

Migrant Entrepreneurship and Talent Management: Integration Policies in Mexico-United States Transborder Contexts

*Emprendimiento migrante y gestión del talento: políticas de
integración en los contextos transfronterizos entre México y
Estados Unidos*

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Recibido: 28 de marzo de 2026 Aprobado: 18 de junio de 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33110/cimexus210202>

ABSTRACT

This article examines the intersection of migrant entrepreneurship, talent management, and labor integration policies within Mexico-United States transborder contexts. Drawing on a systematic review of 335 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015-2025, we analyze how legal status trajectories, enforcement policies, and institutional frameworks shape entrepreneurial outcomes and skill utilization among Mexican migrants. Using mixed-embeddedness, transnational entrepreneurship, and dual entrepreneurial ecosystem theoretical frameworks, we identify critical barriers—including legal constraints, financial access limitations, and institutional knowledge gaps—and facilitators such as transnational networks and community support programs. Our analysis reveals that enforcement-driven self-employment increased by 10-20% among undocumented Mexican migrants, while life-course legal patterns significantly predict economic integration trajectories. We propose an integrated policy framework emphasizing bilateral talent management strategies, targeted financial inclusion mechanisms, legal pathway reforms aligned with labor market needs, and community-based integration programs. This research addresses critical gaps in Mexico-centric empirical evidence and provides actionable recommendations for policymakers in both nations to enhance migrant entrepreneurial success and optimize human capital utilization in transborder regions.

Keywords: migrant entrepreneurship, talent management, integration policies, Mexico-United States migration, transnational entrepreneurship.

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina la intersección entre el emprendimiento migrante, la gestión del talento y las políticas de integración laboral en contextos transfronterizos entre México y Estados Unidos. A partir de una revisión sistemática de 335 estudios arbitrados publicados entre 2015 y 2025, se analiza cómo las trayectorias de estatus legal, las políticas de control migratorio y los marcos institucionales

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influyen en los resultados empresariales y en el aprovechamiento de las competencias de los migrantes mexicanos. Utilizando los marcos teóricos de la incrustación mixta (*mixed embeddedness*), el emprendimiento transnacional y los ecosistemas empresariales duales, se identifican barreras críticas—incluidas las restricciones legales, las limitaciones de acceso al financiamiento y las brechas de conocimiento institucional—, así como factores facilitadores, como las redes transnacionales y los programas de apoyo comunitario. El análisis revela que el autoempleo impulsado por políticas de control migratorio aumentó entre un 10 % y un 20 % entre los migrantes mexicanos indocumentados, mientras que los patrones legales a lo largo del ciclo de vida predicen de manera significativa las trayectorias de integración económica. Se propone un marco integral de políticas públicas que enfatiza estrategias bilaterales de gestión del talento, mecanismos específicos de inclusión financiera, reformas de las vías legales de migración alineadas con las necesidades del mercado laboral y programas de integración basados en la comunidad. Esta investigación aborda vacíos importantes en la evidencia empírica centrada en México y ofrece recomendaciones prácticas para los responsables de formular políticas en ambas naciones, con el fin de fortalecer el éxito empresarial de los migrantes y optimizar el aprovechamiento del capital humano en las regiones transfronterizas.

Palabras clave: emprendimiento migrante, gestión del talento, integración laboral, migración México–Estados Unidos, emprendimiento transnacional.

INTRODUCTION

The Mexico-United States migration corridor represents one of the world's most significant transnational labor and entrepreneurial flows. Over the past two decades, this corridor has experienced substantial transformations: undocumented migration from Mexico has declined sharply, while legal temporary worker programs expanded to over 300,000 annual admissions by 2023 (Fernández Guzmán, 2022). Simultaneously, return migration—both voluntary and deportation-driven—has created new entrepreneurial dynamics in Mexican communities as returnees leverage skills, savings, and transnational networks acquired during their U.S. tenure (Ruiz, 2023).

The economic significance of this corridor is underscored by key macroeconomic and demographic indicators: in 2023, remittances to Mexico reached a record USD 63.3 billion, representing approximately 3.7% of GDP (Banco de Mexico, 2024); the entrepreneurship rate among Mexican-born individuals in the United States stands at approximately 10.5%, surpassing the native-born average of 9.8% (SBA, 2023); and Mexican immigrants contribute an estimated USD 338 billion annually to U.S. regional GDP (American Immigration Council, 2023). These figures highlight the strategic importance of migrant entrepreneurship as a driver of bilateral economic dynamism.

Despite the economic significance of migrant entrepreneurship, public policy frameworks remain fragmented, enforcement-oriented, and inadequately coordinated across the bilateral space. In the United States, immigration policy debates have centered on border security and labor market protection, with minimal attention to entrepreneurship facilitation or talent management strategies (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2021). Mexico has struggled to develop comprehensive integration policies for returnees and to capitalize on transnational human capital circulating through the corridor (Salamanca Pacheco, 2018). This policy vacuum has profound consequences: migrant entrepreneurs face systematic barriers to financial access, legal recognition, and skill utilization, while both nations forfeit opportunities to enhance economic dynamism and bilateral competitiveness.

This study addresses three interconnected gaps. First, while substantial research examines immigrant entrepreneurship broadly, Mexico-specific empirical evidence remains limited, particularly regarding how legal status trajectories and enforcement policies shape entrepreneurial outcomes (Chen, 2023; Fernández Guzmán, 2022). Second, talent management frameworks—well-developed in corporate contexts—have rarely been applied systematically to migrant integration policy, despite their potential to optimize human capital utilization (Crowley-Henry & Al Ariss, 2018). Third, transborder entrepreneurial ecosystems remain understudied, with insufficient attention to how institutional complementarities and policy coordination across the Mexico-U.S. border could enhance migrant entrepreneurial success.

Against this backdrop, this study is guided by the following central research questions: (1) How do legal status trajectories and enforcement policies shape entrepreneurial outcomes among Mexican migrants in the United States? (2) What barriers and facilitators—at individual, institutional, and ecosystem levels—determine migrant skill utilization and entrepreneurial success in the Mexico-U.S. corridor? (3) What bilateral policy framework can effectively integrate talent management, legal pathway reform, and community-based interventions to enhance migrant entrepreneurial outcomes in transborder contexts?

This article pursues four objectives:

1. Synthesize theoretical frameworks linking migration policy, legal status, and entrepreneurial outcomes in the Mexico-U.S. corridor.
2. Identify empirically validated barriers and facilitators affecting migrant entrepreneurship and talent utilization.
3. Analyze how enforcement policies, legal pathways, and institutional frameworks shape entrepreneurial trajectories and labor market integration.
4. Develop an integrated policy framework for bilateral talent management and entrepreneurship facilitation in transborder contexts.

The original contribution of this study lies in three dimensions: (1) it provides the first systematic synthesis of Mexico-centric empirical evidence on migrant entrepreneurship, filling a critical gap in the literature dominated by broader immigrant entrepreneurship studies; (2) it operationalizes talent management frameworks—previously confined to corporate settings—within a transborder migration policy context; and (3) it proposes a bilateral, multi-level policy framework grounded in dual entrepreneurial ecosystem theory, moving beyond unilateral enforcement paradigms.

