
Final Evaluation Report for the Evaluation of the AB 628-Funded Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative Programs

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About This Report:

This evaluation report is part of a series of deliverables produced by CSW and SPR for the California Workforce Development Board.



The California Workforce Development Board submits this Final Report to the Legislature for the AB 628-funded Breaking Barriers to Employment Program. The report is required by California Unemployment Insurance Code 14033 (e) to contain:

- the programmatic impact on the target populations,
- the fiscal savings associated with the program and key conclusions,
- the benefits conferred or realized using quantitative and qualitative data,
- demographic data, and
- data on the languages spoken by the populations served by the grant.

This report addresses the programmatic impact on the target populations throughout, but especially in Chapter 2, the fiscal savings associated with the program and key conclusions in Chapter 5, the benefits conferred or realized using quantitative and qualitative data throughout, but especially in Chapter 3, demographic data in Chapter 2, and data on the languages spoken by the populations served by the grant in Chapter 2. Future reports, including the biannual CWDB Programs Overview Report, will provide ongoing longitudinal participant outcomes, including earnings.¹

¹ The most recent biannual CWDB Programs Overview Report was published in 2024 and is available at <https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2026/01/CWDB-Programs-Overview-Report.pdf>.

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The Corporation for a Skilled Workforce and Social Policy Research Associates produced this report for the California Workforce Development Board as part of the evaluation of the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative.

Abstract

In 2022 and 2023, the California Workforce Development Board (State Board) and the Foundation for California Community Colleges awarded over \$27 million in competitive grants to 53 Breaking Barriers to Employment programs that required partnerships between a community-based organization (CBO) and a local workforce development board. Cohort 2a (42 grantees) operated from January 2023 through September 2024 and Cohort 2b (11 grantees) operated from May 2024 through July 2025. In 2022, the State Board also commissioned the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce and Social Policy Research Associates (the study team) to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of these two cohorts. Data sources included grantee documents and reports, a grantee survey, phone interviews, and administrative program data.

The study team found that grantees in Cohort 2 collectively enrolled 6,934 individuals with multiple barriers to employment, exceeding their goal of 5,282 participants. Service receipt was high, with most (95 percent) having received career services to prepare them for employment, 70 percent having received training services, and more than 60 percent having received supportive services to mitigate barriers. Taken together, these services supported participants in building job skills and competencies and making progress toward key milestones.

Collectively, 39 percent of participants achieved at least one of the post program outcomes the program measured, including entering employment (31 percent), registered apprenticeships (6 percent), and postsecondary education (10 percent).

Breaking Barriers' flexible design and strong partnerships with CBOs enabled grantees to reach individuals with employment barriers and provide them with integrated, culturally responsive services. However, the evaluation could not determine which specific services or supports were most effective in improving post program outcomes, underscoring the need to document promising practices. Lessons from the three cohorts point to opportunities to formalize partnership structures, establish clear program models and determine effective service strategies, and strengthen data reporting to promote participant outcomes and evaluability in similar state-funded workforce programs.

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Executive Summary

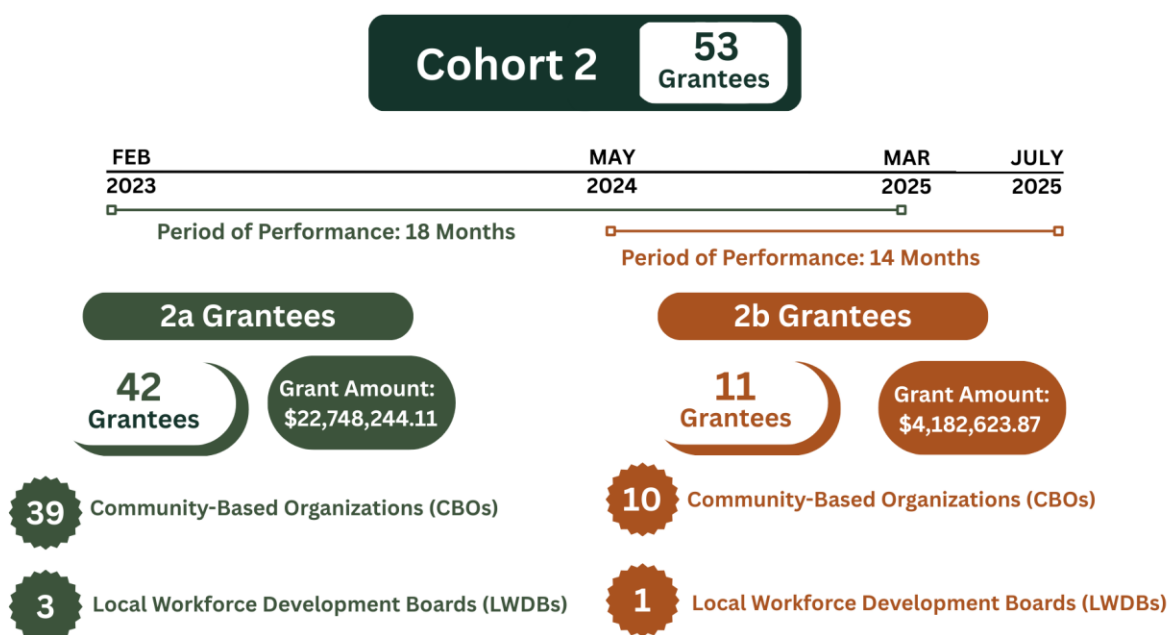
The Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative (Breaking Barriers) aims to supplement existing workforce and education programs by providing services to individuals who face significant barriers to employment that may limit their ability to fully benefit from traditional workforce development approaches. These barriers include limited education, housing instability, justice system involvement, language, and immigration status, among others.

Breaking Barriers services were delivered through partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and local workforce development boards (LWDBs). Through three rounds of funding, the initiative has expanded access to workforce development and training services for people with barriers to employment and strengthened workforce system partnerships.

The California Workforce Development Board (State Board), in partnership with the Foundation for California's Community Colleges (FCCC), awarded nearly \$23 million in July 2022 to fund 42 Breaking Barriers programs (referred to as Cohort 2a). In 2023, FCCC and the State Board awarded an additional \$4.2 million to fund 11 more programs (referred to as Cohort 2b). Cohorts 2a and 2b, collectively addressed as Cohort 2, were funded under AB 628, Statutes of 2021. Previously, in 2019, the State Board awarded \$10 million in grants to 26 grantees (referred to as Cohort 1 and funded under AB 1111, Statutes of 2019).

