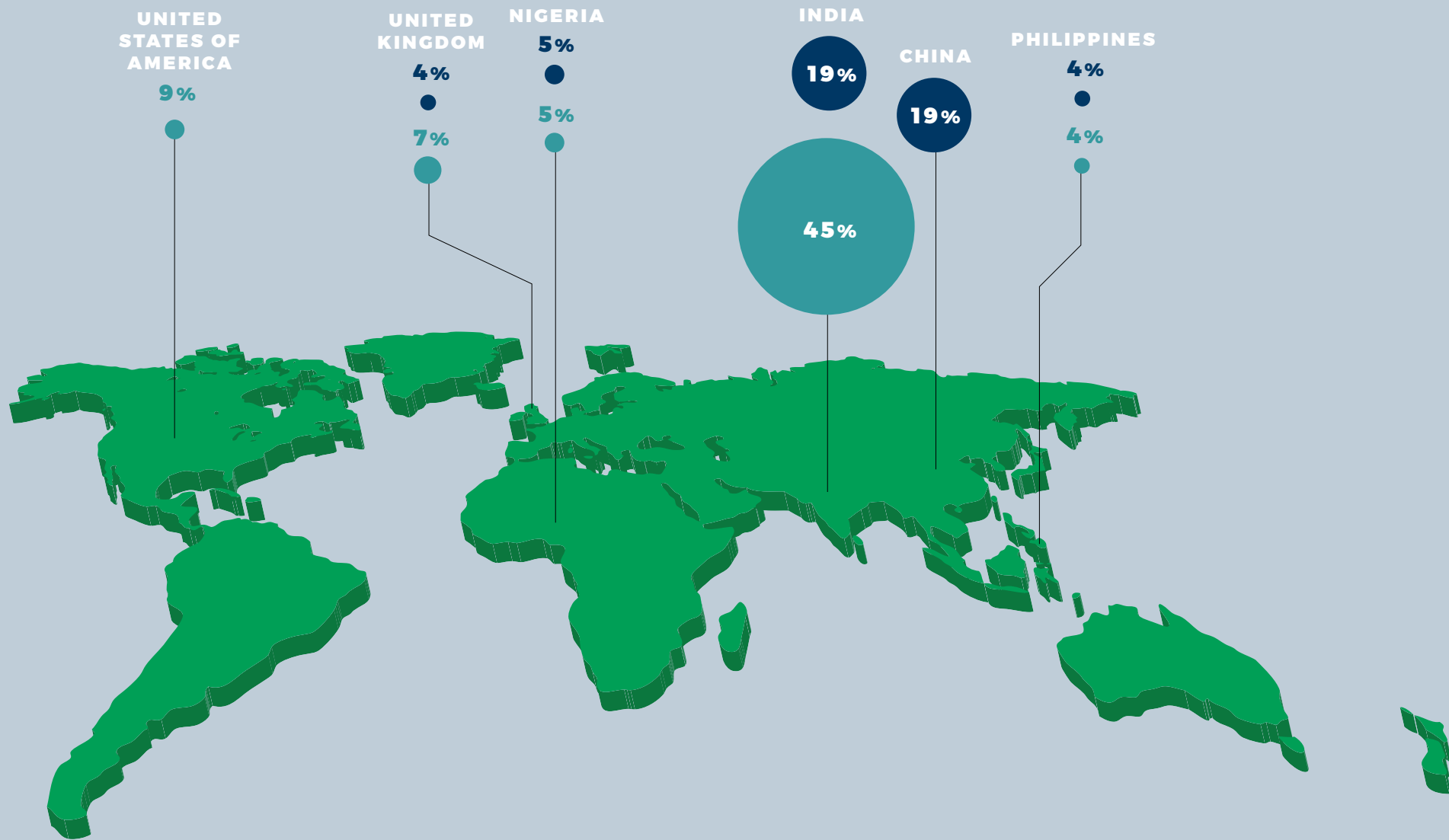
Another IT focus in 2018 was enhanced data protection. Security and compliance are paramount values in working with sensitive customer data. WES makes ongoing investments in ensuring state-of-the-art cybersecurity systems and in diligent

maintenance of comprehensive privacy and confidentiality protocols and policies. In early 2018, that effort saw the IT team work around-the-clock to ensure full compliance with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation.

The IT team also focused on other aspects of customer experience in 2018. The team redesigned WES' online application, simplifying the user experience and providing new self-service tools to enable customers to more easily find the information they need. IT also helped to launch WES digital badges – a new offering which allows customers to securely and transparently share proof of their international education credentials on social media platforms like LinkedIn or Facebook. More than 35,000 customers have made use of these digital badges since the launch.

IT also participated in mission-driven initiatives such as the WES Gateway Program, which helps refugees and other displaced individuals obtain credential evaluation reports.

Finally, the IT team laid the groundwork for more exciting innovations in 2019. These include the development of a WES mobile app, and of a mechanism to securely share credential evaluation reports through Slate, a CRM system used by hundreds of college and university admissions departments.



TOP SENDING COUNTRIES FOR WES APPLICANTS IN 2018

● U.S. ● CANADA

WES received 413,259 credential evaluation applications in 2018. China, India, Nigeria, the U.K., and the Philippines were the top five countries of origin for U.S. applicants.

