

SKILLED & QUALIFIED TALENT

Talent shortages have more than tripled in the last decade across the U.S.¹ and this need for skilled and qualified talent in Northeast Ohio far exceeds that of the national average (69% vs. 80% of employers noting a need for talent).² While current efforts to upskill, improve training programs, and encourage talented workers to move to our region are important, our workforce needs immediate action to ensure the forward movement of our community and economy.

INTERNATIONAL NEWCOMER TALENT TO CONSIDER HIRING: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Optional Practical training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT): extensions of student visa status that allows international students to work in the U.S. in their field of study.³ OPT allows for 12 months of work with an additional 24 months for students who majored in STEM fields. What is considered a STEM field was expanded to include 22 additional fields of study with the changing of policy in January of 2022.⁴ CPT has the same requirements as OPT but for work conducted before graduation.

The return on investment of hiring an international student using OPT is high as this talent will work with you for up to three years without having to sponsor a visa, which is longer than the average length spent in a role by their American counterparts (Gen Z stays in a role for an average of 2 years and 3 months).⁵

With the support from state level policy through Ohio G.R.E.A.T. (Global Reach to Engage Academic Talent), Ohio is in the top ten state destinations for international students.⁶ And Northeast Ohio has a large talent pool of nearly 7,000 international students enrolled who are eager to stay in the region.⁷ Despite having the talent, Ohio is falling behind in retaining these students. For the state of Ohio, retention rate ranged from -81% in Dayton, to 3% in Columbus while the near neighborhood to the north, Detroit, has managed to retain 43%.⁸

Case study: Michigan

Ohio's neighbor to the north, Michigan, has shown that by committing to providing opportunities to the international student pipeline answers the need for talented workers and does so almost immediately.

In 2011, The Global Talent Retention Initiative of Michigan (GTRI) was launched in hopes of meeting the talent needs of the state through retaining international students.⁹ GTRI works with universities and companies to provide guidance and clarity while connecting talent to the workforce. In the first four years of GTRI, the number of international students using OPT to work in Michigan nearly doubled—filling nearly 3,000 open positions. These students were disproportionately in STEM fields and worked at hundreds of different companies across the state.

Much like Ohio, Michigan was in dire need for talented and qualified talent. By giving companies access to hiring international students with the use of OPT, the state began to address their talent shortage with the natural asset already in their communities.

Take Action:

1. For all open positions remove “Employer requires work authorization” and replace it with the following **“Employer Accepts OPT/CPT”** and/or **“Will sponsor or doesn’t require a work visa.”**
2. If attending career fairs at universities, print off and display this sign “We hire international students.”
3. Partner with Global Cleveland and state universities and colleges to access the international student talent pool.



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