As shown in Exhibit ES-1, funding levels and programmatic designs varied across Cohort 2a and 2b grantees. Most grantees (49 of 53) were CBOs, although four were LWDBs. Grant award amounts ranged from \$144,000 to \$750,000.

Exhibit ES-1: Breaking Barriers Grantee Overview



Evaluation Overview

In 2022, the State Board commissioned the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) and Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct a multiyear, mixed-methods implementation and outcomes study of Breaking Barriers' Cohort 2.² This study examined whether and how grantees worked with partners to enroll individuals with multiple barriers to employment into programs and services that improved their preparedness for and opportunities within the workforce. More specifically, this study considers two lines of inquiry:

- 1) an analysis of the implementation of Cohort 2, including the types of grantee organizations and their priority populations,³ the barriers that participants faced, and the cultivation and evolution of collaborative partnerships and their influence on program and service delivery; and

² The State Board also commissioned the CSW-SPR study team to conduct an outcomes and impact study of Cohort 1, being released as a separate report (DeFever et al. 2025).

³ The original RFAs referred to these groups as "target populations." This report uses the term "priority populations" to reflect an asset-based and equity-oriented framing.

- 2) an analysis of participants' enrollment, service receipt, and outcomes, including their completion of grant programs, transitions into the workforce or education systems, and success in achieving performance metrics.

An earlier interim report primarily addressed the first line of inquiry—program implementation—and to a lesser degree the second line of inquiry—enrollment and service delivery (see Folsom et al. 2025). Based on the collection of additional data, this final report focuses on the second line of inquiry and presents findings on participant enrollment, service receipt, and participant outcomes for Cohort 2.

Data used to answer the research questions for each line of inquiry included grantee background documents, quarterly narrative reports, a grantee survey, phone interviews with a select group of grantees, and administrative data from two datasets: the State Grant Data Solution (SGDS) for Cohort 2a participants and the Cal-E-Grants (CEG) system for Cohort 2b participants. These data sources captured information about grantee implementation and participant outcomes at various points in each grant cycle, generally later in the timeline for Cohort 2a grantees and earlier in the timeline for Cohort 2b grantees.

Evaluation Key Findings

Based on an analysis of the data sources listed above, the study team identified several findings, including that grantees reached their priority populations and provided training, career, and supportive services designed to address participants' barriers. They also achieved these implementation goals despite delayed start-ups and staffing shortages. Additional details on these findings are as follows.

Reaching Breaking Barriers Participants

In evaluating the enrollment numbers and participant demographics of Breaking Barriers participants, the study team found that:

- **Cohort 2 surpassed its collective enrollment goal.** Grantees collectively served 6,934 participants, exceeding their combined goal of serving 5,282 participants, achieving 131 percent of their target enrollment.
- **Cohort 2 grantees served at least some participants from all of the initiative's 21 priority populations.** The most commonly served populations were economically disadvantaged individuals, English language learners, displaced workers/long-term unemployed individuals, and immigrants.

- **Cohort 2 participants had an average of three barriers to employment.** These multiple and often overlapping barriers underscored the need for supportive services beyond what is traditionally provided to participants in workforce system services.

Participants and Service Delivery

The study team learned the following about the services provided to Breaking Barriers Cohort 2 participants:

- **Grantees provided career services to most Cohort 2 participants (95 percent).** These included a range of services, such as career guidance and planning, work-based learning, and other classroom instruction that was focused on building participants' employment skills.
- **Nearly three-quarters of Cohort 2 participants received training (70 percent).** Grantees delivered training in virtual, in-person, and hybrid formats, often incorporating culturally and linguistically responsive and cohort-based approaches to strengthen engagement.
- **Well over half of Cohort 2 participants (62 percent) received at least one supportive service.** The most common supportive service provided to Cohort 2 participants was the provision of education and work supplies (39 percent) followed by stipends (34 percent). These percentages are notably higher than what is typically provided to people in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) adult program.

Participant Outcomes

The study team measured several different outcomes obtained by Breaking Barriers Cohort 2 participants, including skills progression, credential attainment, and one of three post program outcomes, finding that:

- **The majority of Cohort 2 participants achieved at least one in-program progress milestone.** Eighty-five percent achieved a training milestone and 81 percent received a skills gain milestone. Around half achieved a barrier-removal milestone related to improved personal finances, improved health or stabilized housing.
- **About 50 percent of participants earned a credential.** The most commonly earned credential was an occupational certificate.

- **Thirty-nine percent of participants achieved at least one of three post program outcomes, including employment, connection to postsecondary education, or transition to a registered apprenticeship.** Thirty-one percent of participants entered employment, 6 percent entered a registered apprenticeship (which is a type of employment), and 10 percent entered postsecondary education after exiting the program.

Considerations for Future Workforce System Programs

Breaking Barriers' flexible program design enabled grantees to effectively support people facing significant barriers to employment. Grantees delivered integrated career development services, skills training, and supportive services using customized and culturally relevant approaches that were responsive to participants' complex, overlapping, and often changing needs, with 39 percent of participants achieving a positive post program outcome.

While these practices were successful for some participants, the evaluation could not determine which specific services or supports—or what level of service dosage or intensity—were most strongly associated with improved outcomes. This gap underscores the need for clearer guidance on service delivery expectations, including minimum service frequency and dosage, and for greater consistency in program delivery across grantees. Establishing a program logic model and providing technical assistance on evidence-based strategies, such as trauma-informed care and other participant-centered practices, could strengthen implementation of similar programs and improve evaluability across grantees.

Lessons learned from across all three Breaking Barriers cohorts highlight several opportunities for continued use of AB 1111 and AB 628-style funding and strengthening of similar statewide initiatives and other state workforce programs aligned with the State Plan. Moving forward, the state should formalize partnership expectations, including clearly articulating partner roles and responsibilities, and offer technical assistance to encourage CBO and LWDB partnership development and success. The state can further support participant success by establishing communities of practice to disseminate effective service strategies that lead to improved participant engagement and outcomes. In addition, the evaluation suggests the need to assess and formalize case management as a core service, ensuring that systems are equipped to support participants who have multiple

employment barriers. Lastly, investing in a formalized data infrastructure, clearly defining performance measures, and offering technical assistance on effective data reporting practices will increase the evaluability of similar programs—enabling the state to more effectively assess outcomes and impacts, disseminate lessons learned, and inform future funding decisions.