India, the U.S., the U.K., Nigeria, and the Philippines were the top five countries of origin for applicants to Canada.

Ensuring the security and privacy of documents received from around the world is fundamental to the way WES operates.

THE WES GATEWAY PROGRAM

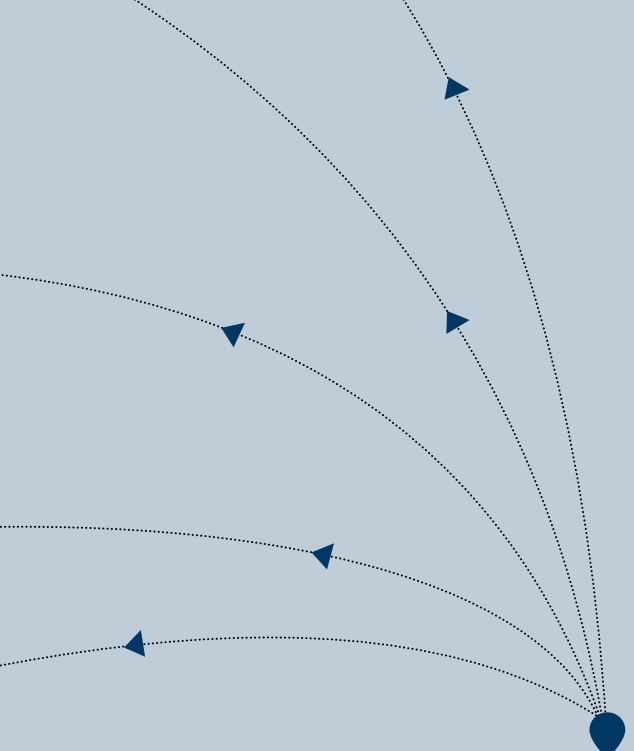
World Education Services launched its WES Gateway Program in Canada on October 24, 2018. Through the program, WES is able to provide credential evaluation reports to highly educated individuals who were forced to flee their homes without access to verifiable academic documents.

At launch, the program served eligible individuals who:

- Could provide some credible proof of academic attainment, including complete or incomplete transcripts, a student identification card, degree certificate, or professional license
- Were referred to WES by a designated referral partner
- Were educated in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine, or Venezuela

With a WES evaluation report in hand, individuals from these countries will have a chance to continue their education or seek jobs that make use of their educational and professional achievements. The program allows them to move forward with their lives, and fully integrate into their new communities.

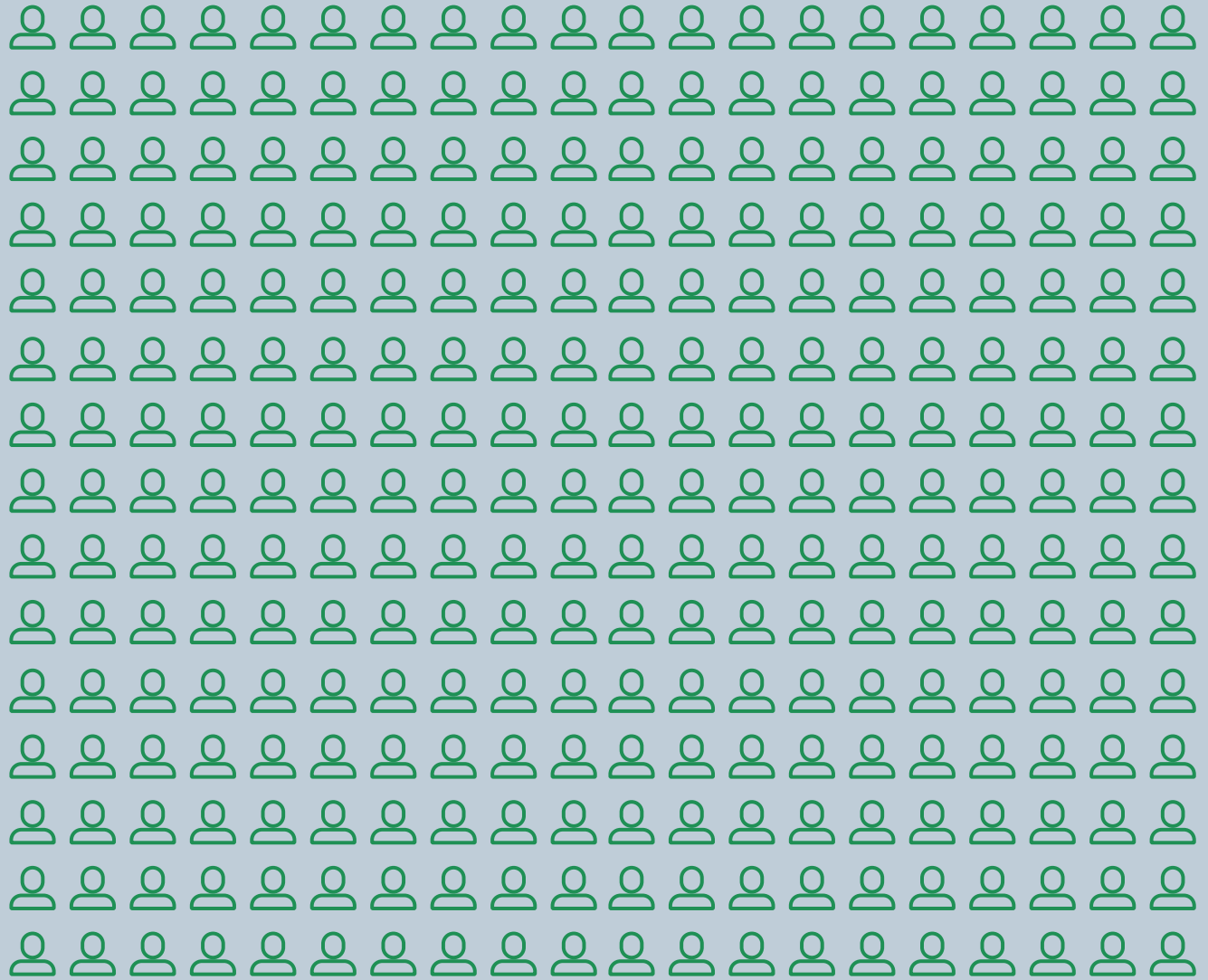
The WES Gateway Program will launch in the U.S. in 2019.



