



# Employing Refugees

How Employers Can Tap into WNY's  
Growing Talent Pool





## Buffalo, NY- The City of Good Neighbors

The 2020 census indicates that the Erie County population has grown for the first time in 70 years- in part due to the influx of refugees & immigrants. 10.4% of the city is foreign born

# Resettlement Programs Overview

The US refugee program has been in existence since 1980 regardless of administration (Refugee Act of 1980)

There are 9 Voluntary agencies that contract with the US government to provide resettlement services. (Office of Refugee Resettlement under the ACF)

Those 9 agencies have over 350 local affiliates throughout the US

Each agency is paid to provide “core services” (approximately 15) during a 90 day time frame under the “cooperative Agreement”

Each October the President and congress decide how many refugees will be admitted and from what regions

1985 70,000

1993 132,000

2002 70,000

2008 80,000

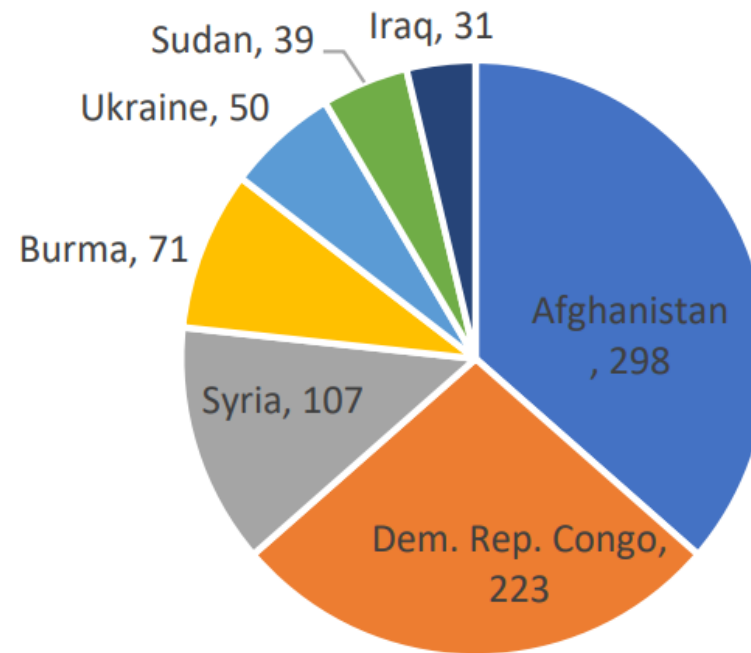
2007 110,000

2020 18,000

2022 125,000

Who  
comprises our  
client  
population?

Refugee/SIV Arrivals 2021



- Refugees
- Immigrants
- Asylees/ Asylum Seekers
- Victims of Domestic Violence
- Victims of Human Trafficking





# Employing Refugees

How Employers Can Tap into WNY's  
Growing Talent Pool

## Why is employment important?

- Employment is essential for refugees and immigrants to reach self-sufficiency in the US
- All refugees and immigrants aged 18-65 are expected to work, unless medically unable
- Refugees need to pay back a travel loan to the US government
- Many clients send money back home
- Need to save for adjustment of status
- Employment services provided to refugees and immigrants of all different backgrounds
  - Common current languages: Burmese, Swahili, Arabic, Pashto, Dari, many others
  - Current client base has military experience, manufacturing experience, restaurant experience, professional backgrounds
  - Some pro bono services for clients who are immigrants and who have been here a while but not employed

# Employment Programs offered

- Employment is a cornerstone of the Resettlement program with a focus on self sufficiency. Funding exists on all levels.
- Every agency has employment programming in house
  - NYS funded (shared by all agencies)
  - United Way Funded (IIB and JFS)
  - ORR funding (IIB)
  - DOL (previous at IIB for manufacturing program)
- Free of cost to clients and employers!

