**Frontiers in Business, Economics and Management**
ISSN: 2766-824X | Vol. 25, No. 1, 2026

# Strategies for Foreign Talent Attraction in Shandong Province in the Context of International Competition

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**Abstract:** The introduction of foreign talents plays a critical supporting and driving role in enhancing regional innovation-driven capacity and fostering new strengths of the open economy. Shandong Province has witnessed continuous expansion in the scale of foreign talent introduction and steady improvement in service efficiency, gradually forming a distinctive regional model for talent attraction and development. However, prominent challenges remain: the proportion of high-end and top-notch talents is relatively low, the alignment between talents and industrial demands is insufficient, regional distribution of talents is unbalanced, and the mechanisms for talent introduction and utilization are imperfect. To address these issues, this study proposes targeted strategies and suggestions for promoting the high-quality development of foreign talent introduction in Shandong Province, including optimizing policies for foreign talent programs, refining the mechanisms for talent introduction and utilization, innovating talent cultivation and development modes, and building a sound talent ecological environment.

**Keywords:** International competition; Foreign talent introduction; Talent policy.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the introduction of foreign talents has become an important starting point for the region to enhance the momentum of innovation and shape the new advantages of an open economy. It has increasingly attracted the attention of universities, enterprises, government departments and even the whole society. The introduction of foreign talents is not only an important path for Shandong Province to build a strong province of talents and connect with global innovative resources, but also a realistic need to promote the upgrading of the industrial chain and achieve high-quality development. It is also an unavoidable important proposition in the process of opening up and talent work.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Research on Regional Talent Introduction Policies and International Talent Competition

Academic research focuses on the macro-level patterns of international talent mobility and the evolution of national and regional talent introduction policy systems, which forms a critical foundation for understanding the strategic context and policy trajectory of talent introduction. Zhou et al. (2024) traced the evolutionary trajectory of China's service guarantee policies for foreign talents and identified the common problems inherent in the policy system [2]. Li (2023) analyzed the pathways and features of international academic talent agglomeration in Chinese universities against the backdrop of the shifting center-periphery pattern [4] Ren (2024) explored the innovation direction of China's international talent institutional system for the 15th Five-Year Plan period [5]. Ge (2023) reviewed the practical challenges confronting China's international talent introduction and proposed systematic advancement strategies [7]. Vinyals-Mirabent et al. (2025) investigated the strategic attraction effect of nation branding on global talents. Drawing on a large-scale survey covering 55 countries, they empirically validated the association between national image and talent relocation intention, and classified national clusters into three tiers of talent attractiveness [13]. Tuttle et al. (2025) examined the reshaping role of digital transformation in talent recruitment and selection models [11]. Studies focusing on BRICS countries center on talent mobility patterns in emerging economies and explore the characteristics of regional development in the context of global talent competition. Research in the field of nation branding points out that nation branding can serve as a strategic instrument for talent attraction, and effectively boost the inflow willingness of international talents through targeted national image cultivation.

### 2.2. Research on Industry-Talent Integration Effect and Talent Structure Adaptation

Scholars have conducted research on the supporting effects of international talents on industrial development and technological innovation, as well as the rules governing the introduction and cultivation of different types of talents, which provides theoretical references for analyzing the matching degree between talent supply and industrial demand. Wang (2024) argued that it is necessary to improve the support and guarantee mechanism for overseas-talent introduction so as to empower the development of new-quality productive forces [6]. Using samples from European Union countries, Bilan et al. (2025) confirmed that high-skilled migration exerts a positive driving effect on digital-economy development, with particularly prominent impacts on corporate digital intensity and big-data application [10]. Akgün et al. (2026) explored the influence of green human-resource management on employers' attractiveness to green talents, and verified the mediating effect of organizational environmental citizenship behavior as well as the moderating effect of green organizational culture [9]. Taking small-and medium-sized enterprises in Portugal's metallurgical industry as research cases, Rodrigues et al. (2024) demonstrated the positive effects of employer-

branding construction and internal-marketing strategies on talent attraction and retention [12].