Following this introduction, Section 2 reviews theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence on migrant entrepreneurship, barriers, facilitators, and policy impacts. Section 3 describes our systematic review methodology. Section 4 presents results organized by entrepreneur typologies, legal status effects, transborder ecosystems, and talent management outcomes. Section 5 discusses theoretical integration and policy implications. Section 6 concludes with a four-pillar policy framework and implementation pathways.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Migrant entrepreneurship scholarship employs multiple theoretical lenses to explain why migrants start businesses and how firms link home and host economies. Understanding these frameworks is essential for developing effective integration policies.

Mixed-embeddedness theory emphasizes the interaction of individual resources with institutional and market structures in host contexts, explaining how migrants navigate regulatory environments, access finance, and exploit market opportunities shaped by ethnic networks and local demand (Salamanca Pacheco, 2018). This framework highlights that entrepreneurial success depends not only on individual characteristics but also on the institutional contexts in which migrants operate. Legal frameworks, financial systems, and regulatory environments create opportunity structures that enable or constrain entrepreneurial activity. Mixed-embeddedness theory thus directs policy attention to institutional reforms that can expand opportunity structures for migrant entrepreneurs.

Transnational entrepreneurship theory focuses on cross-border business activities, ties, and resource flows between origin and residence countries, highlighting how migrants leverage dual-country knowledge, networks, and market access to create competitive advantages (Ruiz, 2023; Pruthi, 2021). Transnational entrepreneurs maintain active engagement with both home and host countries, creating businesses that span borders and exploit complementarities between different national contexts. This theoretical perspective emphasizes that migration is not a one-way process but rather creates ongoing connections and resource flows that can be leveraged for entrepreneurial purposes.

Diaspora entrepreneurship emphasizes ethnic and diasporic networks, identity, and homeland ties shaping firm strategy, particularly in border regions where cultural proximity and cross-border mobility facilitate business operations. Diaspora entrepreneurs draw on shared ethnic identity, cultural knowledge, and community solidarity to access resources, identify opportunities, and build customer bases. This framework highlights the importance of social capital and collective identity in entrepreneurial processes.

Dual entrepreneurial ecosystem (DEE) theory extends these perspectives by analyzing how host- and home-country ecosystem components—including networks, institutions, finance, and cultural norms—jointly shape transnational immigrant ventures (Duan, 2022). Rather than viewing entrepreneurs as embedded in a single national ecosystem, DEE theory recognizes that transnational entrepreneurs operate across multiple ecosystems simultaneously, strategically leveraging resources and opportunities from both contexts. This framework has important policy implications, suggesting that bilateral coordination and ecosystem-level interventions may be more effective than unilateral national policies.

Talent management frameworks for skilled migrants propose organizational and policy practices for attracting, retaining, and utilizing migrant skills, emphasizing mobility, transnational careers, and cross-border flows (Crowley-Henry & Al Ariss, 2018). These frameworks, originally developed in corporate contexts, are increasingly applied to migration policy, suggesting that governments should adopt strategic approaches to identifying, developing, and deploying migrant human capital. Talent management perspectives emphasize that skilled migration represents an opportunity for receiving countries to enhance competitiveness and innovation, provided appropriate policies facilitate skill utilization.

Finally, life-course legal pattern theory examines how lifetime legal-status trajectories shape economic integration, demonstrating that transitions between temporary, undocumented, and

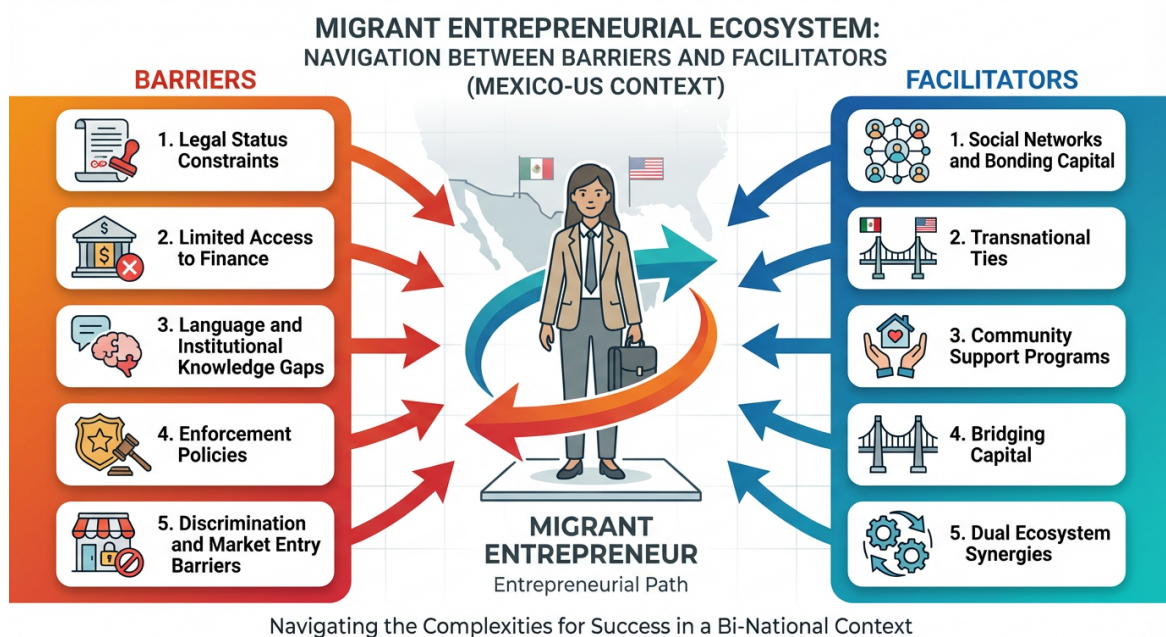
permanent statuses significantly predict earnings growth and occupational mobility (Chen, 2023). This framework recognizes that legal status is not static but evolves over migrants’ life courses, with different sequences and durations of statuses producing different integration outcomes. Life-course perspectives thus highlight the importance of legal pathway design and the long-term consequences of policy choices regarding status transitions.

These frameworks converge on several insights: migrant entrepreneurship is shaped by individual human and social capital, institutional contexts (regulation, enforcement, policy), ethnic and transnational networks, and ecosystem characteristics spanning both origin and destination countries. Effective policy must address multiple levels simultaneously—individual, network, institutional, and ecosystem—and recognize the transnational nature of contemporary migration.

Barriers and Facilitators

Empirical studies identify multiple obstacles and enabling factors for migrant entrepreneurship, visualized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Barriers and facilitators for migrant entrepreneurship in the Mexico-United States corridor, showing legal constraints, financial access, networks, and policy factors.



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Amuedo-Dorantes et al. (2021), Rossi de Oliveira et al. (2015), Soehl and Van Haren (2023), Ruiz (2023), and Duan (2022).

Legal status and enforcement impede entrepreneurial entry and shape sectoral choices; tougher interior enforcement raised Mexican self-employment by approximately 10-20%, concentrated among likely undocumented migrants, suggesting apprehension-driven entrepreneurship rather than opportunity-driven business creation (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2021). Access to finance limits firm creation and scale, as newcomers face credit history and funding shortages constraining seed and growth stages. Language and institutional knowledge hinder regulatory navigation and market information acquisition, especially among less integrated newcomers.