We serve a  
variety of  
clients and  
employers





# What do Employment Programs offer?

- Employment Preparation
- Placement
- Retention Services
- Specialized Training Programs
- Financial Literacy and budgeting for clients

# Employment Preparation

- While many clients have previous employment background, we need to prepare them for the US labor market
- Job Readiness Training is offered at each agency and is not standardized
- **IIB** offers Job Club that is provided for 16 total hours. All clients must attend before they are eligible for placement
- Job Club covers the following topics:
  - Working in America
  - Cultural Expectations
  - Job Searching
  - Resume Writing
  - Interviews
  - Workplace Etiquette/soft skills
  - Labor Rights and worker responsibilities
  - Financial Literacy

# Enrollment into employment

- Full assessment conducted
- Addresses educational background, employment history, language skills, medical history
- All clients in our programs are legally authorized to live in and work in the US
- Discussion of expectations





# Employing Refugees

How Employers Can Tap into WNY's  
Growing Talent Pool

## What about English?

- Clients have a wide array of language and educational skills
- Many clients do speak English, in addition to other languages
- Clients who do not speak English are encouraged to enroll in ESL classes
- IIB uses a simple scale to assess language ability and works with employers to ensure their needs are met
- There are many free ESL classes in the area and IIB can also offer fee based specialized ESL classes