### 2.3. Research on Talent Service Guarantee and Policy Optimization Paths

Scholars have explored foreign-born talents' settlement intention, the optimization of service guarantee systems, and pathways for refining specific policies, which offers practical references for improving the implementation effectiveness of talent-introduction policies. Wang and Li (2025) carried out an empirical analysis on the settlement intention of high-skilled foreign talents in China. Their study verified the positive effects of social networks and social participation, and identified differentiated patterns of ethnic-community synergy and organizational embeddedness across different cities [1]. Taking Guangzhou and Shenzhen as examples, Li (2022) investigated the influencing mechanism of perceived cultural adaptation on the long-term settlement intention of high-skilled foreign talents [3]. Wang (2024) put forward concrete improvement pathways for the employment system for foreign personnel in Hainan Free Trade Port [8].

### 2.4. Commentary on Existing Literature

Existing studies at home and abroad have conducted in-depth discussions on international talent introduction from theoretical, policy and practical dimensions, laying a solid foundation for subsequent research. However, there are still notable gaps. First, most studies on Shandong Province are fragmented policy analyses, while systematic and strategic research aligned with the new round of global talent competition remains insufficient. Second, existing research has not fully explored the mechanism of deep integration between talent introduction and industrial development, and studies on skilled foreign talent introduction in major manufacturing provinces are relatively scarce. Third, most countermeasures are macro-level principled statements, with limited operability and implementability. Grounding itself in the developmental realities of Shandong Province, this study closely responds to the new landscape of international talent competition and the demands of industrial transformation and upgrading in Shandong. It systematically analyzes the achievements, existing problems, and pathways of international talent introduction in Shandong Province, with a view to enriching research outcomes on regional talent policies and providing decision-making support for local practices.

## 3. Challenges Faced in the Process of Introducing Foreign Talents in Shandong Province Under the Background of International Competition

### 3.1. The Challenges Faced by the Foreign Talent Project in Shandong Province

First, challenges in talent competition and attractiveness. With deepening globalization and intensifying technological competition, the uncertainty surrounding international talent mobility has increased markedly. Shandong Province is confronted with dual competitive pressures from both domestic and international contexts. Shandong still has gaps in remuneration competitiveness for international talents, international-oriented living amenities, international schools and medical resources. This gives rise to the phenomenon whereby high-end foreign talents are "willing to come yet reluctant to stay". Second, challenges in talent evaluation and utilization mechanisms. Scientific evaluation and utilization mechanisms constitute a vital guarantee for fully unlocking the value of international talents. Establishing a scientific, impartial and utilization-oriented talent evaluation and utilization system to tap the innovation potential of international talents represents a key issue to be addressed under international talent programs. Third, challenges in talent mobility and retention. International talents in Shandong exhibit high mobility, and their willingness to stay is shaped by multiple complex factors. The province is confronted with practical difficulties including poor talent retention and unbalanced regional distribution. Building an enabling environment for the career growth of international talents and reducing talent turnover rates is a critical task for international talent programs. Fourth, challenges in the matching between talent structure and industrial development. As Shandong advances industrial transformation and upgrading, strategic emerging industries such as advanced manufacturing, biomedicine, new energy and integrated circuits have witnessed growing demand for high-end international talents. Targeted talent introduction aligned with industrial development to achieve high-level compatibility between talent supply and industrial demand stands as an important orientation for developing international talent programs.

