Becoming An Advocate: What Practitioners Need to Know about Influencing Policy

Part 1

January 15, 2014
2-3 pm Eastern Standard Time

Dial-In: +1-415-655-0001
Access Code: 661 250 846
Logistics

- Today’s webinar is in **listen-only mode via internet audio or dial-in**. If you have audio issues during the webinar, try closing browser windows if using internet audio, or hang up and then dial back in using the telephone.

- To **submit your questions/comments** throughout the webinar, use the **Q&A** box in the lower-right part of your screen.

- For technical assistance or to get a **copy of today’s slides**: email **contact@imprintproject.org** at any time.
What is IMPRINT?

IMPRINT is a national coalition of nonprofits helping underemployed skilled immigrants to start their American careers.

IMPRINT:

- Creates and disseminates resources
- Advocates for effective policies
- Broadcasts best practices
Today’s Presenters

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Communications & Policy Director
IMPRINT

Dr. Manuela Raposo
Executive Director
Rhode Island Welcome Back Center
Today’s Agenda

I. Results of our pre-survey:
   • Who’s in the room?
   • What do you most want to learn?

II. What is advocacy?

III. Tackling the “why”

IV. What can advocacy look like in a skilled immigrant context?

V. Next steps
Who’s In The Room Today?

Organizations
- College or university: 25%
- Refugee resettlement agency: 17%
- Immigrant service organization: 17%
- State or local government: 33%
- Other: 8%

Experience with Advocacy
- A great deal - 4 or more years, or regular activity: 27%
- A medium amount - 2-3 years, or periodic activity: 18%
- Very little - less than a year, or a handful of activities: 27%
- None - I'm new to this: 28%
What You Most Want to Learn

• What are different **METHODS** of advocacy (speaking, writing, research)  **46%**

• What are some opportunities to do skilled immigrant advocacy  **64%**
Advocacy is engaging with the broader public in a way that advances your mission.

Your audience includes:
- Legislators
- Members of the media
- Funders
- General public
Advocacy Isn’t Just a Professional Role

• Many people first learn their advocacy skills in a personal context, rather than a professional one.

• Gaining experience advocating for a family member or neighbor in an educational or healthcare setting can help you develop key skills that can be applied to professional work.
Why Do Advocacy?

• It can help you to achieve longer-term goals

• It can help the individuals you serve to participate more fully in the development of the field

• It can build multipurpose working relationships (groups come together around one issue, but end up improving their collaboration on other issues)

• It can give you a forum to experiment with arguments for making your organization’s case, then revise those arguments for funders

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Some barriers are *intrinsic* to individuals while other barriers are *extrinsic*.

The *ecological model* (see *chart at right*) is a useful tool in understanding and identifying in which realm the issue lies, and possible solutions for addressing it.
Using the Ecological Model to Understand Skilled Immigrant Barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers to professional workforce integration</th>
<th>Where it lies in the ecological model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the American interview process and work culture</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional network</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty finding professional-level English classes and building language skills</td>
<td>Organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensure &amp; re-credentialing</td>
<td>Public Policy (state)</td>
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Applying Advocacy Tools to Skilled Immigrant Issues

- The following examples illustrate just a few of the ways that organizations can advocate for skilled immigrants.

- Today’s list is NOT exhaustive. In Part 2 of our webinar next week, we’ll provide many more examples of the “how” of advocacy.

- For now, we’re focused on the “what.”
Raising Awareness through Op-Eds

Short opinion articles of 500-700 words can help to raise the visibility of skilled immigrant issues.

Select publications based on the readership you’re trying to reach.

Consider having the op-ed written in the first person by an immigrant.

www.theopedproject.org has good writing & submission tips on its Resources page.
One IMPRINT member conducted an analysis of skilled immigrant Census data, then held a 90-minute evening briefing for journalists and funders.

Presenters included three skilled immigrants who shared their own stories.

Creating an “embargo” before data was publicly released helped build interest and momentum.