44,400

Estimated number of people
**forced to flee their
homes each day**
due to conflict and other crises

 =100



UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT FOR SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION

In July 2018, UN member states finalized the text of the first-ever Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, a response to the fact that there are nearly 258 million people on the move worldwide. The Canadian government signed the agreement in late 2018. UN member states formally adopted the nonbinding convention in December.

The compact emphasizes the importance of credential recognition as a critical enabler of successful integration of migrants into their new communities. WES is proud that ongoing advocacy and expert feedback by WES staff and leadership helped to shape the final agreement, and believes that its adoption will help to further our long-term objective of encouraging the recognition of international educational credentials and enabling the individuals we serve to fully utilize their education.

RESPONDING TO A WORLD IN TURMOIL



VENEZUELA

1,600

professors have been forced to leave Venezuela's main public universities since 2012

UKRAINE

26

higher education institutions have been forced to relocate because of violence

ERITREA

An estimated

5,000

Eritreans leave the country every month (as of 2016)

SYRIA

An estimated

100,000

university-qualified Syrian refugees are rebuilding their lives around the world

AFGHANISTAN

Approximately

2.6 M

refugees from Afghanistan are rebuilding their lives around the world

TURKEY

485

academic and administrative personnel were dismissed by the Turkish government from December 2017 through July 2018

IRAQ

Approximately

84%

of universities had been looted, burned, or destroyed by 2005



Sources: Washington Office on Latin America, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Council on Foreign Relations, UNHCR, Institute of International Education (IIE), Scholars at Risk, Centre for Research on Globalization

SKILLED IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION PROGRAM (SIIP) 2018

Lasting policy change often takes root well below the federal level. That's why, in 2018, WES Global Talent Bridge decided to expand its work to include direct and sustained partnership with select local communities. These communities already had programs in place to actively support the integration of skilled immigrants into their economies, but needed targeted support to help move the needle faster and further. We approach this work through a new initiative, the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP). In its first year, SIIP provided support to eight communities.

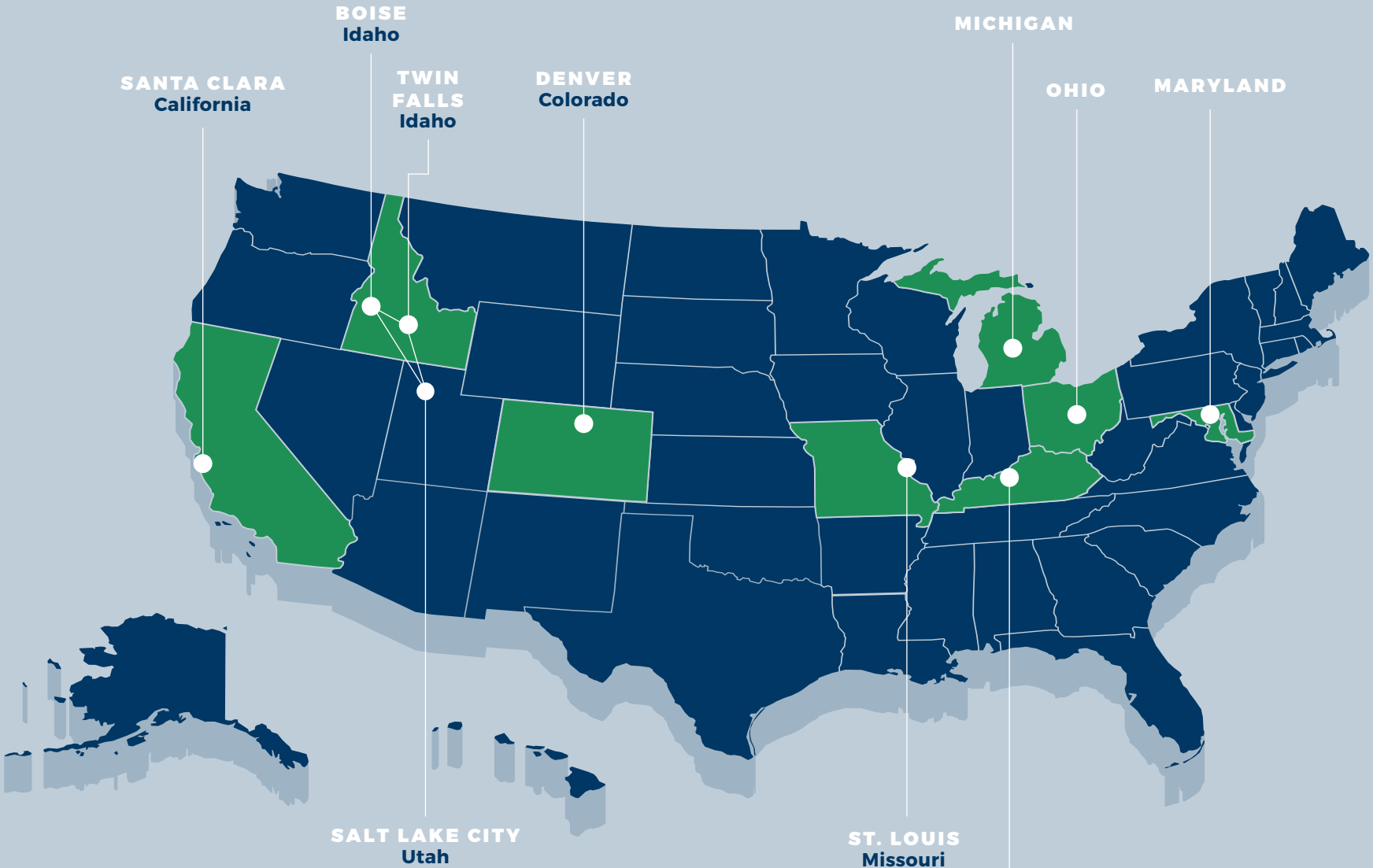
The communities that were part of the program in its pilot year were Denver, Colorado; Louisville, Kentucky; Santa Clara, California; St. Louis, Missouri; Boise, Idaho, and its regional partners Twin Falls, Idaho, and Salt Lake City, Utah, and the states of Ohio, Michigan, and Maryland. The yearlong effort provided participating communities across the country with hands-on coaching, training, and technical assistance.