### 3.2. The Challenges Faced by the Talent Introduction and Utilization Mechanism in Shandong Province

First, challenges in integrating talent agglomeration platforms and improving the efficiency of talent introduction and utilization. Shandong boasts a considerable number of diverse platforms for international talent introduction. Nevertheless, these platforms suffer from fragmented resources and relatively homogeneous functions, which prevents the full realization of overall service performance. Conventional talent-recruitment activities mainly focus on project matching and talent hunting, yet lack post-matching supporting resources for project incubation and technology transformation. Consequently, the platforms play a limited role in attracting and retaining international talents. Second, challenges in headhunting industry development and efficient talent recruitment. Headhunting services serve as an important instrument for market-oriented talent introduction and utilization. However, local international headhunting agencies in Shandong remain relatively underdeveloped and fail to satisfy market demands for high-quality talent recruitment. Cultivating and expanding local international headhunting capacity to improve the quality and efficiency of market-oriented talent introduction is a priority for mechanism construction. Third, challenges in inter-regional talent-introduction coordination mechanisms. Talent-introduction development is uneven across regions within Shandong. Collaborative networks for talent recruitment linking intra provincial, inter-provincial, domestic and overseas stakeholders remain underdeveloped. Insufficient effective communication and coordination hinder the formation of synergy for talent introduction and cultivation. Fourth, challenges in cultivating young foreign talents and building talent reserves. Young talents constitute a pivotal group in global talent competition. Current training for young

foreign talents overemphasizes academic research and degree attainment, while insufficient attention is paid to practical experience and professional skill development.

## 3.3. The Challenges Faced by the Foreign Talent Cultivation and Development Model in Shandong Province

First, challenges in the selection and appointment of leading foreign industrial talents. Key talent-introduction programs such as the "Double-Hundred Program for Foreign Experts" prioritize academic resumes and international titles in selection criteria, while insufficient consideration is given to talents' practical performance after their on-site deployment. The "one policy per person" scheme for top-tier foreign talents is not supported by a standardized evaluation and supervision system, and customized support policies lack follow-up tracking and assessment. Leading foreign talents demonstrate limited team-driving and technology-spillover effects, and fail to effectively foster local talent echelons. Second, challenges concerning university-based talent introduction and the utilization efficiency of educational resources. The disciplinary layout of talent recruitment in universities is not closely aligned with the industrial demands across Shandong Province, so that the supporting role of disciplinary talent introduction for industrial development cannot be fully exerted. Universities show low efficiency in utilizing talent-introduction resources, and the returns on talent-introduction funds are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of overall coordination for talent-recruitment resources among universities, as well as resource-sharing mechanisms for collaborative talent recruitment and joint talent cultivation. Third, challenges in the cultivation and retention of skilled foreign talents. As a major manufacturing province, Shandong has robust demand for skilled foreign talents. Current talent-introduction policies generally favor high-end R&D talents, whereas support for skilled foreign talents remains relatively inadequate. International cooperation in vocational education is shallow, and systematic joint-training programs for skilled foreign talents are absent. Skilled foreign talents are confronted with the absence of standardized systems for professional title evaluation and skill-level certification, resulting in their weak willingness for long-term retention.

## 3.4. The Challenges Faced by the Ecological Environment of Foreign Talents in Shandong Province

First, challenges concerning the implementation and optimization of international talent-introduction policies. Building a development ecosystem tailored for international talents calls for cross-departmental coordination and efficient policy execution. Nevertheless, policy implementation may be hampered by imperfect inter-departmental collaboration mechanisms and uneven resource allocation among grassroots authorities, which directly undermine policy effectiveness. International talent-introduction policies need to be updated and optimized amid global talent competition and the upgrading of industrial demands, so as to adapt to emerging problems and new circumstances. Second, challenges arising from foreign talents' diverse living needs against limited resource endowments. International talents have diversified and high-standard demands for living services. How to fully coordinate resource supply constitutes the key to retaining international talents for career development in Shandong. Addressing practical issues such as employment and education requires substantial financial and material inputs. How to satisfy their diverse needs within resource constraints poses a practical dilemma for the construction of talent ecosystems. Third, challenges in international talent community development and financial guarantee. Creating an "overseas-like" living environment suitable for international talents requires stable financial support and a long-term operational mechanism. Sustained vitality and attractiveness during community construction exert a direct bearing on the long-term retention of talents. The development of international talent communities should be aligned with local economic, social and cultural progress. How to realize integrated development between talent community construction and local socioeconomic growth represents a core issue in building living spaces for international talents.