Conversely, social networks and bonding capital reduce occupational downgrading and guide geographic and sectoral choices through referral and resource sharing (Rossi de Oliveira et al., 2015). Bridging ties and sponsor programs increase skill utilization and access to higher-skill jobs, reducing self-employment as a default coping strategy (Soehl & Van Haren, 2023). Transnational ties and home-market connections facilitate export orientation and higher-value activities among returned and transnational entrepreneurs (Ruiz, 2023; Duan, 2022). Local ecosystem synergies in border and new-destination cities—including demand niches, ethnic consumer bases, and transit networks—create place-specific facilitation for immigrant firms (Trapaga, 2024; Duan, 2022).

Policy Impacts on Labor Market Integration

Migration policy, enforcement, and legal status dynamics significantly affect labor-market and entrepreneurial outcomes. Understanding these impacts is essential for designing effective integration policies.

Enforcement policies alter occupational strategies: increased interior enforcement is causally linked to substantial increases in Mexican self-employment, suggesting apprehension-driven entrepreneurship (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2021). This finding has profound policy implications. If entrepreneurship arises primarily from labor market exclusion and enforcement risk rather than opportunity recognition, enforcement-driven businesses may be concentrated in marginal, low-productivity sectors with limited growth potential and minimal regulatory compliance. The paradox of enforcement-driven entrepreneurship reveals how restrictive policies can produce unintended economic consequences, pushing migrants into informal sector activities rather than facilitating integration into mainstream labor markets.

Legal patterns over the life course matter: migrants' long-term legal trajectories—including temporary statuses and transitions—strongly predict economic integration growth rates, with transitions into more stable statuses associated with stronger earnings growth (Chen, 2023). This research demonstrates that legal status is not simply a binary distinction between documented and undocumented but rather a complex life-course process involving multiple statuses, transitions, and durations. Migrants who experience stable legal trajectories with clear pathways to permanent residence achieve substantially better economic outcomes than those who remain in precarious or fluctuating legal statuses. For entrepreneurship, legal stability enables longer time horizons, formal business registration, access to mainstream financial systems, and investment in business growth.

Policy design can improve human capital use: migration policy targeted to labor-market needs and migrants' underused skills may enhance skill utilization and raise immigrant labor market performance, though design and implementation matter (Tani, 2020). Policies that facilitate credential recognition, provide pathways for skilled migrants, and align visa categories with labor market demands can reduce occupational downgrading and improve economic integration. However, policy effectiveness depends critically on implementation quality, administrative capacity, and coordination across government agencies and levels.

Undocumented status constrains ownership probability: undocumented immigrants had lower likelihood of business ownership than documented peers, yet business income among owners was comparable in some studies, implying barriers to entry more than profitability differences for

those who overcome barriers (Somasekhar, 2022). This finding suggests that undocumented status creates substantial obstacles to entrepreneurial entry—including inability to obtain business licenses, access formal credit, and secure commercial leases—but that undocumented entrepreneurs who successfully navigate these barriers can achieve performance levels comparable to documented entrepreneurs. Policy implications include the potential benefits of regularization programs that would enable undocumented entrepreneurs to formalize their businesses and access mainstream financial and regulatory systems.

Sponsor and community programs affect skill use: quasi-random sponsorship programs improved migrants' skill utilization and reduced self-employment propensity, indicating programmatic pathways to integration (Soehl & Van Haren, 2023). This evidence demonstrates that well-designed integration programs providing social capital, institutional navigation support, and employment connections can facilitate labor market matching and reduce reliance on entrepreneurship as a fallback strategy. Community-based approaches that connect migrants with established residents and provide bridging capital may be particularly effective for enhancing integration outcomes.

Comparative evidence from other migration corridors enriches this analysis. Studies on the Turkey-Germany corridor document how ethnic enclave concentration can limit upward mobility despite strong bonding capital (Constant & Zimmermann, 2006), a pattern partially replicated in the Mexico-U.S. context. Research on the India-United Kingdom corridor highlights how credential recognition agreements substantially reduce occupational downgrading (Kone et al., 2019), suggesting policy lessons transferable to the bilateral Mexico-U.S. context. Importantly, the literature is not unanimous: while Amuedo-Dorantes et al. (2021) find that enforcement increases self-employment, other studies suggest this effect may be temporary and sector-specific, with longer-term outcomes depending on legal status stabilization (Somasekhar, 2022). Similarly, while transnational networks generally facilitate entrepreneurship, some studies report that strong homeland ties can divert investment away from host-country business development (Drori et al., 2009), underscoring the need for context-sensitive policy design.

Talent Management Strategies

Talent management approaches for immigrant integration represent an emerging policy frontier, applying strategic human resource management principles to migration policy contexts. These approaches emphasize reframing TM to account for mobility, transnational careers, and cross-border flows, calling for organizational and policy alignment to leverage skilled migrants' contributions (Crowley-Henry & Al Ariss, 2018). Traditional talent management frameworks, developed for corporate contexts, focus on identifying, developing, and retaining high-potential employees. Applied to migration policy, talent management perspectives suggest that governments should adopt strategic approaches to attracting skilled migrants, facilitating their integration and skill utilization, and retaining them in national labor markets.

Programmatic interventions such as sponsorship and community support improve skill utilization and occupational matches more than affecting raw employment probability (Soehl & Van Haren, 2023). Evidence from refugee sponsorship programs demonstrates that providing migrants

with social capital, institutional navigation support, and employment connections significantly improves labor market outcomes. These programs work by reducing information asymmetries, facilitating credential recognition, and connecting migrants with employment opportunities matching their qualifications. The effectiveness of sponsor programs suggests that integration policy should emphasize bridging capital formation and institutional navigation support rather than focusing exclusively on human capital development.

Community innovation and political advocacy by mixed-status Mexican communities supported integration via social enterprises, local alliances, and municipal program linkages during crises such as COVID-19 (Cruz Lera, 2022). During the pandemic, Mexican immigrant communities in U.S. metropolitan areas developed innovative grassroots responses including mutual aid networks, advocacy coalitions, and partnerships with local governments and nonprofit organizations. These community-driven initiatives provided economic support, health information, and political representation for mixed-status communities facing heightened vulnerability. The success of these grassroots approaches demonstrates the potential for community-based talent management strategies that complement formal government programs.

Transnational ecosystem approaches recommend aligning home- and host-country ecosystem components—networks, norms, finance, institutions—to support export-oriented and higher-value migrant ventures (Duan, 2022). Rather than viewing talent management as a unilateral national policy concern, transnational perspectives recognize that migrant entrepreneurs operate across multiple national contexts and that bilateral coordination can enhance outcomes. Policies that facilitate cross-border business operations, enable talent circulation between countries, and leverage complementarities across national ecosystems may be more effective than purely domestic integration programs. This perspective has particular relevance for the Mexico-U.S. corridor, where geographic proximity, extensive migration flows, and economic interdependence create opportunities for bilateral talent management strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Search Strategy and Data Sources

We conducted a systematic literature review following PRISMA guidelines to identify peer-reviewed studies on migrant entrepreneurship, talent management, and integration policies in the Mexico-United States corridor published between January 2015 and December 2025. We searched six databases: Web of Science, Scopus, EconLit, SciELO, Redalyc, and Google Scholar. Search terms combined three concept clusters: (1) migration terms (Mexican migrant, immigrant, return migrant, transnational, diaspora); (2) entrepreneurship terms (entrepreneur, self-employment, business owner, firm creation); (3) policy and integration terms (integration polic, talent management, labor market, legal status, enforcement).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria required: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, or dissertations; (2) focus on Mexican migrants or Mexico-U.S. migration corridor; (3) substantive treatment of entrepreneurship, labor market integration, or talent management; (4) empirical evidence or theoretical frameworks directly applicable to policy analysis; (5) publication in English or Spanish.