I. Introduction

The Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative (Breaking Barriers) was designed to supplement existing workforce and education programs by providing services to

Initiative Launch and Funding

The California Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB) 1111 in 2017—funded in 2018 under SB 85—which became known as the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative (Statutes 2017, Chapter 824). In 2019, AB 1111 funded 26 grantee programs. In 2021, the Legislature passed AB 628 and Senate Bill (SB) 129. Together, these two bills created and appropriated funds for two additional cohorts of grantees, 42 in 2023 and 11 in 2024. This report presents final implementation and outcome study findings for the AB 628- and SB 129-funded grantees. Additional reports detail interim findings for these same two cohorts of grantees (Folsom et al. 2025) and interim (Geckeler et al. 2022) and final, impact study findings (DeFever et al. 2026) for the first cohort of AB 1111-funded grantees.

individuals with substantial barriers to employment that may limit their ability to benefit from traditional workforce services. These barriers may include limited education, housing instability, involvement in the justice system, language barriers, immigration status, or other limiting conditions. Breaking Barriers services are delivered through partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and local workforce development boards (LWDBs).

Over three rounds of funding, each Breaking Barriers cohort has built on earlier efforts to expand access, strengthen partnerships, and tailor services to meet local needs in providing workforce system services to these priority populations. For rounds two and three, which are the focus of this report, the California Workforce Development Board (State Board) selected the Foundation for California's Community Colleges (FCCC) to administer and

manage the grants, including their competitive procurement, oversight of grant reporting, and provision of technical assistance (TA) to grantees. In July 2022, the State Board awarded nearly \$25 million to fund a second round of 42 Breaking Barriers programs (Cohort 2a), and in 2023, FCCC and the State Board awarded an additional \$4.2 million to fund a third round of 11 programs (Cohort 2b). The State

Board also hired the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) and Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate all three cohorts of the program.

An Overview of Breaking Barriers

The key goals of the first round (hereafter Cohort 1) of Breaking Barriers, which have guided subsequent funding of the initiative, included:

1. Promoting effective and innovative strategies to reduce racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic labor-market disparities.
2. Supporting individuals with employment barriers to access, participate in, and complete workforce programs that lead to sustainable employment and economic mobility.
3. Providing services through strong partnerships between community-based organizations and workforce boards experienced with priority populations (California Workforce Development Board and Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2022).

While the initiative's core goals remained consistent across all three cohorts, SB 628 and SB 129, the subsequent pieces of legislation that funded the second and third rounds (Cohorts 2a and 2b), introduced certain changes, including a stronger focus on intersectionality and community-driven, equity-focused service delivery, and some changes in the populations' scope. As instructed in the requests for applications, Cohort 2a and 2b grants expanded priority populations to include the following groups:

- people who resided in cities disproportionately impacted by violence or who were enrolled in violence prevention or mitigation programs,
- victims of domestic violence or community violence,
- populations with disproportionate numbers of people living in ZIP codes with high concentrations of poverty,
- people with autism,
- people impacted by occupational segregation and underrepresented in jobs,
- and those impacted by COVID-19 (California Workforce Development Board and California Community Colleges, 2022; California Workforce Development Board and California Community Colleges, 2023).

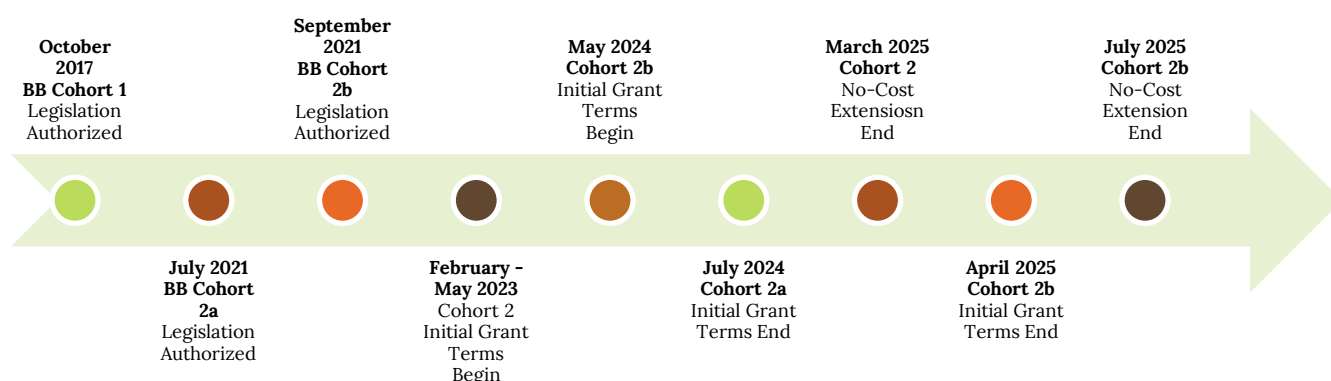
Conversely, Cohort 2 grants did not include the following groups who were priority populations for Cohort 1 grants:

- people experiencing homelessness;
- youth currently or formerly involved in the foster care system;
- individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act;
- single parents, including single, pregnant women;
- and transgender and gender nonconforming individuals.

Cohort 2 grantees were also permitted to serve disconnected youth ages 16 to 24, whereas Cohort 1 grantees could only serve youth participants 18 and older.

As illustrated in Exhibit I-1, the collective timeline for all activities related to Cohorts 2a and 2b, including passing the founding legislation, spanned four years from July 2021 to July 2025.