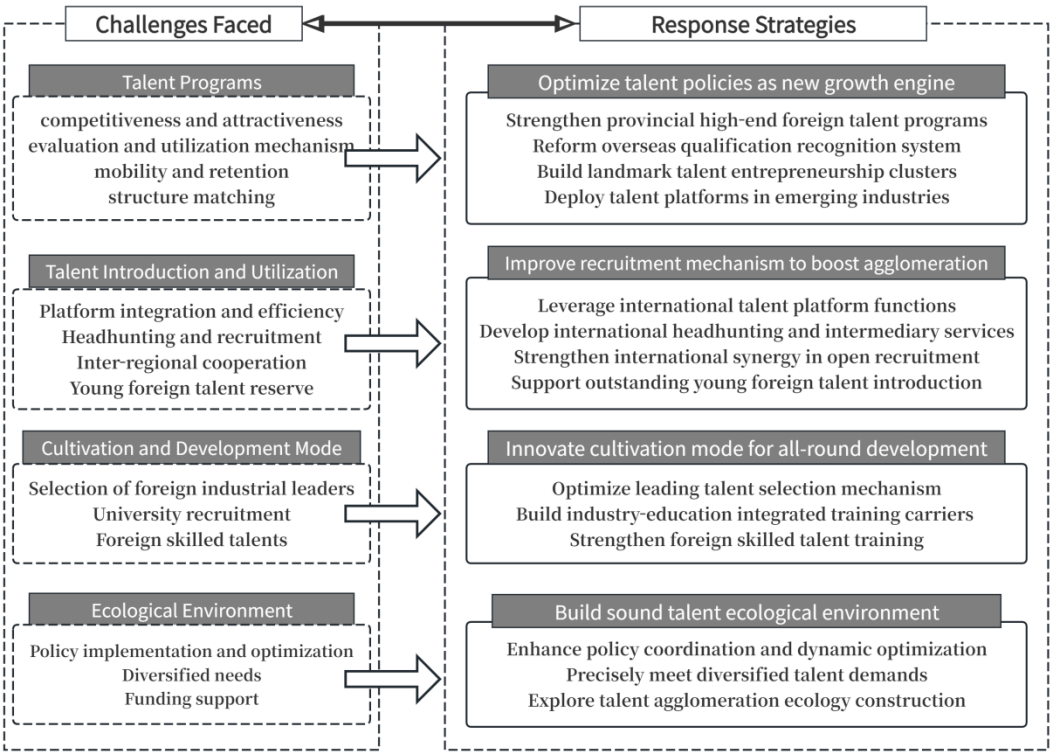



**Figure 1.** Analysis of Challenges and Coping Strategies for International Talent Introduction in Shandong Province Against the Background of International Competition

# 4. Countermeasures for Shandong Province to Attract Foreign Talents in the Context of International Competition

## 4.1. Optimize the Policies for Foreign Talent Projects in Shandong Province, And Create a New Engine for the Development of Foreign Talents

First, strengthen provincial-level programs for the introduction and cultivation of high-end foreign talents. Further implement the Action Plan for Agglomerating Overseas Elites, optimize and upgrade the "Double-Hundred Program for Foreign Experts", and highlight the guiding role of industrial demand in talent-introduction work. Establish and improve mechanisms for releasing the catalogue of urgently-needed talents and tiered support, specify differentiated funding standards and personalized service requirements, promote in-depth alignment between talent policies and industrial demands, and prevent the disconnection between talent recruitment and industrial needs. Second, deepen the reform of the recognition and evaluation system for overseas professional qualifications. Further advance the comparative recognition of overseas professional qualifications and professional titles in Shandong Province, optimize the service mechanism for overseas professional qualifications, actively explore multilateral mutual recognition of overseas professional qualifications, and build a dynamic catalogue adjustment mechanism, so as to provide solid institutional support for professional foreign talents to pursue careers in Shandong. Third, further develop the construction of "landmark talent innovation and entrepreneurship clusters". Give full play to the leading role of the Jinan-Qingdao platform. Building on the initial construction of talent agglomeration nodes in Zibo, Yantai, Weifang and Weihai, jointly forge a high-quality talent-development corridor together with Jinan and Qingdao. Establish and improve a multi-agent linkage mechanism for talent introduction and cultivation, scale up support for organizing high-level academic conferences, project expansion, entrepreneurship support, postdoctoral recruitment and other initiatives, and cultivate high-caliber talents that satisfy industrial development demands. Fourth, deploy talent introduction and cultivation platforms targeting strategic emerging industries. To meet the development needs of strategic emerging industries, promote the establishment of a coordination mechanism for diverse platforms. Encourage and support the establishment of talent-training platforms in Shandong, including foreign-funded R&D centers, international joint laboratories, and national offshore innovation and entrepreneurship bases for overseas talents. Explore the flexible talent-introduction model featuring "overseas R&D and achievement transformation in Shandong".

