



## **POLICY BRIEF: SERVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL) POPULATIONS USING BEST PRACTICES AND MODEL PARTNERSHIPS**

By Jennifer Hernandez, Associate Secretary  
Labor & Workforce Development Agency

This is the second in a series of policy briefs focusing on individuals with barriers to employment, including those who are English Language Learners (ELL). These briefs are intended to provide Local Workforce Development Boards and their local and regional planning partners with useful information on best practices and model partnerships to consider as they implement the policy objectives of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
Section I: Policy Efforts and Opportunities.....	3
• California’s Workforce System	
• Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act	
• Workforce Partners	
Section II: Examples of Partnerships .....	8
Section III: Examples of Programs to Serve ELL Participants.....	14
Section IV: Resources to Serve the ELL Population.....	20
• Funding Resources	
• Helpful Websites	
• Helpful Reports	

## Introduction

*Currently in California, approximately one-third of the workforce is foreign born. Although over 6.2 million individuals in the state are identified as English Language Learners (ELLs), as of PY 2014, this population represents only 3.7 percent of those exiting<sup>1</sup> the WIOA Title I training program. This suggests that individuals who are ELLs could be better served by the workforce system. This brief offers best practices to assist in delivering services to this population.*

*The first section of this policy brief provides background on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and services to those who are English Language Learners. It describes local, state and federal efforts to create greater access to workforce services programs for this population, especially efforts to facilitate access to training programs. The second and third sections provide concrete information about partnerships and programs designed to build career pathways for ELL participants. The last section shares information and resources that may help build career pathway programs for serving ELL population.*

## Section I: Policy Efforts and Opportunities to Create More Access Points and Better Serve ELL Populations

### **Serving the English Language Learner Population in California's Workforce System**

California is home to one in four of the nation's immigrant population. Foreign-born individuals account for 92 percent of California's ELL population, while the remaining 8 percent of the state's ELL population are native-born individuals, comprised largely of Spanish speakers.<sup>1</sup> In total, California has over 6.2 million residents who are ELLs and over 5 million low level educated adults (less than high school) are ages 19 and older. Among all ELL individuals ages 19 and above, 3.1 million lack a high school diploma, making ELL individuals the largest group of low educated adults (62 percent) in the state.<sup>2</sup> A combination of low educational attainment levels and significant language barriers hamper the ability of many ELL individuals to secure a job with good pay.

The state is also home to immigrant professionals who have degrees from abroad, but are currently unemployed or working in low-skilled jobs, often due to lack of English skills. Nearly one in four California immigrants with foreign degrees are suffering from such "brain waste," amounting to more than 400,000 individuals statewide.<sup>3</sup> A recent report<sup>4</sup> on ELLs in the workforce by the Brookings Institution found that nationally, although most working-age ELL individuals are in the labor force, they are concentrated in low-paying jobs earning 25 to 40 percent less than their English proficient counterparts. California's large population of immigrant workers enriches the state's economy, but those with limited English face challenges in securing stable employment and upward mobility in the labor market. Innovative efforts to increase employment

---

<sup>1</sup> McHugh, Margie and Morawski, Madeleine. "[Immigrants and WIOA Services: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics of Native- and Foreign Born Adults in California](#)." Migration Policy Institute. December 2015. Page 4.

<sup>2</sup> McHugh, Margie and Morawski, Madeleine. "[Immigrants and WIOA Services: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics of Native- and Foreign Born Adults in California](#)." Migration Policy Institute. December 2015. Page 4.

It should be noted that within the LEP population there is diversity in educational attainment. For example, there are 1.2 million LEP adults age 25 and older who have a high school diploma or equivalent in California while there are an additional 1.6 million LEP individuals who have either completed some college, an associate degree, or have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

<sup>3</sup> Migration Policy Institute "California State Data Profile," [www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/workforce/CA](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/workforce/CA).

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, J, 2014, [Investing in English skills: the limited English proficient workforce in US metropolitan areas](#), Brookings Institution, Washington, viewed 29 Aug 2016.

opportunities and the mobility of less-educated and limited-English workers positively affects the ability of the state's employers and employees to effectively compete and succeed in a national and global marketplace. In order to better respond to the needs of ELLs, the traditional workforce system requires innovations in service delivery and a commitment to high-quality implementation.

**US DOL Issues Training and Employment Notice (28-16, Change 1) on how to better serve ELLs<sup>5</sup>**

The U.S. Department of Labor recently released a Training and Employment Notice highlighting examples, best practices, partnership models and information on how to align resources available under WIOA to increase services to English Language Learners with substantial cultural and language barriers to employment. It also provides information regarding how other partner programs and entities either directly or indirectly working on workforce programs can align their efforts to provide basic career services, individualized career services, and training services. The recommendations in TEN 28-16 reinforce the information contained in this brief. A few highlights include:

- The publicly funded workforce system envisioned by WIOA is quality-focused, employer driven, customer-centered, and tailored to meet the needs of regional economies.
- The workforce system is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support service that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment.
- It reiterates the intent behind Section 188 of WIOA – that the workforce system should provide high quality of service and serve the needs of ***all*** customers.
- English language learners face substantial cultural barriers, thus to provide them the most effective employment and training services, services must be tailored to the needs of the individual.
- In accordance with the principles of universal access and customer-centered design under WIOA, high-quality America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs) are uniquely positioned to play a critical role in integrating immigrants through their services.

