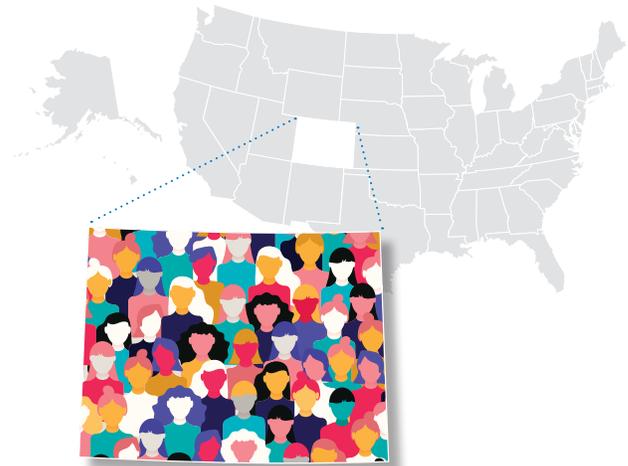


Immigration is a top issue in 2021, but the national conversation often misses what is really happening on the ground in Colorado. It has become imperative that policy makers and the general public better understand the economic impacts of immigration in our communities and how smarter immigration policies will benefit our state.

To maintain Colorado's place as the global hub of innovation, our immigration system must be modernized to recruit and retain top talent.¹

This guide highlights the most urgent and pressing immigration issues for Colorado business, utilizing data and talking points to help you navigate conversations with your networks.



About Partners



Colorado Business Roundtable

The Colorado Business Roundtable (COBRT) is a public policy organization comprised of executives from some of the state's largest employers working to strengthen Colorado's economic vitality. COBRT engages with elected leaders, business and nonprofit leaders, and other strategic allies to improve the business climate in our state by unapologetically amplifying the voice of business in all four corners of Colorado.

[Visit COBRT for more information.](http://www.cobrt.com)



COLORADO BUSINESS COALITION for IMMIGRATION SOLUTIONS

Colorado Business Coalition for Immigration Solutions

Colorado Business Coalition for Immigration Solutions (CBCIS) is a group of more than 45 businesses, industry and trade organizations focused on the economic/business case for a modernized immigration system that works for Colorado. Members are aligned with the tenets of the Colorado Compact. Together we are a unified voice for common sense federal immigration reforms. We advocate through our individual organizations, but also as a larger voice. We utilize data driven research, provided by the bipartisan New American Economy, to make our case.

[Visit CBCIS for more information.](#)



#1 ■ Transparent, consistent, and predictable administration of immigration laws helps businesses invest and grow in Colorado

Inconsistent application of immigration laws in the U.S. deters investment in Colorado and makes it more difficult for companies to plan their workforce needs.^{xxviii} Shifting government standards is particularly difficult for foreign workers going through the immigration process, and Colorado will lose talent to other countries that offer a more predictable, transparent process.^{xxix}

Businesses are more likely to invest and grow in Colorado if they know the federal government will administer immigration rules in a consistent and predictable manner and without unnecessary delay. Talented foreign workers are more likely to pursue opportunities in Colorado if they know the rules are stable and will not change while they go through the immigration process.^{xxx}

#2: Attracting and retaining foreign-born students at Colorado universities, especially those pursuing advanced STEM degrees



International students support Colorado's higher education institutions, local communities, and contribute millions of dollars to the Colorado economy. In 2020, the 11,631 international students at Colorado colleges and universities contributed an estimated \$428.8 million to the Colorado economy through their tuition payments and day-to-day spending.^{xviii}

A high percentage of STEM graduate students at U.S. universities are foreign born, and it is important for U.S. economic and innovation leadership to be able to retain and employ them.^{xix} Other international students are also graduating into economically critical fields like healthcare, where they are assisting in meeting the healthcare needs in our rural and lower-income communities.^{xx}

High-skilled immigrants also create American jobs: past research shows that for each international student who graduates from an American university and remains in the country to work in a STEM-related field, an additional 2.62 American jobs are created.^{xxi}

Our universities attract the best and brightest from around the world, but our immigration system forces many of them to go home after graduation, only to compete with us from abroad.^{xxii}

Removing barriers to attracting and retaining foreign-born students at Colorado universities and ensuring stable student visa program policies will benefit our higher institutions, the Colorado workforce, and economy.

#3: Access to temporary high-skill workers to fill gaps in the Colorado marketplace



Many economists agree immigration leads to a positive net impact on the economy, but restrictions on the number of employment-based visas and the costs of employer sponsorships are preventing businesses from hiring the workers they need across all skill levels.ⁱⁱ Particularly for high-skilled jobs, these limitations prevent U.S. companies from recruiting talent to stay competitive with other countries.ⁱⁱⁱ

Across industries like high-demand science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields and healthcare, immigrants are vital to the Colorado economy, and U.S. immigration policy should reflect the need for improved access to temporary high-skill workers with those skills needed in the Colorado marketplace.