SIIP also brought leaders from each of the eight communities together, so that they could learn from and build on one another's expertise and experiences. Over the course of the year, each community set and achieved goals such as:

- **DEVELOPING GUIDES** to help skilled immigrants navigate employment in fields that have strict licensure and certification requirements, such as health care
- **ENGAGING LOCAL EMPLOYERS** to ensure that they understand the value of the skilled immigrant talent pool already in their backyards
- **WORKING WITH STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES** to develop policies that address barriers to employment among skilled immigrants
- **DEVELOPING PROGRAMS** to help skilled immigrants overcome short-term barriers, such as the steep licensing fees sometimes associated with the training needed to obtain licensure and certification

The program also brought pilot participants to Toronto to learn from their peers in Canada. This cross-border collaboration drew on the expertise of WES Global Talent Bridge staff and partners in Toronto to help participants identify new interventions, such as microloan programs, to ensure that internationally educated immigrants are more readily able to find meaningful jobs and contribute their skills to economies in need.

At the end of 2018, WES identified a new class of SIIP participants to make up the 2019 cohort: Anchorage, Alaska; San Diego, California; Lincoln, Nebraska; Des Moines, Iowa; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Boston, Massachusetts; Portland, Maine; and the state of Texas.



SKILLED IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION PROGRAM 2018 PARTICIPANTS

In 2018, WES Global Talent Bridge partnered with these eight communities across the country that work to advance skilled immigrant integration in the workforce.

OUR PRODUCTS: INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR OUR CUSTOMERS

World Education Services is committed to helping internationally educated individuals contribute their skills and talents to their new communities. Product development is one key to empowering these individuals. In 2018, WES thus established a dedicated Product Management team. The team is charged with understanding, at a deep level, the problems our customers face, and with identifying the tools that will help them most, and then designing and launching effective solutions as expediently as possible. The team launched its first product, WES digital badges, in late 2018. These free digital badges enable WES customers to easily and securely share proof of their international educational qualifications, through LinkedIn and other social media platforms, with employers and others. The team also made substantial progress toward the Q1 2019 launch of our new WES App that enables WES customers to track the status of their applications on demand.

OUR PUBLICATIONS

World Education Services publishes research, trainings, blogs, and newsletters to help individual students and immigrants, as well as partner organizations and other professionals.

In 2018, our research examined the impact of new U.S. immigration policies on international student enrollment and the international student experience at U.S. institutions. For the research report, *Navigating a New Paradigm for International Student Recruitment*, WES surveyed 139 international enrollment professionals to come up with actionable recommendations to better support students and mitigate potential declines in international enrollments.

WES Global Talent Bridge also published a report looking at how skilled immigrants could help to address teacher shortages in key fields and communities across the U.S. The report, *Can Immigrant Professionals Help Reduce Teacher Shortages in the U.S.?* explored the role of alternative teacher certification programs in helping to certify immigrant professionals as teachers. A third report, *A Way Forward for Refugees*, examined the findings from a 2016-2017 pilot project to evaluate the credentials of 337 refugees who had fled the conflict in Syria. The pilot, which was conducted in Canada, provided insights that enabled the launch of the WES Gateway Program later in the year.