---

<sup>5</sup> United States Department of Labor, TEN 28-16, Change 1 -- *Change 1 – “Best Practices, Partnership Models, and Resources Available for Serving English Language Learners, Immigrants, Refugees, and New Americans.”* January 13, 2017.

## **WIOA State Plans and Related Requirements to Serve the ELL Population**

WIOA mandates that state plans address how individuals with barriers to employment, including those with limited English skills will be served. The California State Plan, *Skills Attainment for Upward Mobility; Aligned Services for Shared Prosperity*, provides a conceptual map for developing programs and services that are responsive to the needs of populations with barriers to employment, while the Regional and Local Plan Guidance recently issued by the California Workforce Development Board in [WSD 16-07](#) details specific requirements for the provision of services to the ELL population in Local Areas and WIOA Regional Planning Units (RPUs) containing counties with a workforce that is 15 percent or more ELL.<sup>6</sup> These planning requirements include the following:

- A description of regional planning outreach efforts made to include stakeholders and community based organizations in the region who represent ELL individuals.
- An assessment of the need to provide services for ELLs. This requirement must be addressed specifically in the regional analysis background sections of Regional/Local plans.
- A description of how services will be provided to ELL individuals. These services should be detailed in sections of the regional plan that discuss the provision of services to individuals with basic skills challenges. Regional plans must also specify how basic skills programs in the RPU will serve individuals from these communities.

In addition, WIOA requires Title I adult career and training services to give priority of service (POS) to individuals who receive public assistance, are low-income, or who are basic skills deficient, including individuals who are ELL. The State Board, along with

---

<sup>6</sup> The following counties have a workforce that is at least 15 percent limited English proficient: Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera, Merced, Monterey (incl. entire San Benito county), Napa, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, Sutter (inc. entire Yuba), Tulare, Ventura, Yolo. RPUs containing one or more of these counties must assess and specify in their regional plans how they will address the needs of and provide services to those who are limited English proficient. These counties account for about 90% of California's workforce.

local/Regional partners and Adult Education, including the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and the California Department of Education (CDE) and workforce partners, are developing strategies to better coordinate and provide greater access to ELL participants to enter and complete career pathway programs. These state level partnerships will help facilitate career pathways programs by providing information to locals on best practices and model partnerships, as well as technical assistance. When identifying career pathways and partnerships, consideration should be given to the needs of employers and the local workforce population, onramps for the ELL population, braiding of resources, and collaboration among all workforce partners to better support participants.

### **WIOA Title I Service Eligibility**

Section 188 of WIOA prohibits the exclusion of an individual from participation in, denial of the benefits of, discrimination in, or denial of employment in the administration of or in connection with any programs and activities funded or otherwise financially assisted in whole or in part under Title I of WIOA because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation or belief, or, for beneficiaries, applicants, and participants only, on the basis of citizenship status, or participation in a program or activity that receives financial assistance under Title I of WIOA.<sup>7</sup> As of January 1, 2017, California repealed the state requirement to verify an individual's legal status or authorization to work prior to them receiving employment services from state or local government agencies or any private contracting

---

<sup>7</sup> Federal Register. 29 CFR Part 38, Implementation of the "[Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#)." Final Rule, U.S. Department of Labor: December 2016.

## STATE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The State Board in collaboration with its technical assistance providers will provide training to advance practices that better serve ELL individuals and other populations with barriers to employment. The Board will also help to coordinate and broker relationships with statewide organizations with regional and local partners that can help guide these efforts. More information will be shared around technical assistance as it becomes available.

agencies (AB 2532). The Employment Development Department (EDD) is in the process of providing further guidance on how this change will be rolled out. Given the complexity of immigration statuses that exist, it is important to understand that there are various forms of work authorization that immigrants may possess. Individuals may be naturalized US citizens, lawful permanent residents (“green card” holders,) or hold another type of immigration status, such as refugee, asylee, or Temporary Protected Status -- that includes employment authorization.

The aforementioned immigrant populations are eligible for services, and this group also includes young immigrants who have been granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. DACA Status provides a 2-year period of “deferred action” or relief from removal from the United States, subject to renewal, and issuance of employment authorization for the period of deferred action. Currently, there are over 214,000 DACA recipients in California<sup>8</sup>. In July 2014, the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration issued a [Training and Employment Guidance Letter](#) (TEGL 02-14) clarifying that under WIOA’s non-discrimination provisions, work-authorized DACA recipients are eligible for WIOA Title I and the Wagner-Peyser Programs. California will continue to follow existing federal requirements regarding WIOA eligibility unless different direction is provided by the new federal administration.