Immigrants make up 13% of STEM workers in Colorado and can be instrumental in helping high-tech industries meet their full potential as need for high-skilled STEM workers increases rapidly in the state.^{iv}

Colorado companies are already experiencing a workforce shortage among STEM workers, especially within the high-tech industry. For example, 67% of STEM jobs are in computing.^v In Colorado, there were 14,921 open computing jobs in January 2021 - 2.6x the average demand rate in the state.^{vi} However, only 1,266 students graduated with a bachelor's degree in Computer Science in 2018 in the state, leaving 13,655 open computing jobs if everyone in-state is hired.^{vii}

Immigration is not the only answer, but it is a critical one for many industries. Work visas allow employers to fill urgent open positions while also providing the necessary time to implement long-term solutions to the mounting labor shortages, including efforts to increase the number of Colorado graduates with the necessary education and skills for these positions.

About H-1B Person in Specialty Occupation Visas

The ability to hire high-skilled immigrants allows employers to access skills not readily available and to combine the skills with those of native-born workers.^{viii} In the U.S., generally the only practical way to hire a high-skilled foreign national is on an H-1B visa.^{ix}

Unfortunately, the shortcomings of the H-1B category have concerned employers for years.^x More than half of applicants for H-1B visas each year are denied the opportunity to work due to the low H-1B quota. In 2018, more than 190,000 people applied for just 85,000 available high-skill H-1B visas in the U.S.^{xii}

#4: Access to lesser-skilled workers with skills needed in the Colorado marketplace for temporary and year-round positions

Temporary Lesser-Skilled Foreign Worker Visas (H-2A & H-2B Visas)

Temporary, seasonal labor-intensive and physically demanding positions are not appealing to U.S. born workers;^{xiii} thus, it is important for U.S. immigration policy to reflect the need for improved access to temporary lesser-skilled workers with experience needed in the Colorado marketplace.



About H2-A Temporary (Seasonal) Agricultural Worker Visas

The H2-A program allows employers to bring in immigrant workers temporarily for on-the-farm positions that cannot be filled locally.^{xiv} These workers are brought in to fill these jobs that cannot otherwise be filled, and the workers return home when done.

For example, peach growers in the Colorado agriculture industry depend on immigrant seasonal agriculture workers.

About H2-B Temporary (Seasonal) Non-Agricultural Worker Visas

The H-2B program allows employers to temporarily bring in immigrant workers for non-farm positions that cannot be filled locally.^{xv}

Colorado non-agricultural industries that rely on foreign seasonal labor include summer and winter resorts, hospitality, landscaping and groundskeeping, and the construction industry.

In fact, immigrants make up 21.2% of workers in the traveler accommodations industry.^{xvi}

Year-Round Lesser-Skilled Foreign Workers (No Visa Available)

Current law provides no visa category for foreign-born workers to work legally in the U.S. on a year-round basis in high-demand industries, such as hospitality, construction and certain agriculture industries.^{xvii}

Establishing a legal workable system to hire for positions in these year-round industries by reforming the current system and creating a new visa category would help fill critical workforce needs.

Colorado's dairy sector is another one of Colorado's industries that relies upon year-round labor, not seasonal labor like other agricultural industries. While it faces similar workforce shortages, it does not have access to a year-round work visa program.

#5: Policies encouraging and attracting immigrant entrepreneurs like those who have started businesses and are employing Coloradans



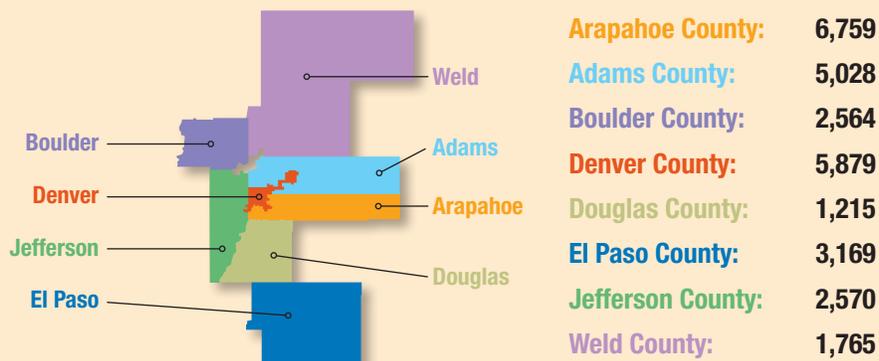
New businesses are a major driver of job growth in the U.S. and in Colorado. Immigrants play a particularly important role, especially during a time of economic recovery, founding businesses at far higher rates than individuals born in the U.S.^{xxiii}

There are 43,684 immigrant entrepreneurs in Colorado employing over 100,000 people, with a total business income of \$1.2 billion.^{xxiv}

Given the entrepreneurial spirit of the Colorado economy, it is notable that our country has no genuine immigration category for entrepreneurs^{xxvi}, and this lack of visa unfortunately encourages foreigners with successful ideas and the ability to attract capital to pursue startup opportunities in other nations.^{xxvii}

To hear more from Colorado immigrant business owners, visit COBRT's Faces of Business campaign at www.cobrt.com/facesofbusiness.

A Snapshot of Immigrant Businesses Across Colorado





Resources

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- xxiv “Map the Impact Data.” New American Economy, 2018, <https://data.newamericaneconomy.org/map-the-impact/>.
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Additional Resources

Business Roundtable

New American Economy