Exhibit I-1: Breaking Barriers Cohorts 2a and 2b Timeline



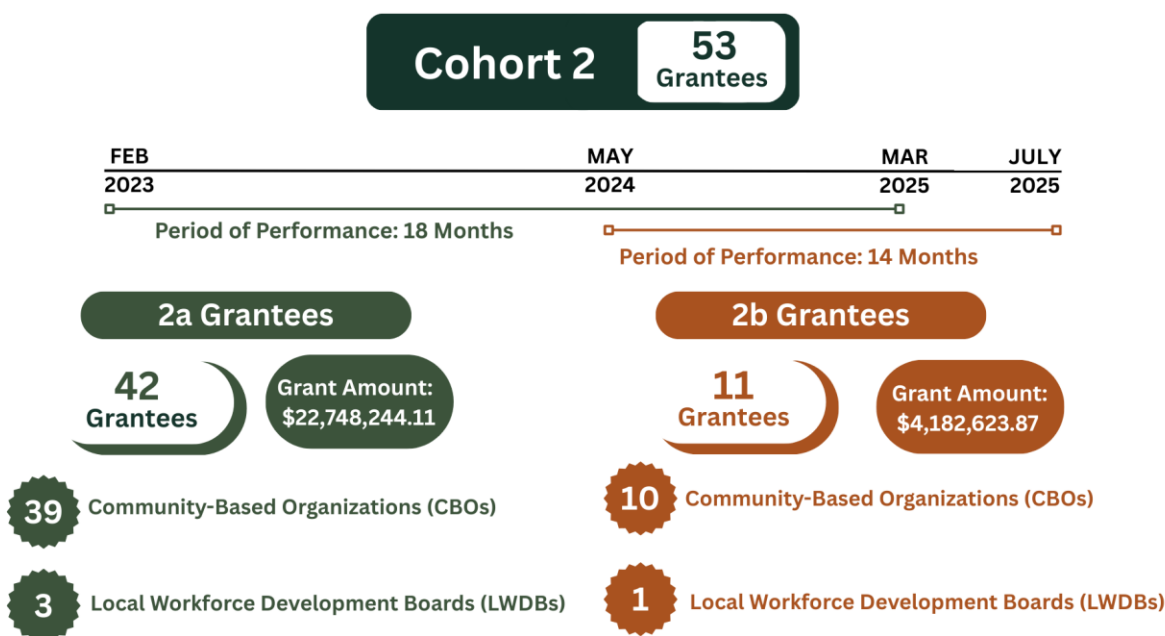
As is also seen in the exhibit, the timelines for both cohorts overlapped, since grants under both operated somewhat longer than initially planned. Key differences in the Cohort 2 timelines are listed below:

- Cohort 2a grantees were supposed to have begun their 18-month grant periods of performance (POP) in January 2023; most programs launched, instead, between February and May 2023. To accommodate these delays, the State Board offered no-cost extensions to Cohort 2a grantees for up to five months, and most grantees modified their contracts to extend grant activities until as late as March 2025.

- Cohort 2b grantees, which had only a 12-month POP (as compared with 18 months for Cohort 2a), were supposed to launch in May 2024, but due to delays, they launched between June and August 2024. To accommodate these delays, the State Board offered Cohort 2b grantees three-month, no-cost extensions, and most 2b grantees opted to extend their grants through July 2025.

As shown in Exhibit I-2, the programmatic design and funding levels of the 42 Cohort 2a and 11 Cohort 2b Breaking Barriers grantees varied. Most (49 of 53) were CBOs, but four were LWDBs. Nevertheless, each grantee had to have a named partnership with the other type of organization.⁴ Grant award amounts ranged from \$144,000 to \$750,000. Further details about each of the grantees can be found in Appendix A.

Exhibit I-2: Breaking Barriers Grantee Overview



Program and Policy Context

Breaking Barriers existed within a complex system of federal and state-funded workforce programs designed to help individuals prepare for employment. While federal programs such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

⁴ As such, each Breaking Barriers program was affiliated with a specific California LWDB.

provide core employment services, they do not always fully meet the needs of individuals facing significant barriers to accessing, persisting in, or completing workforce programming. To address these challenges, California invested in a range of state-funded initiatives specifically targeting populations underserved by traditional systems, including Breaking Barriers. The next section provides an overview of the federal workforce system and California's state-funded initiatives and describes how the initiative aligns with and complements these efforts.

Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title 1 Programs

The federally funded Wagner-Peyser (WP) and WIOA Title I programs form the core of California's workforce system, providing employment services and training to a wide range of job seekers. WP offers universal access to basic employment services, such as job search assistance, job referrals, and labor market information. In contrast, WIOA Title I provides more intensive employment, education, training, and supportive services for adults, dislocated workers, and opportunity youth, with performance measures related to employment and credential attainment. Because WP and WIOA are federally directed, the state cannot easily change core services.

While both programs play critical roles in the workforce system, several gaps remain. For example, WP was not designed to address the layered challenges faced by individuals with multiple barriers to employment, such as housing instability, involvement with the justice system, or limited English proficiency. Further, WIOA's emphasis on performance metrics can make it difficult for participants who require longer-term, intensive support to fully benefit from services. As a result, individuals with the greatest needs may struggle to engage in or complete these programs or are left out entirely.

State Board Workforce Plan and Related Initiatives

In addition to coordinating WP and WIOA core programs, the State Board's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan (State Plan) advances a statewide vision of equity, job quality, and regional economic resilience and guides state-funded workforce programming. Funded by multiple state agencies, California's broader effort to support individuals who have barriers to employment includes several equity-focused initiatives, such as High Road Construction Careers (HRCC), High Road Training Partnerships (H RTP), and Emergency Medical Services Corps (EMS Corps). Together, these initiatives promote industry engagement, climate

resilience, and inclusive pathways into high-quality jobs. For example, H RTP supports regional, industry-driven partnerships that bring together employers, labor, education and training providers, and CBOs to expand access to “high-road” jobs explicitly including underserved populations. Programming aligns training to quality jobs and embeds equity and worker voice in program design (California Workforce Development Board [CWDB], n.d.). Many H RTP projects intentionally recruit participants who face barriers, including individuals who are low-income, have limited formal credentials, or have justice involvement. Further, HRCC invests in construction training pathways developed through partnerships with building trades, workforce boards, community colleges, and CBOs, with the goal of creating reliable on-ramps to middle-class careers often via pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship-connected models (California Workforce Development Board [CWDB], n.d.). These partnerships are designed to reduce employment barriers through structured training, supportive services, and warm handoffs into registered apprenticeship or other high-quality construction employment. Complementing these efforts, EMS Corps is a paid, cohort-based emergency medical technician (EMT) training pathway for young adults (typically ages 18–26), some of whom are justice system-involved, in foster care, or otherwise disconnected from school and work (Employment Development Department 2025). The model pairs industry-recognized credential attainment with wraparound supports, such as coaching, mentorship, tutoring, and financial supports, making it viable for participants who may not be able to complete training without these wraparound services.

Breaking Barriers aligned with the state’s priorities by focusing on barrier mitigation for barriered populations, in partnership with CBOs, nonprofits, and mission-driven organizations with track records of success, to strengthen the state’s workforce programing. Grantees were intentionally selected for their trusted relationships with priority populations and their capacity to address the barriers that priority populations faced, which further supported both recruitment and sustained engagement. Through required partnerships with LWDBs, Breaking Barriers also sought to strengthen the broader workforce system by improving access to services for individuals who might not have been previously identified as eligible or ready, to ensure that those most at risk of being left behind could meaningfully connect to workforce opportunities. To do so, Breaking Barriers

provided flexible funding and tailored services that enabled grantees to offer wraparound supports, culturally responsive programming, and high-touch case management that helped participants enter, persist in, and benefit from career and training programs.