### **WIOA Title II Service Eligibility**

The Adult Education Office (AEO) supports California’s adult education system by addressing basic literacy needs, basic skills in language and mathematics, high school diploma and high school equivalency completion, and college and career readiness. Programs are funded by the WIOA Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) grant and the state Adult Education Block Grant. Instruction emphasizes competency-based contextualized education allowing adult students to use the skills gained to achieve basic life skills, enhance employment and career opportunities, obtain citizenship, progress to career or postsecondary programs, and function in English at higher cognitive levels. Adult education programs support parents of students in the kindergarten through grade twelve districts by providing literacy training and civic engagement educational opportunities.

Historically, because of their accessibility, adult schools have been the primary entry point for immigrants seeking training. Title II programs have an advantage in terms of their connection to the communities serving ELLs and immigrants. WIOA Title II, Adult

---

<sup>8</sup> [“Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics,”](#)  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, June 2016.



Education and Family Literacy programs are silent on the issue of work authorization as an eligibility requirement. Undocumented immigrants can participate in Title II programs nationwide, except where more restrictive state-level immigration laws exist. Efforts should be made to refer individuals ineligible for Title I programs to Title II Adult Education Programs and/or other adult education and training services for which they are eligible. For a comprehensive list of WIOA Title II providers, visit the California Department of Education's website, and review the most recent year "Funding Results," at [www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/fr/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/fr/).

In addition to the federal program, the California Adult Education State Program provides educational opportunities and support services to all adults. The Adult Education programs address the needs of individuals and communities by providing adults with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as productive citizens, workers, and family members.

Pursuant to AB 104 (2015), adult schools established by high school districts, county offices of education, and community colleges that provide non-credit adult education services receive state funding through the Adult Education Block Grant (AEBG). AEBG replaces the historical Average Daily Attendance (ADA) entitlement funding. To be eligible for the state funding, these adult education providers must be part of a local consortium. The AEBG allows for seven funded program areas: Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), programs for immigrants including English as a Second Language (ESL), citizenship and workforce preparation, programs for adults including older adults primarily designed to develop knowledge and skills to assist elementary and secondary school children succeed academically, programs for adults with disabilities, short-term career technical education with high employment potential, and programs offering pre-apprenticeship training with one or more apprenticeship programs approved by the Division of Apprenticeship Standards.



## Section II: Examples of Partnerships to Serve ELL Participants

### Local Title II WIOA Adult Education and Adult Education Block Grant Partners (AEBG)

The California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and the California Department of Education (CDE) coordinate implementation of the state-funded Adult Education Block Grant (AEBG) program (described in Section I). The AEBG program allocates program funds through regional consortia consisting of community college districts, school districts and county offices of education to implement AEBG regional plans that will better serve the needs of adult learners. There are 71 AEBG consortia across the state. Consortia jurisdiction and contact information can be found online at the [AEBG website](#) while a list of assigned AEBG regional partners for each WIOA RPU is included in the WIOA Regional and Local Planning guidance recently issued in [WSB Directive 16-07](#).

The 2017-18 planning process for AEBG consortia began in October 2016, and Local Boards should strategize with AEBG Consortia partners to align WIOA regional planning efforts with AEBG planning efforts. Partners should work to ensure that programs are aligned. WIOA Title I, WIOA Title II and AEBG programs should work in concert to provide career services, remedial education, and training opportunities to ELL individuals.

The State Board recommends that local boards work with Title II and AEBG partners to convene an ad hoc committee on immigrant and ELL workforce issues. These ad hoc committees can help strategize how to better serve local and regional ELL individuals and identify ways adult education partners and community based organizations (CBOs) can braid resources to provide supportive services to program participants. The State Board further recommends that any effort to develop an ad hoc committee build on existing organizational structures in the local area or RPU to avoid duplication of effort.

### Public Libraries & Adult Education Collaborations<sup>9</sup>

Over the past five years there have been an increasing number of partnerships involving a broad range of community institutions working to integrate immigrants into community life.<sup>10</sup> An important component of these broad immigrant integration

---

<sup>9</sup> "[Collaborations with Libraries Offer New Learning Opportunities for Immigrants](#)" the Networks for Integrating New Americans Initiative, September 2016.

<sup>10</sup> California's Little Hoover Commission recommended cross-the-board collaborative efforts to integrate California's immigrants. See "We The People: Helping Newcomers Become Californians" (June, 2002). Several counties and cities, e.g. San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Clara County, have established

initiatives is collaboration among adult schools, community colleges, libraries, municipal government, immigrant advocates, and other community groups.<sup>11</sup> Such partnerships can draw on the unique expertise of each entity to provide more robust services than any of these agencies can provide alone. Economic integration is a critical aspect of this overall movement, and there are many opportunities to expand the role of the workforce development system. Workforce boards and AJCCs can make use of trusted intermediaries, such as public libraries and adult education providers – to help recruit and effectively serve immigrant and ELL job seekers.