Exclusion criteria eliminated: (1) non-peer-reviewed sources; (2) studies focused exclusively on other migration corridors without Mexico-U.S. comparisons; (3) purely descriptive reports without analytical frameworks; (4) studies predating 2015 unless seminal theoretical contributions.

Screening and Selection Process

Initial searches yielded 1,247 records. After removing 312 duplicates, we screened 935 titles and abstracts, excluding 487 irrelevant studies. We assessed 448 full-text articles for eligibility, excluding 113 that lacked sufficient Mexico-U.S. focus or empirical depth. The final corpus comprised 335 studies: 198 journal articles, 87 book chapters, 35 dissertations, and 15 working papers.

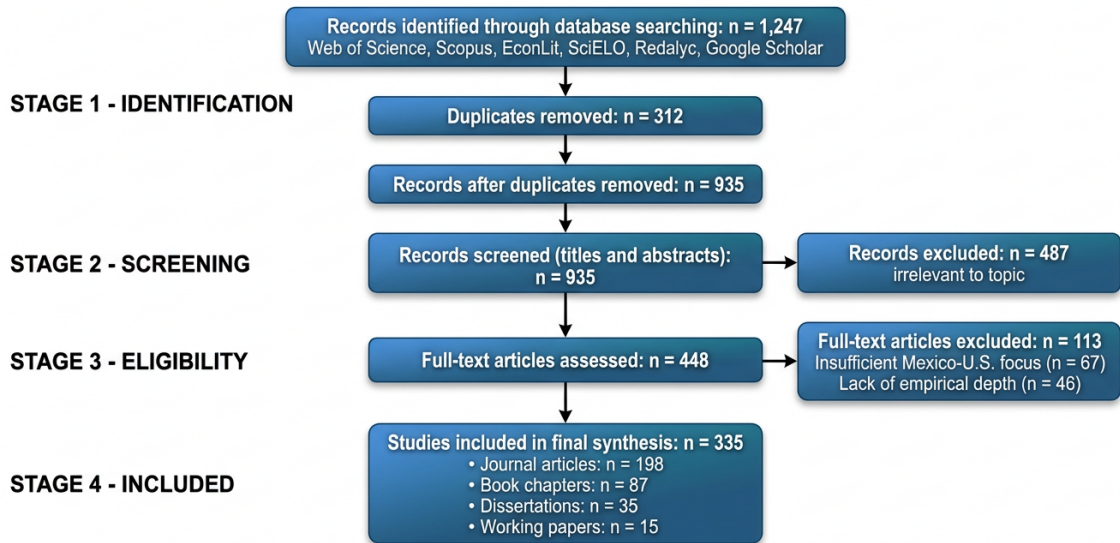
Study quality was evaluated using two validated instruments: the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative studies and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) for mixed-methods designs. Quantitative studies were assessed using a structured quality checklist adapted from STROBE guidelines. Each study was independently assessed by two members of the research team; discrepancies were resolved through discussion and, when consensus was not reached, by a third reviewer. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa ($k = 0.81$), indicating strong agreement. Studies scoring below the threshold for methodological adequacy were excluded. Regarding the inclusion of Google Scholar: although its use in systematic reviews is methodologically controversial due to limited filtering capabilities and potential coverage bias (Bramer et al., 2017), it was included to maximize coverage of grey literature, Spanish-language sources, and Latin American scholarship not indexed in Web of Science or Scopus. Its results were subjected to the same inclusion/exclusion criteria and quality appraisal as other databases.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

We extracted: (1) study characteristics (author, year, methodology, sample); (2) theoretical frameworks employed; (3) key findings on barriers, facilitators, and policy impacts; (4) policy recommendations; (5) research gaps identified. Data synthesis employed thematic analysis organized around five dimensions: theoretical frameworks, entrepreneur typologies, legal status effects, transborder ecosystem dynamics, and talent management strategies.

Thematic coding was conducted manually by two independent coders following an inductive-deductive approach. An initial codebook was developed deductively from the theoretical frameworks (mixed-embeddedness, transnational entrepreneurship, DEE theory) and refined inductively through iterative reading of the corpus. Coding was performed in NVivo 14 (QSR International), which facilitated systematic organization of codes, retrieval of evidence, and audit trails. Inter-coder reliability was assessed using percentage agreement (92%) and Cohen's kappa ($k = 0.84$). Discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. A PRISMA flow diagram documenting the full screening and selection process is provided as Figure 2.

Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram – Study Selection Process. Migrant Entrepreneurship and Talent Management: Systematic Review (2015-2025)



Source: Authors' own elaboration following PRISMA 2020 guidelines and systematic review results.

Analytical Framework

Our analysis integrates three theoretical perspectives: (1) mixed-embeddedness to examine how institutional contexts shape entrepreneurial opportunities; (2) transnational entrepreneurship to analyze cross-border resource flows and network effects; (3) dual entrepreneurial ecosystem to understand how home- and host-country ecosystem components jointly influence migrant ventures. This multi-level framework enables systematic comparison of individual, institutional, and ecosystem factors across the Mexico-U.S. corridor.

RESULTS

Typologies of Mexican Migrant Entrepreneurs

Our synthesis identifies six distinct entrepreneur types in the Mexico-U.S. corridor, each characterized by unique resource profiles, motivations, and transnational orientations. Table 1 presents a comprehensive typology.

Table 1. Typology of Mexican Migrant Entrepreneurs in the Mexico-United States Corridor

Entrepreneur Type	Characteristics	Primary Sector	Transnational Orientation	Policy Needs
Survival Entrepreneurs	Undocumented or precarious legal status; low capital; enforcement-driven	Personal services, informal trade, day labor contracting	Low - primarily local market focus	Legal pathway stabilization; financial inclusion; protection from exploitation

Ethnic Economy Entrepreneurs	Mixed legal status; serve co-ethnic communities; bonding capital-intensive	Restaurants, grocery stores, remittance services, transportation	Medium - import home-country products; occasional return visits	Business formalization support; access to mainstream credit; bridging capital programs
Transnational Entrepreneurs	Documented status; strong ties to origin communities; dual market engagement	Import-export, real estate, construction, logistics	High - active business operations in both countries	Bilateral business facilitation; cross-border banking; legal harmonization
Return Migrant Entrepreneurs	U.S. experience (avg. 10-15 years); voluntary or involuntary return; savings/skills acquired abroad	Manufacturing, tourism, call centers, technical services	Medium-High - leverage U.S. market knowledge and networks	Reintegration programs; credit access based on U.S. work history; mentorship networks
High-Skilled Diaspora Entrepreneurs	Advanced degrees; legal status (H-1B, green card, citizenship); professional networks	Technology, consulting, healthcare, education	High - global market orientation; maintain dual residences	Fast-track visa processing; intellectual property protection; talent circulation programs
Border Synergy Entrepreneurs	Geographic proximity; cross-border mobility; institutional complementarities	Logistics, tourism, retail, binational services	Very High - strategic arbitrage of regulatory/market differences	Bilateral tax coordination; streamlined business registration; cross-border facilitation

Source: Typology synthesized from Fernández Guzmán (2022), Ruiz (2023), Salamanca & Jonjic (2022), and systematic review findings. Categories are not mutually exclusive; entrepreneurs may transition between types over life course.