WES also publishes a number of blogs and newsletters that serve individuals and partner organizations. These include:

- **WORLD EDUCATION NEWS AND REVIEWS (WENR)** For 32 years, WENR has provided partner organizations with news, analysis of global developments in higher education, and country-specific profiles of the education systems in countries around the world.
- **WES ADVISOR** is a biweekly newsletter that provides information, tools, and advice for international students and skilled immigrants so they can make informed decisions about immigrating to or studying or working in the U.S. or Canada.
- **THE BRIDGE** provides community organizations and public agencies that assist skilled immigrants with news of relevant developments from across the field, including highlights of innovative programs, policies, and practices.

WES also helps to build the capacity and expertise of others working to better support international students and help immigrants integrate into the workforce. To that end, we deliver in-person workshops in New York, San Francisco, and Toronto throughout the year. In 2018, we also offered more than two dozen free webinars.



**WES 2018 Impact:
Empowering Individuals**



Omotola Akinlade

EXPRESS ENTRY APPLICANT



Home Country
NIGERIA



Countries of Education
NIGERIA AND UNITED KINGDOM



Now In
NIGERIA

I have an advanced diploma in human resources management from the University of Lagos in Nigeria and a bachelor’s degree in the same subject from the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. I want a better life and new start. I believe the Canadian experience is best for my family which is why I’m applying to immigrate to Canada. I needed an educational credential assessment as part of the immigration process. My friend told me about WES.

Initially, it took a while to receive my evaluation because my documents were not sent as quickly as I expected by my school in Nigeria. It took about two or three months before WES received documents and verified them. That was the hardest part of the whole process. Once the documents were verified, however, the evaluation process was quick. It gave me peace of mind.

I felt ecstatic when I received my evaluation report in January! If I’m going to live in

Canada, I don’t want my credentials and educational qualifications to be undervalued. With an evaluation I can prove that what I have is equal to a Canadian degree. It makes me feel secure knowing there are future possibilities for me.

As someone who has been in school for years who now wants to continue education and work professionally in Canada, having a credential evaluation is critical. An evaluation gives you leverage and puts you at the same level as someone with Canadian education.

I’m in the queue for Express Entry. I hope to find a job in which I can use my education. I also hope to go back to school and get a master’s degree and, eventually, a PhD. Ultimately, I wish to become a lecturer.

I’ve always wanted to change my environment and experience life in another part of the world. I hope, with the help of my evaluation, I will get that chance.

“ I BELIEVE THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE IS BEST FOR MY FAMILY.”



LAGOS, NIGERIA

There were 12,693 students from Nigeria studying in the U.S. during the 2017-2018 academic year, while 9,891 Nigerians studied in Canada in 2018. In 2017, there were 5,130 Nigerians in the Express Entry pool who were invited to apply for permanent residence in Canada, according to the Canadian government.





Wid Sabir

GATEWAY EVALUATION RECIPIENT



**Home
Country**
IRAQ



**Country of
Education**
IRAQ



Now In
TORONTO,
ONTARIO

I finished high school in Iraq in 1983. At the time, Iraq was at war and I was immediately drafted into the army. I spent nearly 10 years in the military. After leaving the army, I lived in different countries but when Saddam Hussein's regime ended I decided to go back home.

I was expecting a better life after the end of the dictatorship. Instead my family and I were victims of sectarian violence. I was traveling to work with colleagues one day when our vehicle was stopped by insurgents and they opened fire on us. I lost my best friend in that incident. Later, my son was abducted and that was the end of it. We moved to Syria in 2006.

I have a brother in Canada who offered to sponsor my family. We arrived in Canada in 2009, and I worked as an Information Specialist for a non-profit that helps newcomers. After a few years, I decided to look for other employment. I was offered a position with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), but they wanted my high school diploma.

As soldiers in Iraq, we had access to higher education. I was lucky enough to get my bachelor's degree in English literature. Unfortunately, I did not have any documentation of that study or of my high school studies. After two wars, I didn't even know if the school I had attended was still standing.

After a few months, my friend was able to get a copy of my high school diploma. I submitted an application to WES for an evaluation but WES was unable to verify my credential. I was extremely upset that I might lose a good job opportunity because I couldn't prove my high school education. That is when I heard about the WES Gateway Program from a friend. It's required that you apply through a WES partner, so I worked closely with ACCES Employment. WES was able to provide an evaluation and equivalency of my high school education. I was thrilled when I received it. I immediately sent a copy directly to the recruiter at TTC.

**“WES WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE
AN EVALUATION AND EQUIVALENCY
OF MY HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION.
I WAS THRILLED.”**



TORONTO, CANADA

Toronto is home to more than 17 percent of recent immigrants to Canada. The total number of immigrants entering Canada each year is expected to reach 340,000 by 2020, according to the Canadian government.



Mekonnen Tesfaye

PHD CANDIDATE, UNIVERSITY OF THE CUMBERLANDS, KENTUCKY

 **Home Country**
ETHIOPIA

 **Countries of Education**
ETHIOPIA AND NORWAY

 **Now In**
KENTUCKY

I am an Ethiopian. I was born and raised in Ethiopia, and I studied my bachelor’s degree in public administration and development management in Addis Ababa University – the top university in the country.

After working five years for different non-governmental organizations, I moved to Norway to pursue my master’s degree. I studied at the University of Oslo Norway in international community health. Immediately after I graduated, I got an offer from UNICEF as an international consultant and state lead for the polio eradication program based in Nigeria. I worked there for about two years before I moved to the U.S.

