

South Carolina: Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Innovation, and Welcoming Initiatives

In South Carolina, there is no doubt that immigrant entrepreneurs and innovators play an important role. Immigrant entrepreneurs bring in additional revenue, create jobs, and contribute significantly to the state's economy. Highly skilled immigrants are vital to the state's innovation economy, and to the metropolitan areas within the state, helping to boost local economies. Furthermore, local government, business, and non-profit leaders recognize the importance of immigrants in their communities and support immigration through local "welcoming" and integration initiatives.

Immigrant entrepreneurs contribute significantly to South Carolina's economy.

- From 2006 to 2010, there were 11,869 new immigrant business [owners](#) [1] in South Carolina, and in 2010, 6.7 percent of all business [owners](#) [2] in South Carolina were foreign-born.
- In 2010, new immigrant business owners had total net business income of \$521.9 million, which is 5.3 percent of all net business [income](#) [1] in the state.
- Immigrant [entrepreneurs](#) [3] have contributed to South Carolina's economy throughout the state's history, founding such companies as Dominion Tar and Chemical Company (DOMTAR), which employs 8,700 people and brings in over \$5.6 billion in annual revenues to South Carolina.

Highly skilled immigrants and foreign-owned companies are vital to South Carolina's innovation economy.

- High-skilled immigrant workers contribute to the success of many South Carolina-based companies and institutions with a significant presence in the state, [including](#) [4] University of South Carolina and Infor Global Solutions Inc.
- In 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor [certified](#) [5] 1,415 H-1B labor certification applications in South Carolina, with an average annual wage of \$62,312, which is higher than South Carolina's median household [income](#) [6] of \$44,587 or per capita income of \$23,854.
- The Columbia metropolitan area had 351 H-1B high-skilled visa [requests](#) [4] in 2010-2011, with 69.7 percent of H-1B visa-holders working in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations.
- The Greenville-Mauldin-Easley metropolitan area had 323 H-1B high-skilled visa [requests](#) [4] in 2010-2011, with 76.9 percent of H-1B visa-holders working in STEM occupations.
- An [expansion](#) [7] of the high-skilled visa program would create an estimated 3,500 new jobs in South Carolina by 2020. By 2045, this expansion would [add](#) [7] around \$1.6 billion to Gross State Product and increase personal income by more than \$1.4 billion.
- Foreign-affiliated companies (majority-owned) [employ](#) [8] 104,300 people in South Carolina, which translates to 7.0 percent of the state's private industry employment. South Carolina ranks 4th in the nation in the percent of its workforce employed by U.S. affiliates of foreign companies. South Carolina largely [depends](#) [9] on direct foreign investment, including through the EB-5 visa, for direct and indirect jobs, tax revenue, and international trade.
- Foreign-affiliated companies also [invest](#) [8] heavily in the Palmetto State. Since 1960, these

companies, representing roughly 40 countries, have invested around \$43.7 billion in the state, created more than 163,000 jobs, and operated more than 1,200 locations for manufacturing, distribution, service, and retail. Examples of foreign-owned companies with significant operations in South Carolina include Michelin, BMW, FUJIFILM, AG, BAE Systems, BASF, Samsung, Siemens, and GlaxoSmithKline.

While the numbers are compelling, they don't tell the whole story.

- Ali Saifi, an immigrant from [Iran](#) [10], has built a successful business of nearly 400 Subway restaurant franchises in South Carolina.
- In Bluffton, near Hilton Head Island, a \$55 million medical complex for PACE Healthcare may be [financed](#) [11] in part by immigrant investors through the EB-5 visa program.
- In Columbia, Gloria Wood, an immigrant from [Colombia](#) [12], opened her Sala de Belleza Sarita in an area of town becoming known for its Hispanic/Latino businesses. Wood found her niche in an area of Columbia that has become attractive for Latino-owned music shops, clothing stores, groceries, and other businesses, all of which help to maintain the neighborhood's vitality.

Immigrant Entrepreneurs in:

South Carolina

*In 2010, new immigrant
business owners generated*

**\$521.9
million**

*in total net
business income*



6.7%

*of business owners in
South Carolina are
immigrants*

11,869

*immigrants became new business
owners in South Carolina
between 2006-2010*

Read more at ImmigrationPolicy.org

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Links:

- [1] <http://www.renewoureconomy.org/sites/all/themes/pnae/openforbusiness.pdf>
- [2] <http://www.fiscalpolicy.org/immigrant-small-business-owners-FPI-20120614.pdf>
- [3] <http://www.maptheimpact.org/state/south-carolina/>
- [4] <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2012/7/18%20h1b%20visas%20labor%20immigration/18%20h1b%20visas%20labor%20immigration.pdf>
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- [11] <http://savannahnow.com/bluffton-news/2012-04-15/bluffton-medical-complex-seeks-immigrant-entrepreneurs>
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