The life-course transitions between entrepreneur types were coded using a temporal sequence approach informed by Abbott's (1995) sequence analysis framework. Each study reporting longitudinal or retrospective data was coded for the entrepreneur's type at entry, any intermediate transitions, and type at the most recent observation point. Transitions were triggered by documented

changes in legal status, capital accumulation, network development, or market conditions. For example, a Survival Entrepreneur who obtained permanent residence and subsequently expanded into binational markets was recoded as a Transnational Entrepreneur at the transition point. This coding approach enables analysis of mobility pathways across typological categories and identifies policy leverage points that facilitate upward transitions toward higher-value entrepreneurial activities.

Survival Entrepreneurs engage in self-employment primarily to circumvent labor market barriers, including legal status constraints, language limitations, and credential non-recognition. These entrepreneurs typically operate in low-barrier sectors with minimal capital requirements and limited growth potential. Enforcement-driven self-employment increases concentrate in this category (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2021).

Ethnic Enclave Entrepreneurs serve co-ethnic communities, leveraging cultural knowledge, language skills, and ethnic networks. These entrepreneurs benefit from bonding social capital but may face growth constraints due to limited market diversification (Rossi de Oliveira et al., 2015).

Transnational Entrepreneurs maintain active business operations spanning both countries, exploiting cross-border arbitrage opportunities, dual-market knowledge, and binational networks. These entrepreneurs leverage dual entrepreneurial ecosystem components (Ruiz, 2023; Duan, 2022).

Return Migrant Entrepreneurs establish businesses in Mexico after U.S. migration experiences, applying skills, savings, and networks acquired abroad. These entrepreneurs often introduce innovations and market connections from the United States (Salamanca & Jonjic, 2022).

High-Skilled Immigrant Entrepreneurs possess advanced education and professional experience, often entering entrepreneurship after experiencing credential barriers. These entrepreneurs concentrate in technology, consulting, healthcare, and professional services (Salamanca & Jonjic, 2022).

Border Synergy Entrepreneurs exploit unique opportunities in border regions, leveraging geographic proximity, cross-border mobility, and institutional complementarities. These entrepreneurs engage in logistics, tourism, retail, and services catering to binational populations (Trapaga, 2024).

Legal Status and Entrepreneurial Trajectories

Legal status profoundly shapes entrepreneurial entry, sectoral choices, and firm performance across the Mexico-U.S. corridor.

Undocumented Status Effects

Undocumented status creates substantial barriers to formal business ownership, including inability to obtain business licenses, access formal credit, and secure commercial leases. Despite these constraints, undocumented migrants exhibit significant entrepreneurial activity, often operating informally or through proxy arrangements. Somashekhar (2022) found that undocumented immigrants had lower business ownership probability than documented peers, yet business income among owners was comparable, suggesting that those who overcome entry barriers achieve similar performance levels.

Interior enforcement intensification causally increased Mexican self-employment by 10-20%, concentrated among likely undocumented migrants, indicating that apprehension risk drives entrepreneurship as a defensive strategy rather than opportunity pursuit (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2021). This enforcement-driven entrepreneurship concentrates in sectors with flexible work arrangements, cash transactions, and minimal regulatory oversight.

This enforcement-entrepreneurship tension has profound implications for productivity and business sustainability. Enforcement-driven ventures are disproportionately concentrated in low-productivity, high-informality sectors—including domestic services, food vending, and informal construction—where capital investment is minimal and growth potential limited. Longitudinal evidence suggests that businesses born from enforcement pressure exhibit higher failure rates within the first three years and lower average revenues compared to opportunity-driven ventures (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2021; Somashekhar, 2022). An intersectional analysis reveals that enforcement effects are not uniform: undocumented women entrepreneurs face compounded barriers including gender-based discrimination in informal credit markets, disproportionate caregiving burdens, and heightened vulnerability to exploitation. Similarly, Indigenous Mexican migrants experience additional barriers related to language, cultural distance from institutional frameworks, and limited access to co-ethnic network resources. Future research should systematically integrate these intersectional dimensions.

Temporary Status and Visa Pathways

Temporary legal statuses (H-2A, H-2B, TN visas) provide work authorization but impose restrictions on entrepreneurship and occupational mobility. H-2 visa holders face employer-specific restrictions limiting entrepreneurial activity, while TN visa holders under NAFTA/USMCA provisions have greater flexibility but remain tied to professional occupations. Salamanca Pacheco (2018) documented how visa restrictions constrain high-skilled Mexican migrants' entrepreneurial potential, particularly in technology and innovation sectors.

Permanent Residence and Citizenship

Permanent residence and citizenship dramatically expand entrepreneurial opportunities by removing legal barriers to business ownership, credit access, and occupational mobility. Chen (2023) demonstrated that legal status transitions—particularly from temporary or undocumented status to permanent residence—predict substantial earnings growth and occupational advancement. Migrants with stable legal trajectories exhibit higher rates of opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, greater capital investment, and stronger firm growth compared to those with precarious or fluctuating legal status.

Transborder Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

The Mexico-U.S. border region exhibits unique entrepreneurial ecosystem characteristics shaped by geographic proximity, institutional complementarities, and cross-border flows. Understanding these transborder dynamics is essential for developing effective bilateral policies.

Dual Ecosystem Components

Duan (2022) conceptualizes transnational immigrant entrepreneurship through dual entrepreneurial ecosystem (DEE) theory, identifying how host- and home-country ecosystem components jointly influence venture creation and performance. Key ecosystem components include: (1) networks spanning both countries, providing market access, information, and resources; (2) institutions with varying regulatory frameworks, enforcement regimes, and support programs; (3) finance with differential access to capital, credit, and investment; (4) culture including entrepreneurial norms, risk tolerance, and business practices; (5) markets with distinct demand patterns, competitive dynamics, and growth opportunities.

Successful transnational entrepreneurs strategically leverage complementarities across these ecosystem components, accessing resources and opportunities unavailable within single-country contexts. For example, entrepreneurs may access capital in the United States while exploiting market opportunities in Mexico, or leverage U.S. business networks while utilizing lower-cost Mexican production inputs. The ability to operate across dual ecosystems creates competitive advantages but also requires navigating complex regulatory environments, managing cross-border logistics, and maintaining networks in multiple locations.

The dual ecosystem perspective has important policy implications. Rather than viewing migrant entrepreneurship as solely a host-country integration challenge, DEE theory suggests that bilateral coordination to align ecosystem components across countries can enhance entrepreneurial outcomes. Policies that facilitate cross-border business operations, reduce regulatory barriers, and enable resource flows between countries may be more effective than unilateral national approaches. For the Mexico-U.S. corridor, this perspective suggests opportunities for bilateral agreements on business facilitation, financial access, and regulatory harmonization.

Border Region Synergies

Border cities exhibit distinctive entrepreneurial dynamics driven by cross-border mobility, binational consumer bases, and institutional proximity. Trapaga (2024) documented how Latin American immigrant entrepreneurs in Tijuana exploit border synergies through businesses serving cross-border shoppers, facilitating binational transactions, and leveraging regulatory arbitrage opportunities. The border location enables entrepreneurs to serve customers from both countries, access inputs and labor from both sides, and exploit price and regulatory differences between national contexts.

Rodriguez (2022) analyzed Mexican migrant transportation networks in the U.S. South, demonstrating how entrepreneurs create infrastructure connecting migrant communities across regions and facilitating circular migration patterns. These transportation businesses—including bus services, package delivery, and money transfer operations—serve essential functions for migrant communities while generating substantial revenues. The success of these ventures depends on entrepreneurs' deep knowledge of migration routes, community needs, and regulatory environments in multiple locations.