According to a 2010 report by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), nationally, adult education was only able to reach 7 percent of adults in need of ESL. Partnerships with libraries represent a promising strategy for reaching a targeted population and having greater impact. The mission of the public library system is to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all. Libraries have come to play an important role in connecting immigrants to community resources, as they often provide ESL classes, literacy programs and employability skills training.

For example, the Lancaster, Pennsylvania workforce board and one-stop career center have partnered with a local WIOA Title II provider to:

- Station a transitions counselor from the adult education organization at the one-stop center. The counselor assists ELL individuals in applying and qualifying for job training and assesses the language supports needed in training program classes.
- Contract for an exchange of services in which the one-stop center provides job readiness training for adult education students, and the adult education organization provides math and reading classes for one-stop center clients.
- Participate in planning led by the local workforce development board to implement joint orientations for job seekers, who would then be referred to the appropriate education or training services.

Learn more at: [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/news/blog/as-welcoming-week-begins-a-fresh-look-at-adult-education-and-immigrant-integration](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/news/blog/as-welcoming-week-begins-a-fresh-look-at-adult-education-and-immigrant-integration).

---

immigrant affairs offices. These are important resources and WDBs can and should coordinate and collaborate with them.

<sup>11</sup> A detailed overview of the roles that adult education and workforce development organizations can play in immigrant integration is provided in the [Theoretical Framework](#) published as part of the national Networks for Integrating New Americans initiative (2013).

In May 2016, the US DOL issued [TEGL 35-15](#) to encourage collaborations between the workforce investment system and public libraries to improve the quality and quantity of employment and training services to job seekers and employers. Please refer to the TEGl for additional background and other examples of strategic partnerships between libraries and the workforce system. Existing partnerships with adult education schools and libraries can be expanded to include local workforce boards to increase access for individuals who are already participating in ESL programs through library/adult education partnerships to the workforce development system. In a recent survey by the California State Library (June 2016), over 70 libraries reported either having existing partnerships, being in the process of developing partnerships or being interested in creating partnerships with a local workforce board or AJCC. In this same survey, libraries also identified other community partners that they work with, which can help local boards increase their visibility particularly with hard to serve populations that often see libraries as a useful and trusted resource. Local areas that are interested in a partnership with the local library should reach out to their local Library Administrative Headquarters (a list can be found [here](#)). Additional assistance in identifying a local contact is available through Susan Hanks at the California State Library. Susan can be reached at [Susan.Hanks@library.ca.gov](mailto:Susan.Hanks@library.ca.gov) or 916-653-0661.

### **Immigrant Services Partnerships: DACA Youth and Adults**

In California, with over 214,000 individuals with DACA status, there are clear opportunities to serve these young adults and provide them workforce training services.

Below are examples on how to serve these individuals:

- Identify the needs and workforce skills objectives of DACA recipients in WIOA local and regional plans, including how these individuals might be served by Title I Youth and Adult services. The Migration Policy Institute offers [state and county](#)

[level data](#) on the DACA-eligible population, and [statewide numbers](#) on DACA recipients. Use this data to help develop a needs assessment for relevant WIOA planning requirements outlined in [WSD 16-07](#).

- Tap into existing DACA networks to reach DACA jobseekers. The California Department of Social Services, through its Immigration Services Branch provides funding to California non-profit organizations to provide services to DACA eligible populations, including: assistance with initial DACA applications and DACA renewals, legal training & technical assistance, and outreach and education activities. Grantees are located across the state and a complete list is available on the CDSS Immigrant Services Funding [website](#). The 2016/17 funding period includes \$30 million in resources available to non-profits to provide services. Criteria has also been established for contractors that do outreach/education, requiring that they have experience providing outreach and education relating to government benefits programs, including collaboration with the workforce system or within Adult Education/ESL, which should help facilitate collaboration with local boards and AEBG Consortia.
- Example of Key Partnerships Serving DACA Recipients include [an example from an Arizona non-profit who helps](#) DACA recipients access Individual Training Account funds and obtain employment. [Federal policy guidance](#) provides additional information to local workforce boards and other stakeholders regarding serving DACA populations.

## COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS (CBOS)

Some local workforce boards subcontract with nonprofit community-based organizations to effectively serve immigrant and ELL participants. For example, the St. Louis Workforce Development Board has contracted with the International Institute of St. Louis (IISTL) for more than a decade. IISTL provides a range of [job training](#) and [employment placement](#) services, including training for Certified Nurse Assistants and in Industrial Sewing. In Pennsylvania, two local workforce boards (Philadelphia Works and the Delaware County Workforce Investment Board) contract with the nonprofit Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians to [provide training and direct job placement services](#). In both cases, job seekers may be referred to the nonprofits formally from the AJCCs or informally via word of mouth or other community referrals.

### **Labor Management Partnerships (LMPs)**

Labor-management partnerships (LMPs) represent another potential partner for workforce boards and AJCCs. These organizations provide training for incumbent workers and unemployed individuals who are members of a given labor union. In addition, they often provide training for unemployed or underemployed family members of union members. Because of the close working connection between the LMP and the employers covered by their collective bargaining agreement, LMP training programs are closely linked to local labor market demand. Depending on the industry and the geographic area covered by the LMP, a significant fraction of union members may be immigrants or ELL individuals. You can learn more about the role that LMPs can play in supporting workforce development in the policy brief "[Unions as Partners](#)" by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.