Evaluation Overview and Approach

Through a multiyear, mixed-method implementation and outcomes study, the study team assessed whether Breaking Barriers Cohort 2 grantees achieved their individual and collective program objectives, examined the participant- and system-level outcomes achieved, and identified factors that supported or hindered these achievements. The study team examined the extent to which, and what ways, grantees collaborated with their partners to enroll individuals into services that prepared them for entry into broader workforce and educational systems and, ideally, into employment or other education and training programs. The study also sought to assess grant implementation to identify strategies developed by grantees for operating and sustaining their programs, which may have implications for other, similar programs in California and nationwide. In addition, the study team was tasked with preparing materials for the State Board to help meet its reporting requirements under AB 628 (see Appendix B for more information about the evaluation approach).

Research Questions

To address these evaluation objectives, the study team sought to answer several research questions, organized into two main lines of inquiry.

- 1. Analysis of the Program Implementation of Cohort 2.** This line of inquiry examined the initiative's operational aspects by focusing on the types of grantee organizations, the priority populations they served, the barriers faced by participants, and how the CBO-LWDB partnerships evolved and impacted service delivery.⁵ It also examined grantees' strategies for outreach and recruitment of individuals facing barriers to employment.
- 2. Analysis of Participant Enrollment, Service Receipt, Outcomes of Cohort 2.** This line of inquiry focused on enrollment, demographics, service

⁵ The study team previously completed a report exploring the implementation and early outcomes of Breaking Barriers Cohort 1 (Geckeler et al. 2022).

participation, and outcomes, specifically participants' completion of grant programs, transitions into the workforce or education systems, and success in achieving performance metrics.⁶

An earlier interim report primarily addressed the first line of inquiry—program implementation—and some aspects (namely early enrollment and service delivery) of the second (see Folsom et al. 2025). This final report primarily addresses the second line of inquiry, reporting updated participant enrollment, service receipt, and participant outcomes for Cohort 2.

Data Sources

The evaluation relied on the following data sources to address the research questions answered in this report (see Appendix B for a more detailed description of the data sources):

- **Grantee background documents**, obtained from FCCC, including proposal narratives, work plans, and contract updates.
- **Quarterly narrative reports**, obtained from FCCC, that summarized grantee progress, activities, and TA received.
- **A grantee survey**, administered by the study team that asked about implementation, service strategies, partnerships, and sustainability. It was fielded in 2024 and 2025, and 91 percent of grantees responded to the survey.
- **Grantee interviews**, with 24 of the 53 Cohort 2 grantees, conducted by the study team, that asked program directors about program design, partnerships, priority populations, co-enrollment, services offered, and lessons learned.
- **Administrative data**, obtained from the State Board, that came from two systems: the State Grant Data Solution (SGDS), a temporary system used for Cohort 2a, and Cal-E-Grants (CEG), the long-term system used for Cohort 2b. SGDS included records for 5,922 Cohort 2a participants enrolled between January 1, 2023, and March 31, 2025. CEG included records for 1,012 Cohort 2b participants enrolled between May 1, 2024, and July 31, 2025. These

⁶ The study team also conducted an impact study of Breaking Barriers Cohort 1 that compared Cohort 1 participant outcomes with a comparable group of Wagner-Peyser program participants (DeFever et al. 2025).

datasets were merged into a single harmonized dataset using data received on January 28, 2026.

Factors Influencing and Limiting This Analysis

Two factors warrant consideration when interpreting this report's findings. Any qualitative data referenced in this report may not reflect the final views of any respondents around implementation, since the study team collected these data at a point when each cohort was still operating, later during the implementation timeline for Cohort 2a and earlier for Cohort 2b. Second, due to the temporary nature of the SGDS data for Cohort 2a and the more recent deployment of the CEG data system, there were issues aligning the data across both cohorts and under-reporting of data for some measures and by grantees. The study team has noted instances of incomplete data that arise throughout the report in table notes and when interpreting findings. The implications for the program around these missing data are also further discussed in the conclusion chapter.

While this report primarily presents findings from the Cohort 2 evaluation, the study team integrated relevant findings from the Cohort 1 evaluation to support interpretation of longer-term outcomes and place the initiative's outcomes within the broader California workforce system. Because wage data were not available for Cohort 2, the report also draws on results from the Cohort 1 impact study to inform the conclusion and recommendations.

Report Overview

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Chapter II provides an overview of program participants, including their enrollment, enrollment patterns, and demographics. Chapter III describes the services they received by participating in the program. Chapter IV describes the interim milestones and employment outcomes achieved by these participants, and finally, the benefits that participants received from their employment based on program administrative data. Finally, Chapter V offers a summary of key findings and a discussion of important themes that emerged over the course of the three cohort evaluations, including lessons learned and considerations for future program implementation, evaluation, and workforce system policy.

II. Enrollment and Participant Demographics

This chapter examines the enrollment and participant demographics, including their barriers to employment for Breaking Barriers Cohort 2 participants.

