



# HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT of the Massachusetts SMALL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

August 2015

While accounting for less than 20% of business owners nationally, immigrants make up 28% of Main Street business owners.<sup>1</sup>



## Health, Prosperity, and Immigrant-Owned Businesses

Immigrant business owners play an important role in our economy, especially on the main streets of our cities and towns. Nationally, over half of dry cleaner and grocery store business owners and a third of restaurant, jewelry, and clothing store owners are immigrants.<sup>2</sup> And in Massachusetts, 20% of all self-employed workers in the state<sup>3</sup> – and 50% of those aged 18-44<sup>4</sup> – come from other countries.

Immigrants to the US tend to experience healthier lives than those who are US-born – but only initially. Over time, as immigrants and their families integrate into the US, their risk of poor health increases.<sup>5</sup> One opportunity to prevent this health decline is to support and sustain employment opportunities. Individuals and groups who experience less unemployment and who help communities become more connected tend to also be those who experience healthier lives.<sup>6,7</sup> Given the role immigrants play in the Commonwealth's economy, this of particular importance in Massachusetts.

The Small Business Technical Assistance (SBTA) program provides business training and access to capital for immigrant-owned business. This support helps immigrant-owned businesses and entrepreneurs understand the business and economic landscape of their communities and the state. In addition, it provides access to technical assistance providers and to financial capital that may otherwise be out of reach.

Over the past three years, the SBTA program has helped nearly 1,000 businesses owned by immigrants and non-native English speakers.<sup>8</sup> This number represents approximately a third of the businesses the program assisted during that period. Through this continued support, the assistance program is playing a part in helping immigrant-owned businesses start and grow and be part of healthier communities in the Commonwealth.

1. Bringing Vitality to Main Street: How Immigrant Small Businesses Help Local Economies Grow. Americas Society and Council of the Americas, Fiscal Policy Institute, January 2015.

2. Ibid.

3. Immigrants in Massachusetts: Economic Impacts by Congressional District. Institute for Immigration Research, George Mason University, November 2013.

4. Massachusetts Immigrants by the Numbers, Second Edition. The Immigrant Learning Center, March 2012

5. Health, life expectancy, and mortality patterns among immigrant populations in the United States. GK Singh, BA Miller - Canadian Journal of Public Health, 2004.

6. Health in the Long-Term Unemployed. Herbig, B., Dragano, N. & Angerer, P., 2013.

7. Social cohesion, social capital, and health. Kawachi I, Berkman LF, 2000.

8. Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation SBTA grant program reporting data, 2014.



The Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Barry Keppard, Public Health Manager  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
bkeppard@MAPC.org | 617.933.0750

Mariana Arcaya, Yerby Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies  
marcaya@hsph.harvard.edu | 617.496.4280



*Interested in contributing to the HIA? Please contact us before October 2015.*



## Participate

Participation is an essential element of an HIA. In this HIA, we are engaging those who provide technical assistance to small businesses, individuals and organizations with small business and public health expertise, and experts from state agencies, academic settings and non-profit organizations.

If you are interested in learning more about the HIA or providing feedback, please contact us.

## ASSESSING THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

Small businesses have a profound economic impact on Massachusetts – that is well known. But what of their health impact? How does the Commonwealth's Small Business Technical Assistance program, which helps underserved and disadvantaged businesses with fewer than 20 employees, improve the physical and mental health of owners and employees? Can that benefit extend to customers, surrounding neighborhoods, nearby residents and other businesses?

These are questions that a team led by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies is determined to answer.

The team is conducting a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on Massachusetts' Small Business Technical Assistance program which is administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation. Our goal is to better understand the links between the program and health outcomes and to use our findings to inform program funding and decision-making. The HIA is being performed in coordination with the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation and the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations.

## WHAT IS A HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

A **Health Impact Assessment (HIA)** is a process that uses data, health expertise, and public input to identify the possible health effects of a proposed change. HIAs are used to assess proposals such as new development projects or legislative policies to produce recommendations that minimize health risks and maximize health benefits.

For more information, visit: [pewtrusts.org/hip/massachusetts-small-business-technical-assistance-program.html](http://pewtrusts.org/hip/massachusetts-small-business-technical-assistance-program.html) and [mapc.org/sbtahia](http://mapc.org/sbtahia).

*This HIA is supported by a grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts.*

[www.healthimpactproject.org](http://www.healthimpactproject.org)

*The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Pew Charitable Trusts or the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*