## 4.2. Improve the Talent Introduction and Utilization Mechanism in Shandong Province, And Enhance the Agglomeration Effect of International Talents

First, maximize the effectiveness of international talent agglomeration platforms. Increase investment in the construction of provincial-level International Talent Service Ports to improve their comprehensive service capacity and standards. Through policy integration and process innovation, adopt a parallel-processing model to shorten approval time-limits. Formulate hierarchical development plans for the platforms, and clarify their functional positioning and phased development goals. Second, accelerate the development of international headhunting and talent-introduction intermediary services. Introduce special supporting policies covering market access, subsidies for talent-introduction

services, tax incentives, and rewards for recommending high-end talents. Explore in-depth cooperation among international headhunting agencies, enterprises and universities to jointly develop overseas talent resource pools. Establish a quality evaluation mechanism for headhunting services, and provide continuous support for high-quality agencies. Third, prioritize collaborative and open international talent recruitment. Build a linked talent-introduction model featuring intra provincial integration, inter-provincial coordination and external openness. Encourage and support the establishment of mechanisms for the mutual recognition of foreign talent qualifications, cross-regional service processing and information sharing among provinces, so as to facilitate inter-regional talent mobility. Set up inter-provincial talent cooperation mechanisms to foster a talent-introduction pattern characterized by cross-regional resource sharing and joint talent cultivation. Fourth, emphasize support for the introduction and cultivation of outstanding young foreign talents. Broaden recruitment channels for young foreign talents and optimize pathways for international students to stay and work in Shandong. Build an online employment-service platform for young foreign talents that delivers one-stop services including visa processing and job matching. Offline, set up youth talent hubs for foreign students at key provincial universities to enhance the attractiveness of Shandong as a destination for career development. Relying on the advantageous disciplines of local universities, expand the enrollment scale of international students in urgently-needed majors to strengthen the reserve of young foreign talents.

### 4.3. Innovate the Training and Development Model for Foreign Talents in Shandong Province, And Promote the Comprehensive Development of Talents

First, optimize the selection and appointment mechanism for leading foreign industrial talents. A practice-oriented evaluation system for talent introduction should be explored, with adjusted weights of evaluation indicators to place emphasis on practical performance and contribution capacity, so as to fully stimulate the innovation vitality of the talent market. It is necessary to strengthen the radiating and driving effect of leading talents, boost exchanges and joint development between foreign experts and local talents, establish joint research teams, and support these experts in taking the lead to build industrial technology innovation platforms, thereby fully unlocking the spillover effects of talent introduction. Second, build training carriers for international applied talents featuring industry-education integration. Give full play to the talent introduction and cultivation mechanism driven by the linkage of "discipline plus industry", and guide universities to optimize and adjust their layout of talent recruitment for various disciplines, so as to jointly construct R&D centers and achievement transformation platforms. Implement a dynamic performance evaluation system for talents based on industry-education cooperation projects, establish a sharing platform for international talents among key universities across the province, smooth the two-way talent mobility channels between universities and enterprises, and adopt an international applied-talent cultivation model characterized by joint talent recruitment and collaborative training through industry-education integration. Third, strengthen the cultivation of foreign skilled talents. Clarify the classification mechanism for skilled foreign talents. Formulate differentiated talent-introduction plans in accordance with the knowledge structure and skill characteristics of various talent categories. Improve career-development pathways for skilled foreign talents, and advance the mutual recognition and interoperability between overseas and domestic skill grades as well as professional titles, so as to raise skilled foreign talents' willingness to stay and work in Shandong.