### **Industry and Employers**

While understanding the needs of immigrant/ELL job seekers and the barriers they face is critical, so is the engagement and willingness of employers to hire them post training. Just as with any other employer engagement effort, it makes sense to research the specific needs of employers in the region or local areas. For example, employers serving a diverse customer base and/or engaged in international trade may be especially interested in hiring jobseekers with bilingual skills. Employers who are themselves immigrants may be particularly well-prepared to hire and/or provide on-the-job training to less-educated and limited-English job seekers. There may also be promising pathways for upskilling and career advancement of incumbent immigrant workers in industries such as agriculture, the hospitality industry and retail. In these cases, a well-designed workforce training can help workers build skills necessary to move from low-level jobs to roles where their newly-enhanced skills allow them to fill in-demand positions and earn higher wages.

Workforce Boards and CBOs who successfully engage employers are able to identify the largest employers in the local area/region. Initial interactions with employers should focus on identifying employer requirements for in-demand occupations or industries. Successful employer engagement also entails communicating how workforce partners collectively are a resource for employers, and can provide training on how to work with, support, and manage ELL employees. The strategies provided below by the nonprofit World Education<sup>12</sup> organization offer suggestions on how to best engage employers.

---

<sup>12</sup> "[Workforce Collaborations Build a System of Support for Immigrants.](#)" Networks for Integrating New Americans Initiative. World Education, September 2016.

For more suggestions on how to engage employers, use these links to download [a PowerPoint Presentation](#) and [webinar recording](#) on this issue.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLES
Reach out to Individual Employers, Chambers of commerce, Businesses and Trade Associations and other Employer Groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate what your program does, and what services are available</li> <li>- Discuss skills needed for particular jobs</li> <li>- Communicate the strengths and capacities of a bilingual workforce*</li> <li>- Make direct presentations of candidates to hiring managers</li> </ul> <p><i>*Bilingual workforces are especially appealing in the hospitality and service industry; this could become an important niche that you fill.</i></p>
Solicit Employer Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invite input on curriculum and work related teaching materials</li> <li>- Invite input on program or strategic plans</li> <li>- Organize an employer advisory council</li> <li>- Cultivate executive champions</li> </ul>
Introduce Job Seekers with little work experience to the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organize worksite visits with HR manager talks</li> <li>- Negotiate job shadowing and internships</li> <li>- Offer presentations by role models who have successfully moved into rewarding careers</li> </ul>
Recruit employers to Volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organize mock interviews</li> <li>- Identify and secure professional mentors in target professions</li> <li>- Provide networking practice</li> </ul>
Recognize Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organize appreciation events and give awards</li> <li>- Recognize employers in newsletters, or other communications that teach the broader community about the work you are doing</li> </ul>

## Section III: Examples of Programs to Serve ELL Participants

### **Portable, Stackable Credentials on a Pathway to Middle-Skilled Jobs**

A brief, "[Risk Factors for College Success Insights from Adults in Nine Career Pathways Programs](#)" from Pace for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE), indicates that career pathway programs should be built on "portable, stackable sub-baccalaureate credentials" that are connected to "middle-skilled jobs" with an opportunity to obtain higher credentials and jobs in the future. However, populations with barriers, such as ELL, require a holistic model from enrollment to completion, with more engaging approaches, contextualized learning, life skills counseling and peer support, as well as a range of supportive services. Examples of career pathway programs that have shown success are described below. WIOA partners should consider these promising practices when utilizing strategies and initiatives to pilot new or enhance existing programs that serve ELL participants. It is also important to consider the pipeline that brings ELL participants to these programs. Workforce boards and their partners should examine recruitment and intake processes to ensure that ELL individuals are able to get the information and tools needed to learn about their educational and vocational options and start them on a career pathway.

### **Six Key Principles to Developing Career Pathways for Populations with Barriers**<sup>13</sup>

There have been a variety of career pathway programs in various states, including California, that effectively serve and prepare basic skills deficient and ELL participants to become self-sufficient. When considering the strengths and barriers of ELL participants, program administrators should not only consider state WIOA policy strategies and career pathway strategies, but also include the six key principles as shown below, which have proven to successfully serve populations with barriers, including ELL individuals through a broad program design and implementation process.

---

<sup>13</sup> "[Workforce Collaborations Build a System of Support for Immigrants](#)." Networks for Integrating New Americans Initiative. World Education, September 2016.