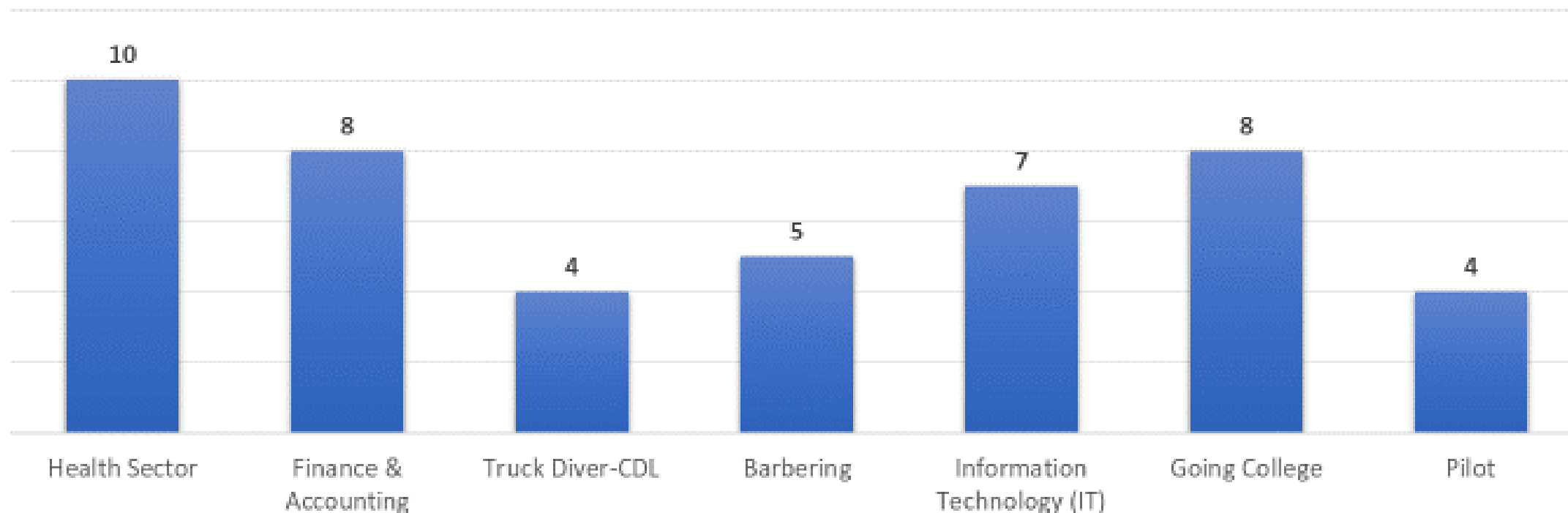
# Employing Refugees

How Employers Can Tap into WNY's  
Growing Talent Pool

# ONA/ORR Professional Pathways

- The Refugee Career Pathways program helps enable refugees to achieve self-sufficiency by obtaining the necessary credentials, education, experience, and job skills to secure employment in professional and/or skilled career fields
- Provides a much-needed opportunity to address outstanding employment and certification needs in the refugee community and employment sectors
- Assists those who have specialized skills and higher levels of education to re-enter their field of expertise in the U.S. or embark on a new specialized career path
- National Partners including WES (World Education Services – credentialing)
- Opportunities include:
  - ESL classes
  - Career Coaching and mentoring
  - Employment opportunities
  - Assistance in creating personalized Career Development Plans
  - Connections with educational opportunities, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training
  - Re-credentialing and credential recognition

## ORR Clients Interests by each Sector







# Employing Refugees

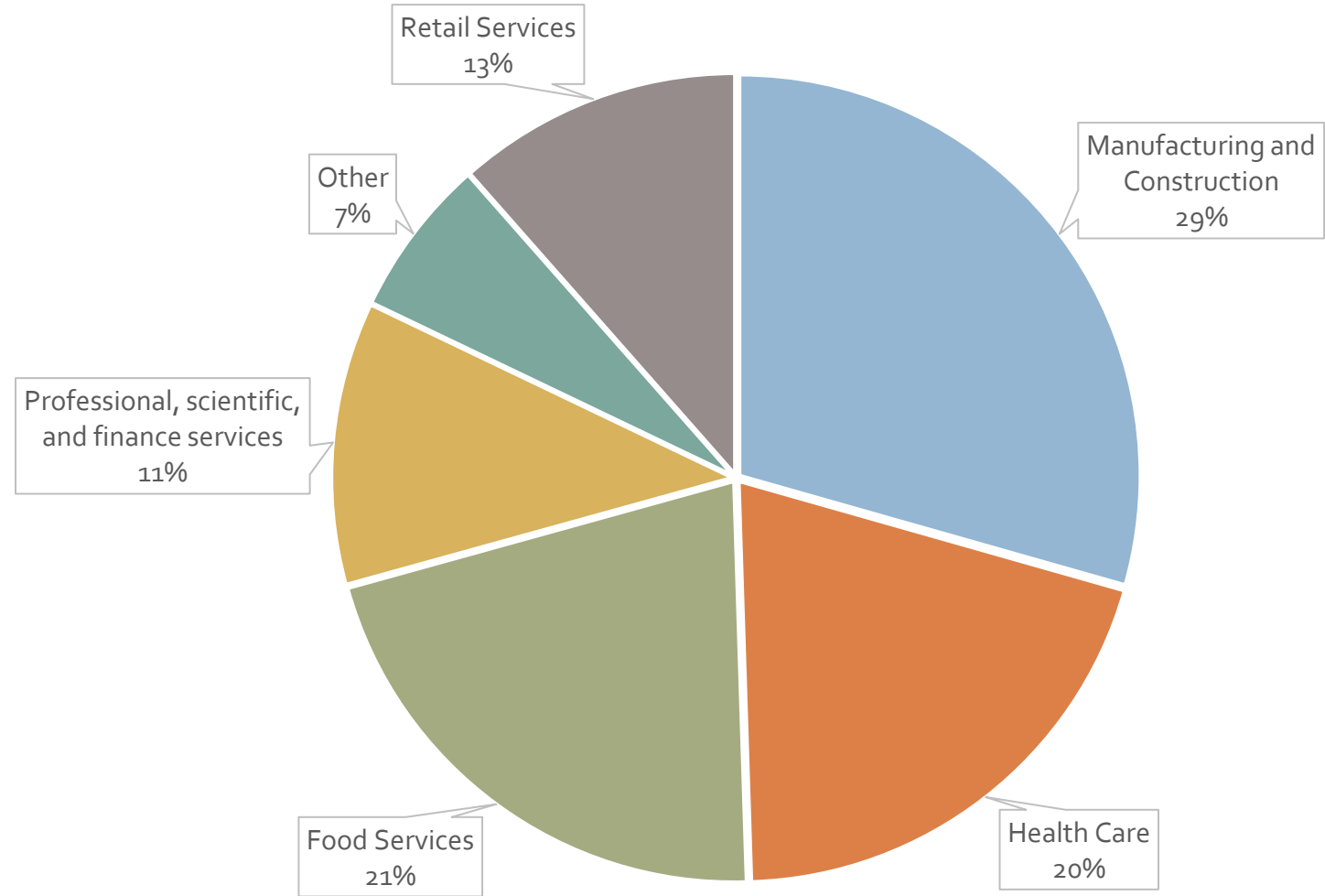
How Employers Can Tap into WNY's  
Growing Talent Pool