### 4.4. Create an Ecological Environment for Foreign Talents in Shandong Province and Foster a Conducive Atmosphere for Talent Growth

First, strengthen policy coordination, implementation, and dynamic optimization. Build a policy implementation system that facilitates horizontal cross-departmental collaboration and vertical integration across provinces, cities, and counties. Further deepen the reform of "decentralization, regulation, and service", simplify the approval process for attracting talents and intelligence, fully stimulate the vitality of the employing entities, and continuously maintain policy adaptability and competitiveness. Second, accurately meet the diverse needs of foreign talents. Optimize the "one-form checklist" for foreign-related administrative matters including the Work Permit for Foreigners in China. Tailored services shall be launched to meet the personalized demands of diverse enterprises and talents, so as to provide one-stop service packages for international talents. Further advance the reform to facilitate entry and exit of foreign talents, and explore initiatives such as visa-free transit and extended stay periods for foreign talents, with an aim to improve their convenience in daily life. Third, explore the construction of an international talent agglomeration ecosystem. By combining "targeted talent introduction" and "flexible talent introduction", we should accelerate the construction of international talent innovation bases, realize the organic integration of talent and intelligence introduction with industrial demands, promote the transformation of scientific research achievements, and continuously enhance the international competitiveness of China's talent resources.

## 5. Summary and Outlook

The academic community has paid extensive attention to issues related to international talent competition and the introduction of foreign talent at the local level. Research on the current status of policies for introducing foreign talent, the practical difficulties of talent introduction work, the construction of international talent service systems, and the enhancement of regional foreign talent agglomeration through policy optimization has yielded fruitful results, laying a solid foundation for subsequent research. However, there are still several areas that urgently require further in-depth study:

(1) A systematic framework for the comprehensive analysis of local foreign talent introduction in the context of international competition has not yet been established:

Currently, research on the introduction of foreign talent in Shandong Province mostly focuses on interpreting policy provisions or analyzing individual talent introduction cases. Few scholars have taken a comprehensive approach, considering the international talent competition landscape, regional industrial endowments, and diverse talent introduction practices across different cities, to systematically establish a comprehensive analysis framework for local talent

introduction. Therefore, this study combines typical cases to systematically analyze the achievements and practical challenges of introducing foreign talent in Shandong Province, and constructs an analysis framework for introducing foreign talent that is tailored to the provincial context.

(2) Research on the actual effectiveness of implementing local policies for attracting foreign talent is still inadequate:

Due to significant differences in industrial foundations and international supporting conditions across cities within the province, existing research rarely focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of various foreign talent projects and service reform policies. Therefore, this study adopts case analysis, policy text analysis, and other research methods to systematically review the actual implementation effects of Shandong Province's foreign talent policies in terms of talent introduction scale, industry matching, and talent retention.

(3) Research on the long-term operational guarantee of the regional foreign talent introduction system is still insufficient:

Through literature review, it is found that research on operational guarantees related to the multi-stakeholder collaboration, market-oriented talent introduction force cultivation, and long-term operation and maintenance of talent ecology for the introduction of foreign talents at the provincial level is still relatively scarce. Therefore, this study aims to optimize the policies, mechanisms, and ecological environment for the introduction of foreign talents in Shandong Province, clarify the responsibilities of multiple stakeholders such as the government, universities, enterprises, and intermediary agencies, and ensure high-quality and sustainable development of the introduction of foreign talents.

# Acknowledgments

This paper was supported by the following funds: Shandong Provincial Key Research and Development Program (Soft Science) Key Project (Grant No.2025RZB0506); Shandong Technology and Business University Postgraduate Education and Teaching Reform Research Project (11688YK202403)

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