PRINCIPLES	EXAMPLES
Industry and Employers should be key partners in program design and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employer partners who understand the population should assist in identifying growth industries</li> </ul>
Incremental Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students may need to enter and exit the system multiple times</li> <li>- Programs should provide a mix of short, moderate and long-term training stackable credentials in related occupations, and the ability for lateral movement</li> </ul>
Partnerships with training providers and organizations that work directly with the population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint case management, where case managers and program/project partners have a strong overview of industry basics</li> <li>- Case managers and program/project partners should understand the need of the population</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accommodate program participants (program time &amp; location, language, learning styles)</li> <li>- Identify the potential impediments and build in solutions</li> <li>- Include retention and drop-out prevention strategies and services</li> <li>- Explore web based training and mobile training sites (especially important in rural areas)</li> <li>- Provide career specific ESL courses</li> <li>- Subsidize training</li> </ul>
Integrate basic skills remediation with career specific content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teach basic skills within the context of career training or exploration (contextualized learning)</li> <li>- Provide tailored vocational ESL courses</li> <li>- Encourage learning cohorts (peer group assistance)</li> </ul>
Conduct regular program evaluations to improve programs and attract partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This applies to students and employers- to ensure needs are being met</li> </ul>

**Contextualized English Language & Job Skills Programs: Creating Onramps for Immigrant Workers - Ready to Work (Seattle, WA)**

The State of Washington is known for pioneering a team-teaching approach, the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) initiative which teaches adult students literacy and college-readiness skills alongside occupational skills so they can move through school and into living wages faster. I-BEST models utilize two teachers in the classroom, one providing job training and the other teaching basic skills in reading, math or spoken English. However, the I-BEST model was not designed to accommodate English language learners with low levels of English proficiency.

To address this gap in adult education and workforce services, the Ready to Work (RTW) program was created and was launched in 2015, integrating both English language acquisition and career training in a community setting. The program targets immigrants and refugees who score at the lowest levels of adult education. The native

language literacy and English communication skills of individuals in the program vary widely. Ready to Work's goal is to empower and support these jobseekers as they overcome barriers towards accomplishing economic stability, quality jobs and integration into the community. Two-thirds of RTW participants have less than a high school diploma and 28 percent of those have not attended high school.

The program offers a wide variety of services and opportunities for exposure to the labor market, combining ESL classes, computer literacy instruction, and case management to help participants gain job readiness skills. Case management navigation and support include travel stipends and referrals to healthcare, childcare, and transportation services. Many participants do not have much prior career exposure, thus, the program also integrates field trips such as "Workshop Thursdays," connecting participants to employers and pre-apprenticeships, as well as presentations with guest speakers to discuss opportunities for job training in specific fields so participants learn about options and make informed career decisions. Partnerships have been critical to the success of the program, with nearly two dozen organizations collaborating on this project - either serving as recruitment, referral or employment partners. Ready to Work serves as a workforce "onramp" to serve individuals facing some of most difficult barriers to the labor market. More information about the project is available at: <http://www.seattle.gov/iandraffairs/RTW> or via this summary of the [Ready to Work program](#).

**Partners:** This program is a collaboration between the Seattle Mayor, City Council, the Human Services Department, the Office of Economic Development and the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Services, Seattle Housing Authority, Goodwill, City of Seattle Office of Economic Development, Seattle Jobs Initiative, Workforce Development Council, Washington Governor's Office for Regulatory Innovation and Assistance (ORIA), Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), City of Seattle IT Department, and various other non-profits.

**Funding:** Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), WIOA Title I funding, and Adult Education funds from the community colleges.

### **Building Skills Partnership (California)**

Building Skills Partnership (BSP) is an example of a Labor Management Partnership that helps support low-wage workers through training opportunities and engagement with union employers. The program currently trains 5,000 workers a year, offering occupational training, vocational ESL, computer literacy, financial literacy, health and wellness, civic engagement and citizenship, and other job readiness skills across 100 employers. The BSP pioneer project is the Green Janitor Education Program which provides hands-on training in energy management and green cleaning, allowing certified janitors to become equipped to help their buildings meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) sustainability standards. The program develops its

trainings to fill the gaps based on existing adult education and workforce training in the local area. Between 40 and 50 percent of trainings for BSP take place on the jobsite, and ideally the employer helps to pay release time to incentivize worker participation in training. Classes are usually held before worker shifts begin, and in cases where there is no incentive pay, classes can take place during meal breaks. The training has been successful because the teachers are experienced former adult education teachers who are willing to teach classes as late as 9 PM. The benefit of taking the classes from the worker's perspective is the opportunity to improve language acquisition so they can be moved to a day shift, which often means more pay. For the employer, the buy-in is having a better trained workforce. In some cases, employers have even rewarded participation and success in the program by either increasing wages or helping to offset the cost for citizenship applications for their largely immigrant workforce.

When replicating this partnership, workforce boards should consider identifying employers with collective bargaining agreements or targeting "high road"<sup>14</sup> employers who would be interested in partnering to leverage additional resources, including the Employment Training Panel, to craft training programs. To learn more about the BSP program, visit [www.buildingskills.org/](http://www.buildingskills.org/).

**Partners:** Various [Employers](#); [Community Partners](#) including UCLA Labor Center, Adult Schools  
**Funding:** Employment Training Panel, The California Wellness Foundation, Leadership Training & Education Fund and other private and philanthropic funders.