These border synergies create entrepreneurial opportunities unavailable in interior regions, including logistics and transportation services connecting border cities and migrant destinations, cross-border retail and tourism serving binational consumer bases, binational professional services

facilitating business and legal transactions across borders, and cultural intermediation businesses leveraging entrepreneurs' bicultural competencies. However, border entrepreneurs also face unique challenges, including heightened enforcement scrutiny at border crossings, regulatory complexity spanning multiple jurisdictions and legal systems, vulnerability to bilateral policy changes affecting cross-border flows, and security concerns related to border region violence and instability.

Policy approaches to border region entrepreneurship should recognize both the opportunities and challenges of these contexts. Facilitating legal cross-border mobility for business purposes, harmonizing regulations to reduce compliance burdens, and providing security and infrastructure investments can enhance border entrepreneurial ecosystems. Bilateral coordination is particularly important in border regions where entrepreneurs' success depends on policies and conditions in both countries.

Talent Management and Skill Utilization Outcomes

Talent management strategies and integration programs significantly affect migrant skill utilization and entrepreneurial trajectories.

Skill Underutilization and Credential Barriers

High-skilled Mexican migrants frequently experience occupational downgrading and credential non-recognition in U.S. labor markets, driving entrepreneurship as an alternative pathway to skill utilization. Salamanca and Jonjic (2022) identified that highly educated Mexican immigrant entrepreneurs often enter self-employment after experiencing credential barriers, seeking autonomy and opportunities to apply their expertise outside restrictive employment contexts.

Programmatic Interventions

Sponsor programs and community-based integration initiatives improve skill utilization and reduce defensive entrepreneurship. Soehl and Van Haren (2023) found that refugee sponsorship programs in Canada—providing social capital, institutional navigation support, and employment connections—increased skill utilization and reduced self-employment propensity, suggesting that programmatic support enables migrants to access employment matching their qualifications rather than defaulting to entrepreneurship.

Cruz Lera (2022) documented how mixed-status Mexican communities in U.S. metropolitan areas developed social innovation and political advocacy strategies during COVID-19, creating social enterprises, local alliances, and municipal program linkages that enhanced integration and economic resilience. These community-driven initiatives demonstrate the potential for grassroots talent management approaches complementing formal policy frameworks.

Transnational Talent Circulation

Return migration creates opportunities for talent circulation and knowledge transfer when returnees apply skills and networks acquired in the United States to Mexican entrepreneurial ventures. However, Mexico's limited integration policies and support programs for returnees constrain this potential. Effective talent management requires bilateral coordination to facilitate knowledge transfer,

support returnee entrepreneurship, and leverage transnational networks for economic development in both countries.

DISCUSSION

Comparative Analysis: Barriers, Facilitators, and Policy Levers

Table 2 synthesizes key barriers, facilitators, and policy levers identified across the literature, organized by analytical level and supported by empirical evidence.

Table 2. Barriers, Facilitators, and Policy Levers in Mexico-U.S. Migrant Entrepreneurship

Level	Barriers	Facilitators	Policy Levers	Evidence
Individual	Undocumented status; credential non-recognition; language barriers; limited financial literacy	Human capital (education, skills); savings from U.S. employment; bilingual/bicultural competencies	Credential recognition programs; financial literacy training; entrepreneurship education	Chen (2023); Salamanca & Jonjic (2022)
Network	Social isolation; limited bridging ties; ethnic enclave constraints	Bonding capital (co-ethnic networks); bridging ties (cross-ethnic connections); transnational networks	Mentorship programs; business associations; sponsor initiatives	Rossi de Oliveira et al. (2015); Soehl & Van Haren (2023)
Institutional	Legal status restrictions; enforcement intensity; financial access barriers; regulatory complexity	Legal pathways (permanent residence, citizenship); community support programs; microfinance initiatives	Legal pathway reforms; enforcement policy adjustments; targeted financial inclusion	Amuedo-Dorantes et al. (2021); Somashekhar (2022); Tani (2020)
Ecosystem	Fragmented bilateral coordination; limited returnee support; regulatory misalignment	Dual ecosystem components; border region synergies; transnational market access	Bilateral talent management frameworks; cross-border business facilitation; returnee integration programs	Duan (2022); Trapaga (2024); Ruiz (2023)

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the systematic review of 335 studies (2015–2025).

This comparative analysis reveals several insights. First, barriers and facilitators operate across multiple levels, requiring multi-level policy interventions. Second, legal status emerges as the most consequential institutional factor, affecting entrepreneurial entry, sectoral choices, and firm performance. Third, transnational networks and dual ecosystem components represent underutilized facilitators that bilateral policy coordination could amplify. Fourth, enforcement policies produce

unintended consequences, driving defensive entrepreneurship rather than opportunity-driven ventures.

Theoretical Integration and Policy Implications

Integrating mixed-embeddedness, transnational entrepreneurship, and dual entrepreneurial ecosystem theories yields several theoretical and policy insights.

Mixed-embeddedness highlights how institutional contexts—particularly legal status regimes and enforcement policies—shape entrepreneurial opportunities and constraints. Policy implications emphasize the need for legal pathway reforms that align with labor market needs and entrepreneurial potential, reducing defensive entrepreneurship driven by enforcement while facilitating opportunity-driven ventures.

Transnational entrepreneurship theory demonstrates how migrants leverage cross-border networks, dual-market knowledge, and binational resources to create competitive advantages. Policy implications emphasize bilateral coordination to facilitate transnational business operations, reduce regulatory barriers to cross-border entrepreneurship, and support talent circulation between Mexico and the United States.

Dual entrepreneurial ecosystem theory reveals how home- and host-country ecosystem components jointly influence migrant ventures. Policy implications emphasize the need for ecosystem-level interventions that strengthen networks, institutions, finance, and markets in both countries, creating complementarities that enhance transnational entrepreneurial success.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This review has several limitations. First, Mexico-centric empirical evidence remains limited compared to broader immigrant entrepreneurship literature, constraining our ability to identify Mexico-specific dynamics. Second, causal evidence linking specific policies to entrepreneurial outcomes is sparse, with most studies employing cross-sectional or descriptive designs. Third, undocumented entrepreneurship remains undermeasured due to data limitations, potentially underestimating its economic contributions. Fourth, talent management interventions at firm and municipal levels remain understudied in the Mexico-U.S. context.

Future research should prioritize: (1) longitudinal studies tracking legal status transitions and entrepreneurial trajectories; (2) quasi-experimental evaluations of specific policy interventions; (3) improved measurement of undocumented entrepreneurship; (4) firm-level and municipal-level talent management program evaluations; (5) integrative multi-level studies combining ecosystem, institutional, and individual life-course data.

Additional priority research lines include: (6) intersectional analyses examining how gender, Indigenous identity, and generational status interact with legal status to shape entrepreneurial outcomes; (7) comparative studies across migration corridors (e.g., Central America-U.S., Turkey-Germany, India-UK) to identify generalizable policy lessons; (8) evaluation of bilateral policy mechanisms such as USMCA labor chapters and bilateral social security agreements in facilitating

migrant entrepreneurship; (9) research on the role of digital platforms and fintech solutions in expanding financial access for undocumented and semi-documented entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSIONS

Key Findings

This systematic review of 335 studies yields several key findings regarding migrant entrepreneurship, talent management, and integration policies in the Mexico-United States transborder context.