View the briefing slides at: http://tinyurl.com/IMPRINTdata
Using Personal Stories to Frame Debate

Path to United States Practice Is Long Slog to Foreign Doctors

Balith Abayawickrama, who came in 2010 from Sri Lanka, teaches exam prep on genitals at Kaplan Medical in Newark, N.J.

By CATHARINE SCHNEIDER

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From Packing Boxes to Environmental Engineer

After working in Iraq as a Project Engineer in the U.S. Army Corps, Musthag Dakhlil relocated to the United States as a refugee in 2006. Upon his arrival in the U.S., he struggled to find job opportunities and ended up packing boxes for minimum wage.

After reading online about IMPRINT, a member organization of Upwardly Global, Musthag joined Upwardly Global’s program, which helped him improve his interview skills and network. With Upwardly Global’s assistance, Musthag reentered his career field as an Environmental Engineer at Greeley and Hansen, a national environmental engineering and consulting firm.

With a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, Musthag worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq as a Project Engineer and then Senior Design Engineer. As the insurgency worsened, his involvement in the U.S. Army put his own and his family’s lives in danger. In 2008, Musthag was forced to leave home and resettle in the U.S.

When Musthag arrived in Illinois, he had 7 years of work experience, a young family, and high hopes for the future. However, Musthag found the interview process difficult due to the difference in communication style in the U.S. workforce. Even with his extensive work experience and letters of recommendation from high-ranking Americans in the Army Corps of Engineers, the only job Musthag was able to find was packing boxes at minimum wage.

"Due to the different customs and norms, qualified jobseekers can find themselves in a difficult practice when interviewing in a new country. The good news is that winning behaviors can be learned, allowing skilled immigrants to find employment again in their career fields."

- Jennifer Braiman, IMPRINT Director

Two years after settling into his new life, Musthag joined Upwardly Global Chicago in 2010. After gaining the specialized workforce services available through this IMPRINT member organization, Musthag in many ways, including:

- Improving interview and communication skills for the U.S. workforce
- Networking to help make connections in the engineering field
- An Engineer Development Series that focused on building and catalyzing job search success for engineers

Through Upwardly Global’s connections, Musthag interviewed with Greeley and Hansen, a leading national environmental engineering and consulting firm based in Chicago. After serving an apprenticeship with the firm, Musthag was promoted to a permanent engineering position. His experience illustrates both the challenges faced by skilled immigrants, and the powerful dividends that result when their American dreams are realized.
Submitting written testimony to Congressional or state hearings is an important first step in building awareness among legislators and their staff members.

Also consider issuing a press release and/or e-mail bulletin with a copy of your testimony.

Learn more about submitting testimony in our upcoming Part 2 webinar.
Case Study: Immigrant Nurses in Rhode Island

The Impetus:

In 2006, the Rhode Island Professional Latinos Association convened immigrants, local healthcare and government leaders.

Together, they identified state labor needs in healthcare and a potential labor supply – skilled immigrants.
In 2007, a **Welcome Back Initiative** program site was launched to provide services to internationally-trained health professionals.
Building Momentum for Change

In **2008**, the *RI Welcome Back Advisory Council* is established with subcommittees on participant services, fund development and public policy & advocacy.

**2008 - present**: Relationship cultivation and council development; joined state Nursing Board and state health care exchange working group; delivery of strong program outcomes

**2011**: The national Welcome Back Initiative wins the E Pluribus Unum prize for immigrant integration

**2012**: Approval of new language in Rhode Island nursing regulation, giving board more control over choice of credentialing organizations and testing methods used in the state.
A Recap: Key Steps in Advocating for Regulatory Changes

1. Gathered information about barriers to career integration

2. Get key stakeholders to the table (e.g., RI State Nurses Association)

3. Define & implement a strategy:
   - Join Board of Nursing
   - Write white paper on desired reform
   - RISNA presents proposal to Board
   - Conduct education campaign

4. Achieve regulatory change
Q&A

Submit via Q&A box on screen

OR

Submit via email: contact@imprintproject.org