When I first arrived, things were not as expected. Despite the fact that I had a lot of professional experience and a master’s degree from one of the most prestigious universities in the world, without a credential evaluation it wasn’t easy for me to continue with my PhD or get a professional job.

Before I got my evaluation, I applied to universities and to agencies and employers in the D.C. area. Most of them were not interested

enough to even invite me for an interview. But once I could prove I had an education which is equivalent with a U.S. education, things were different.

It was tremendous that WES changed my life in this way. It is not only a credential evaluation agency, it’s really a bridge that connects skilled immigrants to opportunities.

One of the things that made my life easy was the digital badge that WES provided. It gave me a sense of empowerment and energy. I got it a few months ago. The day I got it, I immediately used it.

Now I am getting a PhD. Once I finish, my long-term objective is broad-based research and developing my advocacy organization, which is called Jantla. It means “sharing ideas.” I started it with two friends to promote the idea that immigrants with relevant skills can contribute in a very meaningful way, rather than working in low-level jobs because they lack information or because the system is hard to penetrate.

“ WES IS REALLY
A BRIDGE THAT CONNECTS
SKILLED IMMIGRANTS TO
OPPORTUNITIES.”



**ADDIS ABABA,
ETHIOPIA**

The number of students from Ethiopia enrolled in higher education programs abroad increased from 3,003 in 1998 to 6,453 in 2017, according to UNESCO.

ChildFund
Ethiopia



Sandeep Swaminathan

**DEVELOPER,
BMO FINANCIAL GROUP**



**Home
Country
INDIA**



**Country of
Education
INDIA**



**Now In
TORONTO,
ONTARIO**

I earned my master's degree in computer application from Sri Sivasubramaniya Nadar College of Engineering in 2009. I decided to immigrate to Canada after one of my close friends moved here and told me great things about the country like the quality of life and the multiculturalism. I've also always lived where it's tropical so I wanted to experience winter and enjoy the snow.

As I contemplated moving, I initially looked at the government of Canada website for more information. I saw WES listed as one of the designated organizations recommended by the government for an evaluation. As I did more research, I found the Degree Equivalency Tool. It was an easy way to understand what my degrees would be equivalent to in Canada. I simply put information about my universities and degrees. The tool generated a preliminary equivalency, free of charge. It was not official but it gave me the confidence to continue with an actual evaluation from WES.

The process of getting an evaluation was straightforward. You just have to read the instructions on the website carefully

and follow them step by step. After I was sure I understood WES' requirements, I met personally with university officials. I explained that I was immigrating to Canada and needed a credential evaluation. Once I showed them the details, they were more than happy to help. It took about 15 to 20 days to get all the documents sent properly to WES. Within 20 days, I got my evaluation.

I only came to know about the evaluation process after I started applying for immigration. I wish I had known about it earlier. I had considered earning a master's degree in the U.S. but I didn't know if schools would accept my three-year bachelor's degree. I didn't know WES existed at the time. However, now I am so happy to be in Canada.

I work for BMO Financial Group in Toronto as a developer for the wealth management side of the company. We develop complex products and services. I'm responsible for gathering requirements for projects, providing estimates, talking to business analysts, and pushing products into production so the customer can make use of them.

**“ NOW I AM
SO HAPPY
TO BE IN CANADA. ”**



**CHENNAI, TAMIL
NADU, INDIA**

Approximately 12 percent of recent immigrants to Canada were born in India, according to the Canadian government's 2016 census.

The background features a series of thin, green, curved lines that originate from the left side and converge towards a central point on the right side, creating a sense of motion and focus. The lines vary in length and curvature, some being straighter and others more pronouncedly curved.

**WES 2018 Impact:
Enabling Systems Change**

Louisville Metro Government Office for Globalization

“We have a responsibility to help assist our fellow residents in achieving their goals in life.”



BRYAN WARREN

SIIP Participant
Director, Louisville Metro Government
Office for Globalization

The Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) presented an opportunity for Louisville Metro to create an intensive focus on questions of integration in our community. How do we get people who are working in jobs in which they are underemployed, underpaid, and not really working to their full capacity into jobs that would not only benefit them, but their families and our community economically? It was one of the looming questions in the immigrant integration field in the Louisville area.

SIIP helped us prioritize and focus on the core areas where we could advance opportunity in our community. WES Global Talent Bridge gave us the coaching to help us narrow down areas where we thought we could make the most effective impact. As a result, we focused on three things: career pathway guides, a microloan program, and a mentorship program.

We are in the process of completing our career pathway guides for accounting, engineering, nursing, teaching, and programming to help skilled immigrants with experience in those fields. After looking at ways in which we can engage employers as advocates, we identified an immigrant mentorship program. We received approval for a pilot program to offer part-time work experience within our local government to immigrant professionals.

City government can model good practices for integrating immigrant professionals into the workplace. Finding a way to help bridge the gap in funding for those seeking funds to pay for either skills training or credential verification is also important. The immigrant professional loan pool has been a program that we are still moving toward.

There is a firm belief by those working in city government and those who are partners of our work around the community that we have a responsibility to help assist our fellow residents in achieving their goals in life. It's a big responsibility. It is really gratifying to help people who have such great potential and can bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to advance our community through our work. It's the right thing, and it's always the smart thing to do. To be able to do that more rapidly through SIIP is a real gift to Louisville.