Key Findings

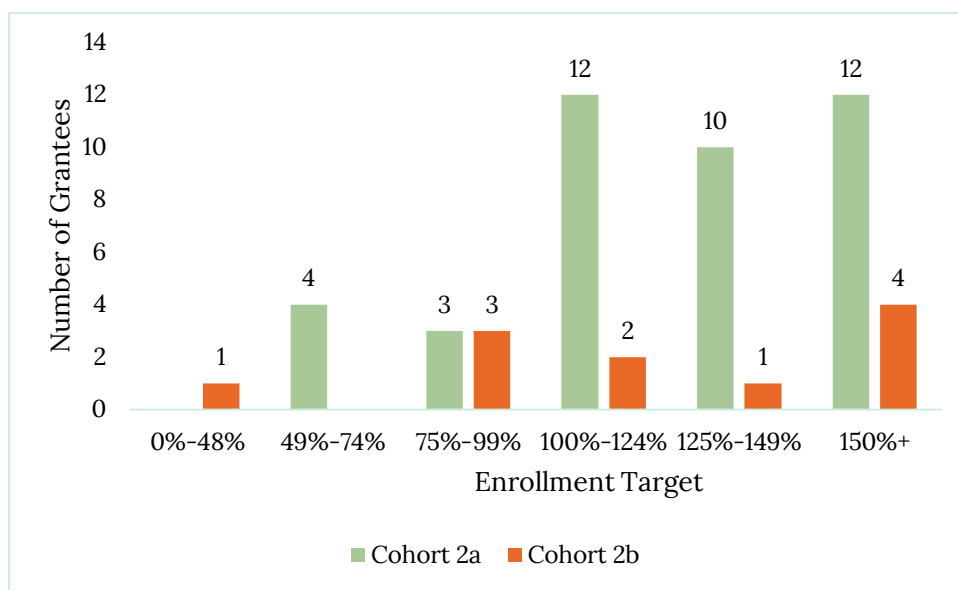
- **Cohort 2 surpassed its collective enrollment goal.** Across both Cohorts 2a and 2b, grantees collectively enrolled 6,934 participants, exceeding their combined goal of 5,282 participants, achieving 131 percent of their enrollment goal.
- **Cohort 2 grantees enrolled and served at least some participants from all of the initiative's 21 priority populations.** The most commonly served populations were economically disadvantaged individuals, English language learners, displaced workers/long-term unemployed individuals, and immigrants.
- **Cohort 2 participants had an average of three barriers to employment.** These multiple and often overlapping barriers underscore the need for supportive services beyond what is traditionally provided in the workforce system.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Collectively, across Cohorts 2a and 2b, grantees collectively enrolled and served 6,934 participants, exceeding their collective enrollment goal of 5,282.⁷

Furthermore (as shown in Exhibit II-1), each cohort exceeded its own separate enrollment goal. Cohort 2a grantees enrolled 5,922 participants compared with a goal of 4,439 participants and Cohort 2b grantees enrolled 1,012 participants compared with a goal of 843 participants. While most individual grantees also exceeded their own enrollment goals, a few fell short, with a slightly higher proportion of Cohort 2b grantees falling short, compared with Cohort 2a grantees.

⁷ The study team excluded 821 participants with no enrollment data. In addition, the study team excluded enrollment data for one grantee due to having served only a small (two) number of participants.

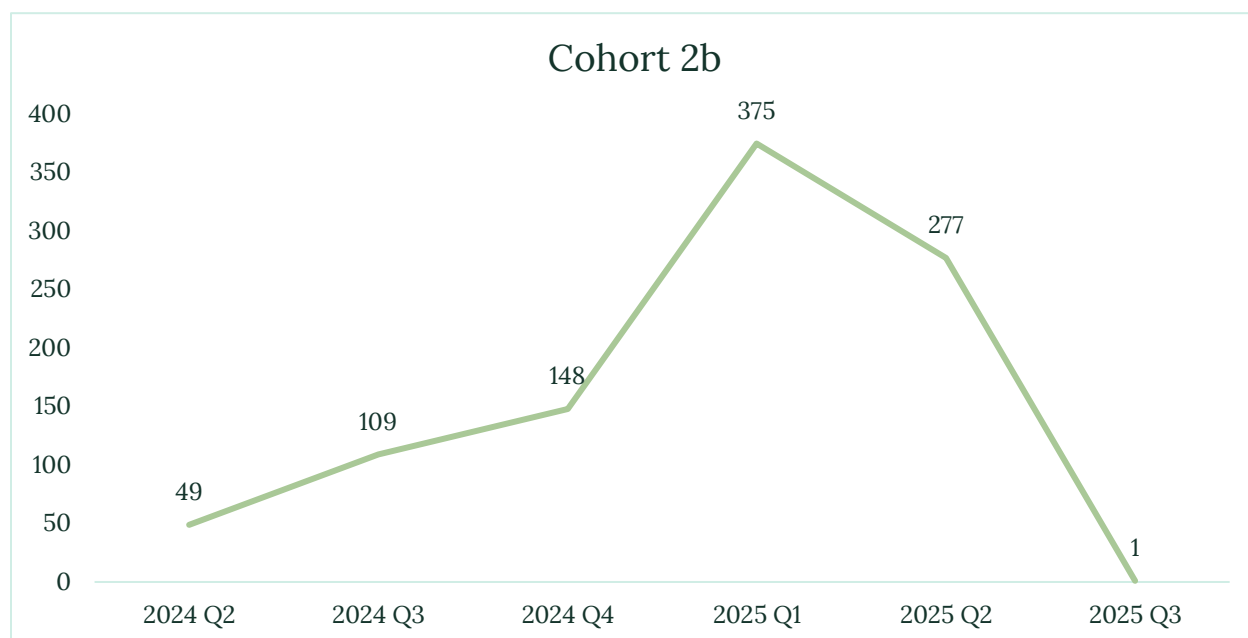
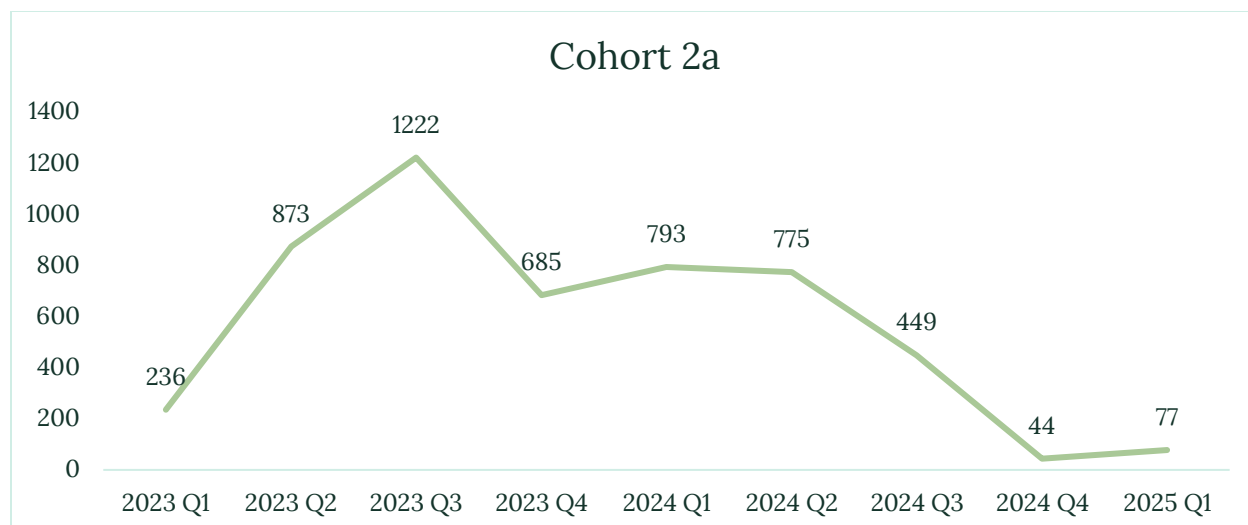
Exhibit II-1: Breaking Barriers Grantee Enrollment Goals versus Actual, by Cohort

Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: The dataset includes enrollment data for 5,922 Cohort 2a participants and 1,012 Cohort 2b participants.

