


Five Steps for Championing Newcomer Talent in Michigan

There are more than **123,000** working-age adult English learners in Michigan, poised to help employers fill roles in a state where there are currently more open jobs than available workers. Yet many local employers struggle to recruit, retain, and engage this often-overlooked talent pool. Fortunately, many blueprints exist for building workplaces that intentionally and successfully include multilingual workers. Here are five steps to get you started.

How to Build an Ecosystem of Inclusion

1 RECRUIT FOR SKILLS, NOT CREDENTIALS. Assessing job candidates based on their skills – rather than degrees or credentials – opens opportunities for job seekers and employers alike by expanding the talent pool. Validating international degrees and credentials is a complex process in the best of circumstances. Applicants without formal training may have lived experiences that are applicable to a job. Instead of requiring a credential, allow candidates to demonstrate their abilities as part of the hiring process.

 *Michigan Resources:* **Michigan Works** supports job seekers in translating their skills and training to the local job market; coaching programs include resume, job search, and interview support, as well as funding for international credential evaluation.

2 RE-IMAGINE YOUR HIRING PRACTICES. Are your hiring systems accessible to speakers of other languages, or do restrictive algorithms and language requirements screen out otherwise-qualified candidates? Employers can get support in building more inclusive hiring practices, with training on subjects like unconscious bias and cultural competence, and expertise on hiring questions like work authorization and Optional Practical Training (OPT) for international students.

 *Michigan Resources:* The **Global Talent Retention Initiative** (GTRI) works with employers, universities, and international students to provide educational workshops and training on how to hire and retain global talent. The **Michigan Economic Development Corporation** (MEDC)'s Talent Action team provides concierge-level service to local employers, public universities, community colleges, and other education partners to build tech talent pipelines to support strategic sectors across the state.

3

BUILD NEWCOMER TALENT PIPELINES. Everyone in Michigan’s workforce ecosystem – including educators, service providers, community-based organizations, and employers - must work together to build pipelines that connect international students and job seekers from newcomer backgrounds with employers that need their skills. A first step is ensuring that workforce leaders know how to connect with each other.



Michigan Resources: The [Office of Global Michigan](#) collaborates with dozens of local partners to connect Michigan-based employers with newcomer talent. Michigan’s [Sixty by 30 Adult Student Success Grant](#) provides grants to community colleges to increase college completion for numerous student groups. And Michigan’s [Global Talent Retention Initiative](#) (GTRI, also mentioned above) connects Michigan-based companies with international students and graduates.

4

INTENTIONALLY INCLUDE MULTILINGUAL STAFF. Multilingualism is an asset at any workplace. Employers can cultivate a culture of linguistic diversity by ensuring that English isn’t a barrier. Invest in translation and interpretation services, especially during critical onboarding periods. Make commitments to using “plain” workplace language – cutting down on jargon and unnecessarily complex or formal language. Offer opportunities for employees of all backgrounds to build connections with peer-to-peer learning programs and workplace social events.



Michigan Resources: [Anthill](#) offers software and resources for multilingual employee onboarding, [Jeenie](#) provides on-demand simultaneous interpretation, and [One Language Pro](#) provides language access consulting services.

5

BUILD NEWCOMER-FRIENDLY TRAINING PROGRAMS. Companies grappling with skills and talent gaps are focused on upskilling their workers, yet many training programs are offered solely in English, creating a barrier for speakers of other languages. Employers can offer on-site English instruction, connecting multilingual employees with career-aligned English skills and opportunities for career growth.



Michigan Resources: The [Michigan Global Talent Initiative](#) (MGTI) has partnered with EnGen to provide Michigan-based employers, community colleges, and workforce partners with free access to personalized, career-driven English instruction.

A Workforce for All Michiganders

Company-wide investments to more inclusive recruitment and retention will reap returns in attracting and engaging newcomer talent. The benefits extend to other talent pools as well, including incumbent workers. EnGen is committed to helping to create an ecosystem of workforce leaders that champion newcomer talent across Michigan – and ensuring that they have resources and support to drive the work forward.

Email michigan@getengen.com to learn how employers, community colleges, and workforce partners can access free EnGen licenses in Michigan.