# Job Placement

- Job Seekers work with the employment team to create resumes to showcase their work and education histories
- Job Seekers are then matched to employers throughout WNY who are looking to hire refugees and immigrants
- Collaborate with local businesses to schedule tours and interviews
- Assist with interviewing, onboarding, and training processes
  - Assist with new hire paperwork
  - Can provide limited interpreting assistance to overcome language barrier where needed

Where do  
refugees and  
immigrants  
work?

Buffalo, NY Foreign-Born Employment by Industry



# Job Retention Services

- Employment teams regularly follow up with both the employer and the employee
- Provide post-employment case management to support with:
  - Job upgrades/promotions
  - Budgeting assistance
  - Addressing any additional barriers
- Additional help in navigating language barriers



# Our Employers

- Manufacturing:
  - Tapecon
  - Harmac
  - Roberts-Gordon
  - Lite Lab
  - Aesku labs
  - US Sugar
  - Buffalo Wire Works
  - Tectron
- Logistics & Transportation
  - Amazon
  - Try It Distributing

# *Harmac*

MEDICAL PRODUCTS, INC.



# What makes employers a good fit?

- Awareness of potential issues, during the hiring process or once the client is working, and ability to plan for solutions
  - Employment history, limited English proficiency, transportation barrier, different communication styles
- Is everyone on the same page and prepared to work with the foreign born?
  - Executives might be committed but line level and supervisory staff working with the clients must be too
  - Not every refugee has a great work ethic (not every new hire will work out)
- Logistics
  - Working in supports for the above-mentioned potential issues
  - Overtime or bonuses for those training the new clients
  - Interpreting budget to ensure understanding after initial onboarding process
  - Holding clients accountable to the same standards as other workers
- Understanding what agencies can do and our limitations

# Resources for employers

- **Higher** provides newcomer workforce solutions to corporations across the U.S. while supporting career entry and advancement for resettled refugees and other new Americans
- **US Employers' Guide to Hiring Refugees** is a manual to assist businesses that are interested in hiring refugees and have questions about the logistics and practicality of hiring refugees in the US





# Contact Information

- International Institute of Buffalo
  - Maddie Fenton, Employment Program Supervisor - [mfenton@iibuff.org](mailto:mfenton@iibuff.org)
  - Ahmad Yaqoubi, Professional Pathways Coordinator - [ayaqoubi@ibuff.org](mailto:ayaqoubi@ibuff.org)
- Catholic Charities of WNY
  - Winnie Vu - [Winnie.Vu@ccwny.org](mailto:Winnie.Vu@ccwny.org)
  - Amanda Rosario - [Amanda.Rosario@ccwny.org](mailto:Amanda.Rosario@ccwny.org)
- Jewish Family Services of WNY
  - Meghann Perry - [mperry@jfswny.org](mailto:mperry@jfswny.org)
- Journey's End Refugee Services
  - Jeff Ogilvie, Director of Employment - [jogilvie@jersbuffalo.org](mailto:jogilvie@jersbuffalo.org)

Questions?







**BNP** Employ  
Buffalo Niagara

**Thank You**