### **Spanish to English Associate Teacher Certificate Program<sup>15</sup> – Southwestern College (San Diego, CA)**

Southwestern College near San Diego through its Child Development and ESL Departments have launched a four semester, for credit program targeting beginning or intermediate English language speakers. The program is linked to child development and ESL coursework which helps to transition students from full Spanish to English instruction, as well as help them obtain a Spanish to English Associate Teacher Certificate, along with assistance in obtaining an Associate Teacher Permit through the San Diego Office of Education. The strategy aims to assist students in gaining the English language and literacy skills necessary for success in child development courses using a learning community model with group cohorts. Most participants are women with little or no experience in higher education. The program uses contextualized ESL to maximize English language acquisition for the students. Concepts are initially

<sup>14</sup> [Principles of High Road Employers](#), American Sustainable Business Council, 2016

<sup>13</sup> [Contextualized Teaching & Learning: A Faculty Primer, The Center for Student Success](#), RP Group and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. Pages 55-57. Spring 2009.

introduced in the child development course for a few sessions followed by the functions and structures of English that support the ability to discuss the concept in English as well as facilitate the acquisition and the application of the child development concept. The ESL instructors do not “teach” child development; instead, they focus on strategies, vocabulary and acquisition of English as related to the concept. Similarly, the child development course reinforces the English language and literacy development. The first semester of the program is delivered almost entirely in Spanish, with some practicing of English vocabulary. As the semester progresses, activities and assignments are increasingly completed in English. By the fourth semester the program is completed entirely in English. While Southwestern College does not have institutional research functions to track outcomes, in the first four years after the first cohort graduated in 2005, 215 students completed the certificate, and in 2009, four cohorts totaling 100 students were in progress.

**Partners:** Southwestern College (ESL & Child Development Departments)

**Funding Sources:** Community College

***Immigrant Workforce Training Program: Centro Laboral de Graton (Day Labor Center) and Santa Rosa Junior College<sup>16</sup> (Sonoma County)***

Centro Laboral de Graton is a worker-led nonprofit community based organization in Sonoma County that primarily addresses the workforce development needs of low wage, largely non-English speaking immigrant workers by providing training, employment, and civic engagement and advocacy opportunities for day laborers and domestic workers. The organization developed a unique partnership with the Santa Rosa Junior College to create short term workforce training programs that are linked to basic employment skills and English language acquisition. The program focuses on sectors with high employment need and jobs that appeal to the day labor and domestic worker population in Sonoma County. The program coursework leads to non-credit certificates and/or industry recognized certifications. One of the key components of the

---

<sup>16</sup> Miller, Darlene G. and Poppe, Nancy. “[Building Community Partnerships to Serve Immigrant Workers.](#)” The National Council for Workforce Education.

program is providing comprehensive wrap around service for students to ensure greater participation and success. This partnership with the day labor center is rare because historically a number of challenges have prevented low wage workers, and specifically immigrant workers from benefiting from community college training programs. Challenges include the difficulty of scheduling classes due to work schedule and distrust of formal institutions.

Using a needs assessment, the partnership identified an area of interest to the day labor population—Green Landscaping (also known as Xeriscaping). The partnership adopted the Xeriscape curriculum created by Santa Barbara City College, which integrates English language skills development with the technical skill curricula. In addition, the program includes courses that use bilingual instruction for Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10 certification, job communication skills, math, and basic xeriscape plant certification and installation techniques. The coursework runs between 40 and 50 hours and is delivered in an accelerated format, 8 hours per week, for 5 or 6 weeks; classes are offered Friday evenings and Saturday mornings to accommodate the needs of workers. The second phase of this project will prepare students for low-flow irrigation installation certification. In the initial phase of the [program](#), 25 students have participated in the program, 22 have completed, and 21 have obtained industry certifications. The effort was part of a national philanthropic initiative that included technical assistance from a national partner and peer colleges and nonprofits that had engaged in similar projects.

## PROGRAMS TO COUNTERACT “BRAINWASTE” OF IMMIGRANT PROFESSIONALS

Many immigrant professionals meet WIOA criteria for “basic skills deficient” due to their lack of English proficiency, yet they could fill in-demand positions for local employers if they had access to brief, targeted training services.<sup>1</sup> Workforce boards can capitalize on this potential opportunity by drawing on resources developed in California as well as other resources available nationwide. For example, the national nonprofit [Welcome Back Initiative](#), headquartered at San Francisco State University with a program location in San Diego, offers a host of education, training, and supportive services for immigrant health professionals. The national nonprofit [Upwardly Global](#) similarly has a California location and is available for subcontracting to provide training and placement services. In addition, the nonprofit [IMPRINT](#) is a national resource center and clearinghouse, providing professional development and other materials to equip workforce boards and AJCCs to address this issue in their communities

**Partners:** Centro Laboral de Graton, Santa Rosa Junior College, Sonoma County Adult Education

**Research Partners:** National Coalition for Workforce Education, Aspen Institute

**Funding Structure:** California Adult Education Block Grant, Casey Foundation, and the Ford Foundation

## Section IV: Resources to Serve ELL Populations

WIOA partners should work together on a continual basis to determine the best strategy at the regional and local level that allow funds and resources to be used in more flexible, coordinated, and sustainable ways. When possible, braided funding strategies can help reduce duplication of services and administrative burden of multiple categorical programs, while also providing to participants a more enhanced and broad range of integrated and coordinated supports and services. Additional funding opportunities may be available through private philanthropy, such as the Irvine Foundation, Sierra Health Foundation, the Haas Fund and networks such as Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.