**LOUISVILLE,
KENTUCKY**

Approximately 21 percent of college-educated skilled immigrants in Kentucky work below their skill level, according to the Migration Policy Institute.

Centre for Immigrant and Community Services (CICS)

“The program really opens many doors. It gives people hope that they can get back to their own field or to a similar field sooner instead of starting from nothing.”

MOY WONG-TAM
WES Gateway Program Partner
Executive Director, Centre for Immigrant
and Community Services
Toronto, Ontario

A credential evaluation is an extremely important piece of paper. The Canadian government and employers attach so much significance to certificates. So it's a frightening situation for someone if their documents are destroyed or inaccessible. It's like being stripped of a good part of their identity.

Imagine it: Even though you know who you are and what you've accomplished, nobody else believes you because you can't prove it. Suddenly you have nothing.

Even in the best circumstance, it often takes newcomers time to settle and integrate because the systems around them are not set up properly. There are many qualified people who don't have their international credentials recognized. It's very difficult for them to requalify themselves in the Canadian system because it takes a long time and a lot of money.

In 2016, the Canadian government began to accept thousands of Syrian refugees. That year, WES approached us to participate in the Refugee Pilot Program. Of course, we leapt at the opportunity.

We had a lot of Syrian clients who were all eager to get their credentials established, and the pilot was designed to help them, even if they didn't have all their official documents in hand.

Seventy of our Syrian refugee clients successfully received an evaluation during the pilot. It was so successful that we are continuing to work with WES through the WES Gateway Program.

The program really opens many doors. It gives people hope that they can get back to their own field or to a similar field sooner instead of starting from nothing. CICS works to empower newcomers with knowledge and with road maps so that they can be on their feet and flourish as soon as possible. That's why we're delighted with this service.



Access Centre for Regulated Employment (ACRE)

“Through the program, we’re able to help underserved populations from seven countries – people who don’t have access to their academic documents and are at high risk of falling through the cracks.”

KATE KENNEDY
WES Gateway Program Partner
Project Manager, Access Centre
for Regulated Employment
London, Ontario

There are almost three million internationally trained workers in Canada. That includes skilled immigrants and Canadians with international training or education.

But employers or licensing bodies don’t always understand the value of prior study that’s completed in other countries, and regulatory recertification processes are complex. ACRE offers specialized services to help skilled immigrants in Ontario navigate these processes.

Most of the people we see are doctors, engineers, teachers, and nurses – people in highly skilled professions. Unsurprisingly, they often encounter great difficulty navigating regulatory processes in Canada. They hit roadblocks: credential evaluation, language benchmarks, bridge training, and examinations, among others. It’s our job to offer specialized counseling and support to help clients overcome those roadblocks. We first began working with WES in that context.

In 2016, we started seeing more Syrian refugees coming through our program. Many arrived in Canada without access to official academic records. So we became part of WES’ Syrian Refugee Pilot Project. Thanks to the pilot, many of our Syrian clients received credential evaluations.

I admire the slow, steady wisdom of the pilot program; WES made sure that everything was done according to

standards. It tested its own processes. In the end, WES clearly had the policies and expertise in place to help us help our most vulnerable clients.

Now, we are a partner in the WES Gateway Program. It is a fantastic effort. It gives vulnerable newcomers an opportunity to obtain equivalency or attain attestation that their documents are authentic.

Through the program, we’re able to help underserved populations from seven countries – people who don’t have access to their academic documents and are at high risk of falling through the cracks.

The best and most powerful healing for a person can be as simple as getting a meaningful job. A lot of things fall into place when a person is working. A credential evaluation, validating a person’s academic documents, really makes a difference for people who are already going through more than anybody should.





**DENVER,
COLORADO**

One in 10 Colorado residents is an immigrant, and approximately 27 percent of immigrants in Colorado have a college degree or higher, according to the American Immigration Council.

Emily Griffith Technical College

“I hope every skilled immigrant that I meet with walks away from our meeting with more confidence and knowledge about what’s available and what steps it takes to get to their goal.”



TIFFANY JARAMILLO

SIIP Participant
Pathway Navigator, Emily Griffith Technical College
Denver, Colorado

I’m relatively new to the field of immigrant integration. It has been very important to learn more about what programs there are and become familiar with the community that exists. There are many difficulties that skilled immigrants face but one stands out: lack of confidence. It goes beyond not knowing the opportunities and pathways. That confidence gap is evident whether skilled immigrants in our community are running into barriers using their education or language skills as they apply for jobs and go on interviews. There is a problem communicating and recognizing the transferability of their skills.

Through our work in the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) with WES Global Talent Bridge, we developed a pathway guide, *Skill-Based Pathway Guide: Engineers*, which focused on the level of English proficiency needed at different career stages, training and certifications, and employment listings. We also wanted to build a website, a hub of information, for skilled immigrants in our community. As we started to look at programming and options that we have available for skilled immigrants, we recognized that many of

our own staff weren’t aware of what existed. We had to change our focus. We decided to educate staff and create a communication plan so staff and faculty are aware of the services that are available for immigrants and refugees.