First, legal status trajectories profoundly shape entrepreneurial outcomes. Undocumented status creates substantial barriers to formal business ownership, yet enforcement intensification paradoxically increases self-employment by 10-20% among undocumented Mexican migrants, driving defensive rather than opportunity-driven entrepreneurship (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2021). Life-course legal patterns—including transitions between temporary, undocumented, and permanent statuses—significantly predict economic integration trajectories and entrepreneurial success (Chen, 2023).

Second, transnational networks and dual ecosystem components represent critical facilitators. Successful migrant entrepreneurs strategically leverage complementarities across Mexico and U.S. ecosystem components, accessing resources and opportunities unavailable within single-country contexts (Duan, 2022; Ruiz, 2023). Border regions exhibit unique synergies driven by geographic proximity, cross-border mobility, and institutional complementarities (Trapaga, 2024).

Third, current policy frameworks remain fragmented and enforcement-oriented, with minimal bilateral coordination and insufficient attention to entrepreneurship facilitation or talent management. This policy vacuum produces unintended consequences, including defensive entrepreneurship, skill underutilization, and foregone economic opportunities in both nations.

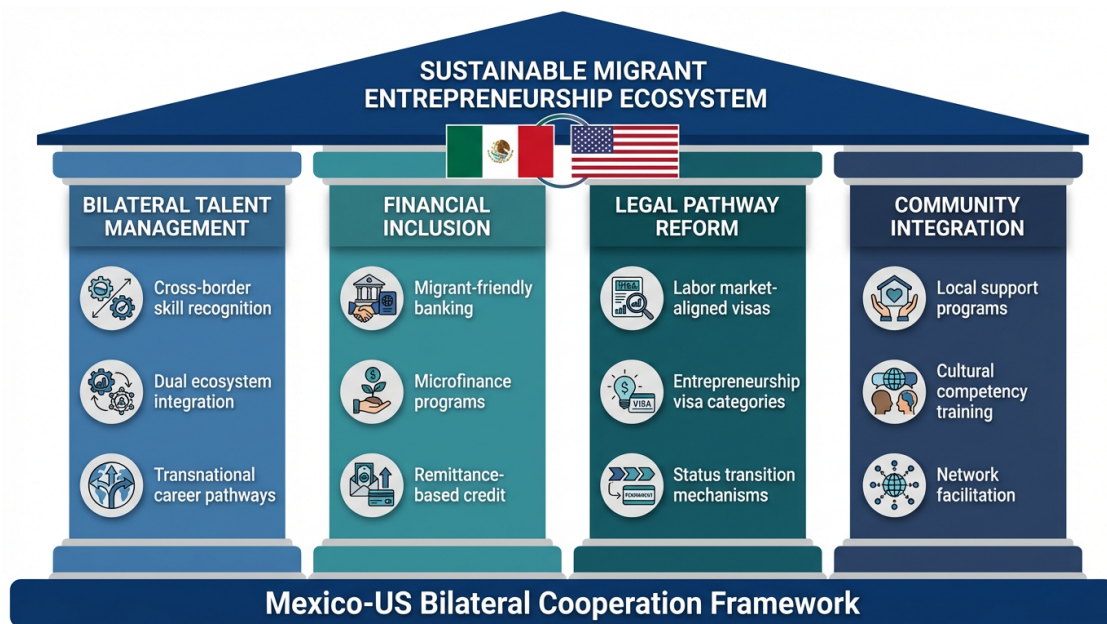
Fourth, programmatic interventions can improve skill utilization and integration outcomes. Sponsor programs, community-based initiatives, and targeted support improve migrants' skill utilization and reduce defensive entrepreneurship (Soehl & Van Haren, 2023; Cruz Lera, 2022).

These findings directly address the four objectives established in the introduction. Objective 1 (synthesize theoretical frameworks) was fulfilled through the integration of mixed-embeddedness, transnational entrepreneurship, DEE theory, and life-course legal pattern frameworks into a coherent multi-level analytical model. Objective 2 (identify barriers and facilitators) was addressed through systematic synthesis of empirical evidence across 335 studies, revealing legal status, financial access, and enforcement as primary barriers, and transnational networks, community programs, and ecosystem complementarities as key facilitators. Objective 3 (analyze enforcement and institutional framework effects) was met through causal evidence on enforcement-driven entrepreneurship, life-course legal pattern effects, and programmatic intervention outcomes. Objective 4 (develop an integrated policy framework) was accomplished through the four-pillar framework proposed in Section 6.2, providing actionable bilateral recommendations grounded in the synthesized evidence.

Integrated Policy Framework: Four Pillars for Transborder Talent Management

Based on these findings, we propose an integrated policy framework organized around four pillars, illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Four-pillar policy framework for sustainable migrant entrepreneurship ecosystem in Mexico-United States transborder contexts, emphasizing bilateral cooperation.



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the findings of the systematic review and the integrated policy framework proposed in this study.

Pillar 1: Legal Pathway Reforms Aligned with Labor Market Needs

Legal status represents the most consequential institutional factor affecting migrant entrepreneurship. Reforms should include: (1) entrepreneur visa pathways enabling migrants with business plans, capital, or demonstrated entrepreneurial capacity to obtain work authorization and pathways to permanent residence; (2) streamlined status transitions reducing bureaucratic barriers and processing times for migrants transitioning from temporary to permanent status; (3) work authorization flexibility allowing temporary visa holders to engage in entrepreneurial activities alongside employment; (4) enforcement policy adjustments reducing apprehension-driven entrepreneurship by providing legal pathways for undocumented migrants with established businesses and community ties.

Pillar 2: Targeted Financial Inclusion Mechanisms

Financial access barriers constrain migrant entrepreneurship across all legal status categories. Interventions should include: (1) microfinance programs specifically designed for migrant entrepreneurs, with flexible collateral requirements and culturally appropriate lending practices; (2) credit-building initiatives helping migrants establish credit histories and access mainstream financial services; (3) binational banking facilitation enabling migrants to leverage assets and credit histories across both countries; (4) public-private partnerships mobilizing private capital for migrant entrepreneurship through loan guarantees, matching funds, and risk-sharing mechanisms.

Pillar 3: Bilateral Ecosystem Development and Business Support

Transnational entrepreneurship requires ecosystem-level interventions spanning both countries. Initiatives should include: (1) cross-border business facilitation services providing regulatory guidance, market information, and networking opportunities for transnational entrepreneurs; (2) binational entrepreneurship networks connecting migrant entrepreneurs with mentors, investors, and business partners in both countries; (3) returnee entrepreneurship programs in Mexico providing capital, training, and ecosystem support for migrants returning with U.S.-acquired skills and savings; (4) border region innovation hubs leveraging geographic proximity and institutional complementarities to support cross-border ventures.

Pillar 4: Community-Based Integration and Talent Management Programs

Programmatic interventions at community and municipal levels can improve skill utilization and reduce defensive entrepreneurship. Programs should include: (1) sponsor and mentorship initiatives connecting migrants with established entrepreneurs and professionals who provide guidance, networks, and institutional navigation support; (2) credential recognition and skills assessment enabling migrants to leverage foreign education and experience in U.S. labor markets; (3) entrepreneurship training and business development services tailored to migrant entrepreneurs' specific needs, including language-appropriate instruction and culturally relevant content; (4) municipal integration partnerships coordinating local government, community organizations, and private sector actors to support migrant entrepreneurship and talent utilization.