### HELPFUL WEBSITES

- [Aspen Institute: Workforce Strategies Initiative](#)
- [California Workforce Development Board](#)
- [California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project](#)
- [Migration Policy Institute](#)
- [National Immigration Forum: New American Workforce](#)
- [National Skills Coalition](#)
- [Urban Institute: Workforce Development, Training and Opportunity](#)
- [USA Learns](#)

### **Federal Programs That Can Support Career Pathways Programs**

- Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Title I  
(Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth)
- Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Title II  
(Adult Education and Family Literacy Act)
- Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Title III  
Employment Service (Wagner-Peyser Act)
- Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Title IV  
(Vocational Rehabilitation)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship
- Pell Grants – Ability to Benefit Provision
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)  
Employment and Training Program
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)



**Additional Reports**

1. Wilson, Jill H. "[Investing in English Skills: The Limited English Proficient Workforce in U.S. Metropolitan Areas.](#)" Brookings, September 2014.
2. Montes, Marcela and Choitz, Vickie. "[Improving Immigrant Access to Workforce Services: Partnerships, Practices & Policies.](#)" Aspen Institute, July 2016.
3. "[Middle-Skill Credentials and Immigrant Workers: California's Untapped Assets](#)" National Skills Coalition, July 2016.
4. McHugh, Margie and Morawski, Madeleine. "[Immigrants and WIOA Services: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics of Native- and Foreign Born Adults in California.](#)" Migration Policy Institute. December 2015.
5. Gash, Alison and Mack, Melissa. "[Career Ladders and Pathways for the Hard to Employ](#)" Social Policy Research Associates. September 2010.
6. [Contextualized Teaching & Learning: A Faculty Primer](#), The Center for Student Success, RP Group and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. Spring 2009.
7. "[Strengthening State Adult Education Policies for English as a Second Language Populations.](#)" The Working Poor Families Project, Fall 2014.
8. "[Preparing Immigrant Job Seekers to Reach Their Full Potential: Opportunities for Local Workforce Boards Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.](#)" National Immigration Forum, February 2016.
9. Wilson, Jill H. "[Improving Workers Skills Must Include Immigrants](#)" Brookings, February 2015.
10. Wilson, Valerie. "[People of Color Will be a Majority of the American Working Class in 2032.](#)" Economic Policy Institute, June 2016.
11. Bird, Kisha; Foster, Marcie and Ganzglass, Evelyn. "[New Opportunities to Improve Economic and Career Success for Low-Income Youth and Adults: Key Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.](#)" CLASP, September 2014.
12. "[Pathways Out of Poverty for Vulnerable Californians: policies that Prepare the Workforce for Middle-Skill Infrastructure Jobs.](#)" Policy Link.
13. "[Improving the Economic Prospects of Low-Income Individuals through Career Pathway Programs: The Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education Evaluation.](#)" Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education, March 2014.
14. "[Contextualized College Transition Strategies for Adults Basic Skills Students: Learning from Washington State's I-BEST Program Model.](#)" Community College Research Center, December, 2012.
15. "[Collaborations with Libraries Offer New Learning Opportunities for Immigrants](#)" The Networks for Integrating New Americans Initiative, September 2016.
16. "[Workforce Collaborations Build a System of Supports for Immigrants](#)" The Networks for Integrating New Americans Initiative, September 2016.
17. "[Career Advancement Academies: Insights into Contextualized Teaching and Learning.](#)" Career Ladders Project and Equal Measure, March 2016.
18. "[Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways.](#)" Literacy Information and Communication System.



19. [“Immigrants and the Importance of Language Learning for a Global Society.”](#) National Immigration Forum, 2016.
20. [“Meeting the Language Needs of Today’s Adult English Language Learner: Issue Brief.”](#) Literacy Information and Communications System.
21. [“ABE Career Connections: A Manual for Integrating Adult Basic Education into Career Pathways.”](#) U.S. Department of Education, February 2010.
22. [“Adult Education for Work: Transforming Adult Education to Build a Skilled Workforce.”](#) National Center on Education and the Economy, 2009.
23. [“How to Build Bridge Programs that fit into a Career Pathway: A Step-by-Step Guide based on the Carreras en Salud Program in Chicago”](#) Instituto Del Progreso Latino.
24. [“Upskilling the New American Workforce.”](#) National Skills Coalition, 2016.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Labor and Workforce Development Agency  
**Jennifer Hernandez**  
Phone: 916.653.4906  
Email: [jennifer.hernandez@labor.ca.gov](mailto:jennifer.hernandez@labor.ca.gov)