We recently received funding to launch the website. Because of the communication plan and our work in SIIP, we’re in a much better place to build it in a strategic way rather than simply placing all the information on the site. We’re educating our staff internally while also building content for a website we hope will launch soon.

I hope every skilled immigrant that I meet with walks away from our meeting with more confidence and knowledge about what’s available and what steps it takes to get to their goal. Also, that they have a partner in Emily Griffith Technical College that will help them walk that path.



Lucas County, Ohio

“SIIP has provided a fantastic opportunity to help Ohio further integrate immigrants in our state.”

BRITTANY FORD
SIIP Participant
Policy Analyst
Lucas County, Ohio

Ohio has a historically low immigrant population, but that population is growing and it’s highly skilled. Through the Welcome Toledo – Lucas County initiative, we have worked very closely with WES Global Talent Bridge and the Ohio Welcoming Initiatives Network (OWIN).

We joined the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) in its pilot phase. SIIP really helped us home in on very specific goals. It also brought in the technical expertise from WES Global Talent Bridge and its partners to move the needle on our work in a very concentrated time period. It was intense but we made more progress in one year than we had in the several prior years combined.

We had been advocating with the state to develop a statewide office or task force. Through SIIP, we had an opportunity to use the technical assistance to work with the state at a deeper level. We were able to engage the governor’s office to see skilled immigrant integration as an issue they should take on. In return, they launched the Office of Opportunities for New Americans. Now we have a statewide office dedicated to ensuring that departments in the state think about how to include skilled immigrants in programs that focus on workforce and economic integration.

Our biggest challenge, though, is educating our workforce providers about resources for skilled immigrants so that a person

with a master’s degree isn’t referred to a GED program. We held a convening with workforce development and immigrant service providers that included workshops led by technical assistance providers to deepen the understanding of how we can best serve this population.

In addition, we worked with an ESL director in the Department of Higher Education on credential charts. Through SIIP, we worked to integrate some of those charts with the WES Global Talent Bridge Career Pathway Guides in three targeted areas that are high demand for immigrants as well as for the state workforce sector: nursing, engineering, and teaching.

We appreciate the opportunity to galvanize around very specific project goals through SIIP to dive into this work and learn from experts from around the country and Canada. SIIP has provided a fantastic opportunity to help Ohio further integrate immigrants in our state.



Michigan Office for New Americans

“The program gave us a very well-structured way to accomplish meaningful goals that will have direct impact in Michigan.”

KAREN PHILLIPPI
SIIP Participant
Director, Michigan Office for New Americans

My office serves a broad community – basically the entire state. We do it by trying to help grow the state’s economy, first by attracting global talent, and second by promoting the skills, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit of our immigrant communities.

WES Global Talent Bridge invited us to participate in the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) after we attended a 2016 New Americans’ National Skills and Credential Institute. The program offered technical assistance to help each participating community move two or three defined goals forward. My office chose to focus on two.

The first involved developing an alternative career pathways guide for foreign-educated and foreign-trained doctors, dentists, and nurses. We chose health care because licensing is a barrier for many skilled immigrants and refugees seeking work in the field. We wanted to help them identify other ways in which they can use their skills and education. A doctor could work in medical research or in public health, for example. But to do that, they have to know they have options.

The second initiative focused on building capacity at the local workforce level. Together with the Michigan Talent Investment Agency (part of our state’s

Labor Department), we sought to educate local and state staff who come into direct contact with skilled immigrants. Our goal was to ensure that staff follow routine best practices in providing services to every individual they interact with.

Being part of the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program also allowed us to learn from other communities trying to help foreign-educated and foreign-trained individuals integrate into the workforce. We were able to learn from the experiences of other communities, and to determine whether any of their approaches could be replicated in Michigan.

The program gave us a very well-structured way to accomplish meaningful goals that will have a direct impact in Michigan. I know it sounds simple, but the program really helped us plot out over the year how to accomplish our goals.





**Our Staff, WES Board of
Trustees, and Leadership**

OUR STAFF

WES employees are passionate about supporting immigrants and international students in the U.S. and Canada – many are immigrants themselves and know firsthand the challenges many international students and immigrants face. WES' 346 employees come from more than 40 countries and speak more than 37 different languages. All share a dedication to WES' mission.

In 2018, WES staff volunteered an estimated 2,500 hours mentoring skilled immigrants and enabling immigrants in the New York area to tell their stories. Through volunteer efforts staff meaningfully engaged with immigrants outside of their day-to-day work. Staff mentored 30 skilled immigrants to help them enhance their job search skills and explore career opportunities. In addition, WES volunteers are working to record and publish stories of immigrants to foster positive perceptions of immigrants in the U.S. and inspire those yet to come.

Karen Clarke
Advanced Evaluation
Specialist

Vanessa Young
Credential Examiner





From top left: **Isha Zade** Academic Records Specialist, **Michael Porter** Sr. Research Strategist, **Debra Means-West** Director, Network Engagement and Knowledge Management, WES Global Talent Bridge, **Karolin Givergis** Academic Services Coordinator, **Hope Didi** Administrative Services Specialist

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2018 WES LEADERSHIP



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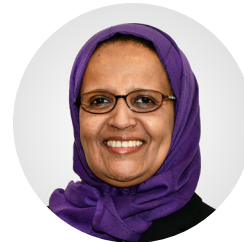
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