

Building Labor Mobility Pathways in North Dakota Project



OVERVIEW: North Dakota faces one of the most acute labor shortages in the U.S. With only 30 available workers for every 100 unfilled jobs, the state simply does not have enough workers to meet employer demand. The shortage cuts across industries, education levels, and geographies, with particularly critical needs in healthcare & social assistance, energy, and agriculture.

In response, the Government of North Dakota established the Global Talent Office (GTO) [formerly the Office of Legal Immigration] in 2023 to support businesses in recruiting and retaining foreign-labor talent. The office emerged from state-led priorities and employer demand for workforce solutions tied to immigration and labor mobility, and recognized early on that it needed specialized expertise to build an effective, evidence-based strategy.

LaMP's Role

Since 2023, LaMP has served as a strategic advisor to the GTO, providing technical guidance, research, and implementation support as the office works to fulfill its mandate. LaMP's engagement has unfolded in two phases:

Phase I (2024-2025): Strategic Foundation - with Dalberg

- Mapped the full landscape of North Dakota's labor needs and identified high-priority sectors.
- Analyzed bottlenecks across the employer journey, from awareness to recruitment to community integration.
- Delivered actionable recommendations around four core programmatic pillars: web sources, webinar & workshops, an advocacy agenda, and seven "innovation" solutions
- Top innovation priorities included: OPT pathways for international university graduates, cap-exempt H-1B pilots for nurses and highly educated workers, and domestic relocation programs targeting work-authorized immigrations in high-density cities.
- Supported the GTO to design and launch the inaugural Global Talent Summit, now a premier gathering of actors working to build practical solutions in U.S. immigration.

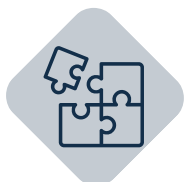
Phase 2 (2025-2027): Implementation Support - LaMP

Under dedicated technical advisory engagement, LaMP continues to support the GTO as it operationalizes its strategy:

- Research and guidance on navigating changes to federal foreign labor laws and visa processes
- Technical assistance translating 2024 study recommendations into state and local action
- Planning and supporting convenings, including continued Global Talent Summits and webinar series
- Connecting GTO to engaging talent pipelines and subject matter experts.



Selected Activities & Deliverables



Strategy Report with Dalberg

In partnership with Dalberg Associates, LaMP led and facilitated a comprehensive assessment with recommendations and strategies that support GTO and partner's implementation of programs related to recruitment and retention of new Americans and foreign-born immigrants.



Global Talent Summits

LaMP helped design and host North Dakota's inaugural Global Talent Summit, an all-day convening for employers to learn about visa pathways, international recruitment strategies, and how to hire and retain foreign-born workers. LaMP led hands-on implementation of the first summit (2024), provided lighter-touch support for the second (2025), and consulted on the third (2026), intentionally transitioning ownership to the GTO over time.



Visa Decision Tree

LaMP advised on and designed an interactive visa decision tool for GTO's public website, first-of-its-kind public resource enabling employers and businesses to better navigate immigration options and identify appropriate pathways.



Source Country Assessment

LaMP assessed eight potential origin countries to help GTO identify strategic international labor partnerships. The analysis evaluated visa pathway compatibility, recruitment costs, workforce demographics, English language prevalence, and skilling infrastructure.

Why This Work Matters

North Dakota is at the frontier of state-led labor mobility innovation. The GTO's work – and LaMP's advisory role within it – is helping establish a replicable model of how subnational governments can proactively and responsibly address workforce shortages through international recruitment, thoughtful integration, and evidence-based policy advocacy.



This program was designed by Labor Mobility Partnerships (LaMP), a global nonprofit that designs and launches labor mobility systems at scale, partnering with governments, employers and investors to align labor market needs with safe migration pathways.