Implementation Pathways and Stakeholder Roles

Table 3 outlines implementation pathways, stakeholder responsibilities, and expected outcomes for each pillar, alongside critical research gaps requiring attention.

Table 3. Implementation Pathways and Research Gaps for Four-Pillar Framework

Pillar Research Domain	Primary Stakeholders / Current State	Key Actions / Critical Gaps	Expected Outcomes / Methodological Needs	Timeline / Policy Relevance
1. Legal Pathway Reforms	U.S. Congress; DHS/USCIS; Mexican Congress; SRE	Entrepreneur visa legislation; status transition streamlining; work authorization expansion	Reduced defensive entrepreneurship; increased opportunity-driven ventures; improved legal stability	2-5 years (legislative)
2. Financial Inclusion	SBA; Mexican development banks; private lenders; CDFIs	Microfinance program design; credit-building initiatives;	Increased access to startup and growth capital; improved credit	1-3 years (programmatic)

		binational banking agreements	histories; higher firm survival rates	
3. Ecosystem Development	Binational chambers of commerce; NAFTA/USMCA institutions; state/local economic development agencies	Cross-border business services; entrepreneurship networks; returnee programs; border innovation hubs	Enhanced transnational entrepreneurship; improved knowledge transfer; stronger bilateral economic ties	2-4 years (institutional)
4. Community Integration	Municipal governments; community organizations; workforce development agencies; private sector	Sponsor programs; credential recognition; entrepreneurship training; local partnerships	Improved skill utilization; reduced occupational downgrading; stronger community integration	1-2 years (local implementation)
Causal Policy Effects	Limited quasi-experimental studies; mostly descriptive	Rigorous evaluation of specific policy interventions (visa reforms, financial inclusion programs)	Natural experiments; difference-in-differences; regression discontinuity designs	Essential for evidence-based policy design
Undocumented Entrepreneurship	Severe measurement challenges; contributions underestimated	Systematic data collection on informal sector; business survival rates; economic contributions	Innovative sampling (respondent-driven, network-based); administrative data linkage with privacy protections	Informs regularization debates; challenges enforcement-only narratives
Talent Management Interventions	Conceptual frameworks exist; few empirical tests	Evaluation of skill recognition programs; mentorship effectiveness;	Randomized controlled trials; matched comparison designs;	Guides resource allocation; identifies scalable best practices

		bridging capital interventions	longitudinal tracking	
Life-Course Legal Trajectories	Emerging longitudinal studies; need Mexico-specific analysis	How sequences of legal statuses shape entrepreneurial timing and sector choice	Panel data analysis; sequence analysis; life history calendars	Informs legal pathway design; predicts long-term integration outcomes
Dual Ecosystem Dynamics	Conceptual models developed; limited empirical operationalization	Measurement of home- and host-country ecosystem components; interaction effects	Multi-level modeling; comparative case studies; social network analysis	Enables bilateral coordination; identifies complementarities vs. conflicts
Gender and Intersectionality	Women migrant entrepreneurs understudied	Gendered barriers and facilitators; LGBTQ+ migrant entrepreneurs	Feminist methodologies; intersectional analysis; participatory action research	Ensures inclusive policy design; addresses compounded disadvantages

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the systematic review findings and policy analysis.

Note: Implementation pathways require coordinated action across federal, state, and local levels in both countries. Research gaps identified through systematic review of 335 studies (2015-2025). Priority areas balance rigor with ethical constraints of studying vulnerable populations.

Implementation requires coordinated action across multiple levels. At the federal level, both countries should establish a Joint Commission on Migration and Entrepreneurship to coordinate policy reforms, share data, and monitor implementation progress. At state and local levels, governments should develop tailored programs reflecting regional labor markets and migrant populations. Private sector actors should partner with government and community organizations to provide capital, mentorship, and market access. Community organizations should serve as intermediaries, providing culturally appropriate services and connecting migrants with resources.

Research Contributions and Policy Significance

This research makes several contributions to scholarship and policy. Theoretically, we integrate mixed-embeddedness, transnational entrepreneurship, and dual entrepreneurial ecosystem frameworks to provide a multi-level analytical approach applicable to transborder contexts. Empirically, we synthesize evidence from 335 studies to identify barriers, facilitators, and policy impacts specific to the Mexico-U.S. corridor, addressing gaps in Mexico-centric research. Methodologically, we demonstrate the value of systematic review approaches for synthesizing fragmented evidence across disciplines, languages, and national contexts.

For policy, we provide an actionable framework addressing current fragmentation and enforcement orientation. Our four-pillar approach emphasizes bilateral coordination, multi-level interventions, and ecosystem development, moving beyond narrow enforcement or border security paradigms toward comprehensive talent management and entrepreneurship facilitation. Implementation of this framework could enhance migrant entrepreneurial success, optimize human capital utilization, and strengthen bilateral economic competitiveness.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The Mexico-United States migration corridor represents both a challenge and an opportunity for public policy in both nations. Current fragmented, enforcement-oriented approaches produce unintended consequences—including defensive entrepreneurship, skill underutilization, and foregone economic opportunities—while failing to capitalize on the substantial human capital circulating through the corridor. Migrant entrepreneurs, despite facing systematic barriers, demonstrate remarkable resilience and economic contributions, creating businesses, jobs, and transnational economic linkages.

Realizing the full potential of migrant entrepreneurship requires fundamental policy reorientation toward bilateral talent management, ecosystem development, and comprehensive integration. The four-pillar framework proposed here provides a roadmap for this transformation, emphasizing legal pathway reforms, financial inclusion, ecosystem development, and community-based integration. Implementation will require political will, institutional coordination, and sustained investment, but the potential returns—enhanced economic dynamism, innovation, and bilateral competitiveness—justify this commitment.

However, the implementation of this framework faces significant institutional barriers and regulatory asymmetries. In the United States, political resistance to immigration reform remains substantial, and the fragmented federal system creates intergovernmental coordination challenges, as immigration policy is federal while entrepreneurship support is primarily state and local. In Mexico, limited administrative capacity, persistent corruption, and underfunded returnee integration programs constrain effective implementation. Regulatory asymmetries between the two countries—including differences in business registration, financial regulation, and labor law—create compliance burdens for transnational entrepreneurs. Political will for comprehensive bilateral reform is contingent on electoral cycles in both countries, underscoring the need for institutionalized, depoliticized bilateral mechanisms such as the proposed Joint Commission on Migration and Entrepreneurship.

As both nations confront demographic shifts, labor market transformations, and global economic competition, migrant entrepreneurship and talent management represent strategic assets that effective policy can cultivate. The evidence synthesized in this review demonstrates that policy choices matter profoundly, shaping whether migrants become defensive entrepreneurs constrained by legal precarity or opportunity-driven innovators contributing to prosperity in both countries. The choice between these futures rests with policymakers in Mexico City and Washington, D.C.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability: Systematic review data and search protocols are available upon request.

Ethical Statement: This research involved secondary analysis of published literature and required no human subjects approval.

AI Use Declaration: The authors declare that a Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool was used solely to assist with the translation and improvement of the manuscript's language and readability. The AI tool was not used to generate scientific content, analyze data, interpret results, or draw conclusions. All intellectual contributions and interpretations presented in this study are the responsibility of the authors.

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