Due at least in part to their different operational timelines and the shorter program duration for Cohort 2b compared with Cohort 2a, both cohorts experienced different enrollment patterns. As shown in Exhibit II-2, enrollment for Cohort 2a rose rapidly and peaked in the first three quarters of the grant period and slowly declined from there. Meanwhile, Cohort 2b experienced a slower rise in enrollments, reaching its peak in the fourth quarter of the grant period, with a more rapid decline after that.

Exhibit II-2: Number of Breaking Barriers Participants Enrolled Quarterly



Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: Enrollment dates were reported for only a subset of all participants. The dataset included enrollment dates for 5,154 out of 5,922 Cohort 2a participants and 959 out of 1,012 Cohort 2b participants.

Recruitment and Enrollment Strategies

As discussed in greater detail in the evaluation's interim report, grantees met their enrollment goals using a combination of community-based and relational recruitment strategies (Folsom et al. 2025). For instance, many grantees included information about Breaking Barriers in routine presentations they made to community members about their full menu of programs, making it easier to identify

and refer individuals to Breaking Barriers. Grantees also relied on digital outreach methods, including text messages, social media posts, and virtual information sessions. Based on interview data, recruitment appears to have been most effective when grounded in established community networks, with many programs leveraging partnerships with community- and faith-based organizations and with judicial system agencies (e.g., police or sheriff and probation or parole partners) to expand their reach. Grantee staff conducted grassroots outreach by attending job fairs and reentry events, and by visiting laundromats, shelters, and housing complexes to connect with harder-to-reach individuals in places where people carried out their lives. Word-of-mouth referrals played an important role, as participants shared their experiences and encouraged others to enroll.

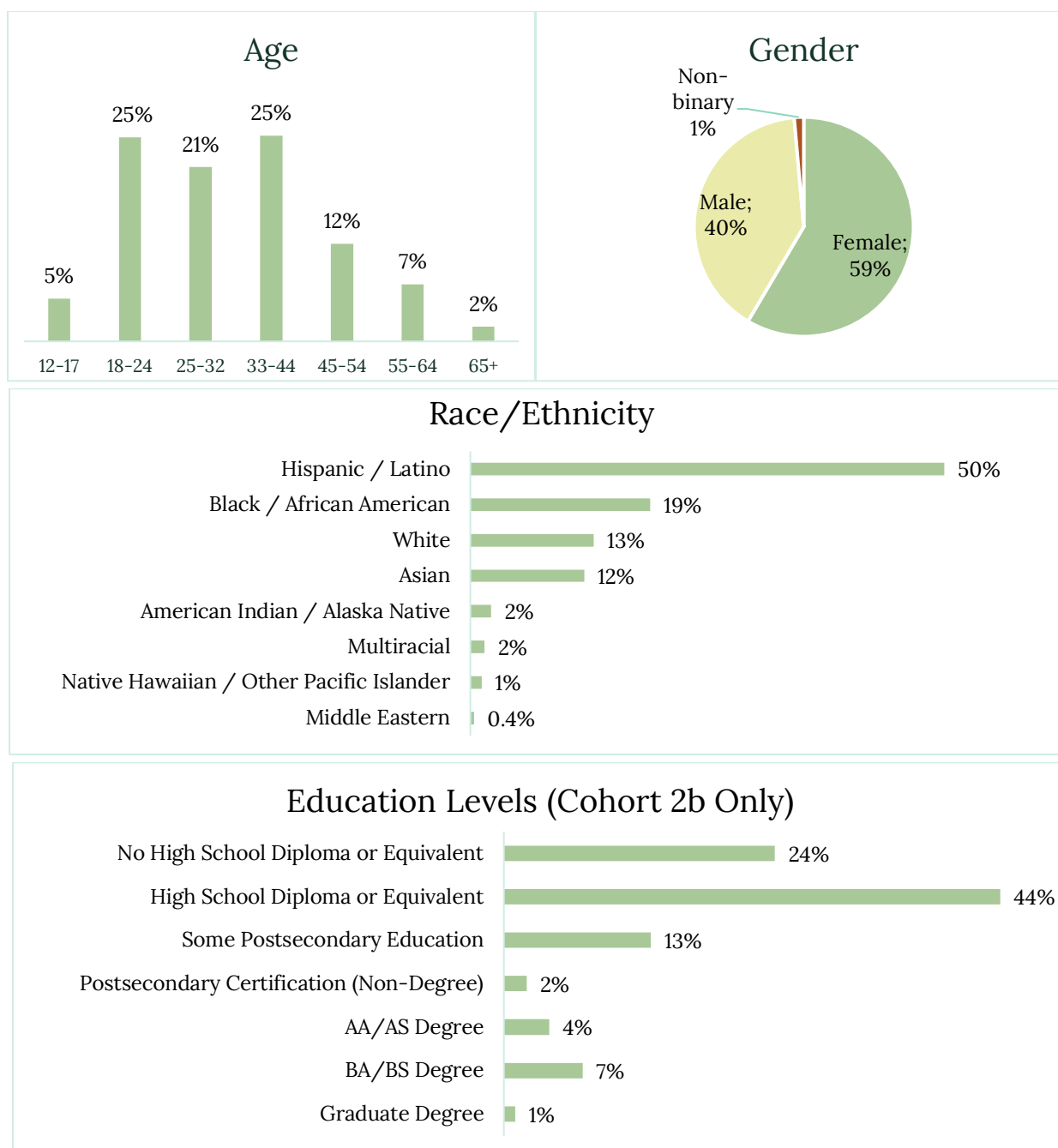
Despite using a range of recruitment strategies to reduce barriers to participation, 11 grantees did not meet their enrollment goals. Interview data provides insight into several factors that contributed to grantees falling short of enrollment targets. Some grantees described a slow start as programs worked to build visibility, establish credibility, and coordinate outreach with new partners. In addition, participants often faced financial instability and had to prioritize paid work, which limited their ability to enroll in services.

Participant Demographics

As shown in Exhibit II-3, Breaking Barriers grantees enrolled a diverse group of participants. About half of all Breaking Barriers Cohort 2 participants were Hispanic/Latino, and more than half were female. Available educational background data for Cohort 2b participants showed that about half had completed a high school diploma or equivalent.⁸ Cohort 2 participants had a median age of 34, and about 71 percent of participants were between the ages of 18 and 44 (Appendix B provides the demographic profile of each cohort.)

Exhibit II-3: Cohorts 2a and 2b Participant Demographics

⁸ These data were not collected for Cohort 2a participants.



Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: Age was available for 6,681 individuals, as 253 participants did not have age data. Gender was provided for 6,863 individuals (14 did not provide their gender identity, and 57 chose not to self-identify). Data on racial categories were available for 6,532 individuals (402 individuals chose not to self-identify their racial identity). Education level was unavailable for Cohort 2a participants and was only provided for 976 Cohort 2b participants (36 of these participants did not provide a response).

Priority Populations

As noted in the introduction, Breaking Barriers grantees were required to serve participants who had one or more barriers to employment. Grantees identified which of these priority populations they planned to serve in their Breaking Barriers funding proposals, typically selecting them based on their own organizational expertise. This sometimes resulted in programs focusing on a single priority population, such as English language learners, although participants often met the criteria for multiple priority populations.

As indicated in Exhibit II-4, multiple grantees served each of the 21 priority populations shown. While the highest number of grantees served participants with disabilities, this group did not represent the largest share of participants overall. Instead, economically disadvantaged participants made up the largest proportion (39 percent), followed by English language learners (28 percent).⁹ The priority populations that made up the smallest percentage of Cohort 2 participants were individuals diagnosed with autism. Comparisons of priority populations for Cohorts 2a and 2b are provided in Appendix B.

Exhibit II-4: Number and Percentage of Participants Enrolled by Priority Population for Cohorts 2a and 2b, Combined

Priority Populations	Percentage of Participants	Number of Participants	Number of Grantees Actually Serving
Economically disadvantaged individuals	39%	2,709	40
English language learners	28%	1,948	36
Displaced workers/long-term unemployed	22%	1,556	44
Immigrants	22%	1,537	38
Basic skills deficient/low levels of literacy [†]	20%	1,387	34
Ex-offenders	14%	999	38
Homeless individuals/runaway youth	13%	912	38

Single parents (include single, pregnant women) [†]	12%	839	42
Individuals with disabilities	11%	764	45
Women in nontraditional fields of employment	10%	720	24
CalWorks	9%	590	31
Dislocated worker	8%	528	31
Victims of domestic violence or community violence	7%	467	24
Disconnected and/or at-risk youth	6%	416	19
Returning veterans	5%	332	30
Individuals over 50 years of age and retraining	3%	240	24
Displaced homemakers [†]	2%	132	20
Foster youth [†]	2%	154	16
Migrants or seasonal workers	2%	151	6
Native Americans	2%	156	34
Diagnosed with autism	0.3%	21	14

Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: The numbers and percentages are based on 6,934 participants. Since participants could belong to more than one priority population, the percentages total more than 100.

[†]Grantees reported serving participants described by these four barriers, which were categorized as other populations with barriers to employment as identified in subdivision Unemployment Insurance Code Section 14005(j).

Participant Barriers

Breaking Barriers participants rarely faced a single barrier to employment. On average, the 6,934 Cohort 2 participants experienced three barriers, with the number of reported barriers ranging from one to as many as 11. This is important to note since research shows that layered challenges make it even harder for people to enroll and persist in training, complete credentials, and secure stable employment (Spaulding and Martin-Caughey 2015; Roder and Elliott 2019).

While grantees provided supportive services to address participants' basic needs, interview data suggested that persistent systemic challenges may have limited some participants' employment outcomes. Several grantees reported that some participant challenges, such as immigration-related issues, including temporary

visas or lack of work authorization, were structural in nature and outside of issues they could readily address. Further, programs in rural areas described challenges such as long commutes to job sites, limited public transportation, and small local labor markets. For some participants, commuting was not realistic without a personal vehicle, which narrowed their already limited job options. Grantees also indicated that hiring practices sometimes made job placement for breaking barriers participants more difficult than for non-barriered people, especially for people with limited work experience or prior justice system involvement. Requirements for previous experience, background checks, and rigid schedules reduced access to entry-level roles, further limiting opportunities for people with limited work experience. These factors—at both the individual and labor market levels—affected employment outcomes in ways programs could not fully control.

Summary

Cohort 2 grantees used community-based and relational recruitment strategies to surpass their collective enrollment goals. Grantees reached a diverse set of individuals across all 21 priority populations. Cohort 2 participants had an average of three barriers to employment. These multiple and interconnected barriers underscore the need for a level of support and service delivery that extends well beyond traditional federal workforce system services. The next chapter describes how grantees sought to address these barriers through training, career services, and supportive services—either by designing interventions specifically targeting these challenges or by delivering them in ways tailored to participants' needs—with the goal of improving participants' well-being and supporting pathways to economic security.

III. Service Delivery

Research increasingly shows that targeted, community-based strategies and integrated service models are more effective at addressing structural employment barriers faced by individuals typically excluded from economic opportunities (see, for example, Jobs for the Future 2024; Urban Institute 2024). Combining job training with supports such as housing, mental health care, childcare, and legal aid has been shown to improve outcomes for people navigating multiple, interconnected challenges, compared with traditional workforce programming (Spaulding and Gebrekristos 2018; Shanshory 2023). Building on these principles, Breaking Barriers grantees delivered a range of services to support their priority populations. This chapter describes the services that grantees provided to Cohort 2 participants and how these services were intended to address participants' multiple barriers.

Key Findings

- **Grantees provided career services to most Cohort 2 participants (95 percent).** These included a range of services, such as career guidance and planning, work-based learning, and other classroom instruction focused on building participants' employment skills.
- **Nearly three-quarters of Breaking Barriers participants in Cohort 2 received training (70 percent).** Grantees delivered training in virtual, in-person, and hybrid formats, often incorporating culturally and linguistically responsive and cohort-based approaches to strengthen engagement.
- **Well over half of Cohort 2 participants (62 percent) received at least one supportive service.** The most common supportive service provided to Cohort 2 participants was the provision of education and work supplies (39 percent) followed by stipends (34 percent). These percentages are notably higher than what is typically provided to people in the WIOA adult program.

Service Delivery Types

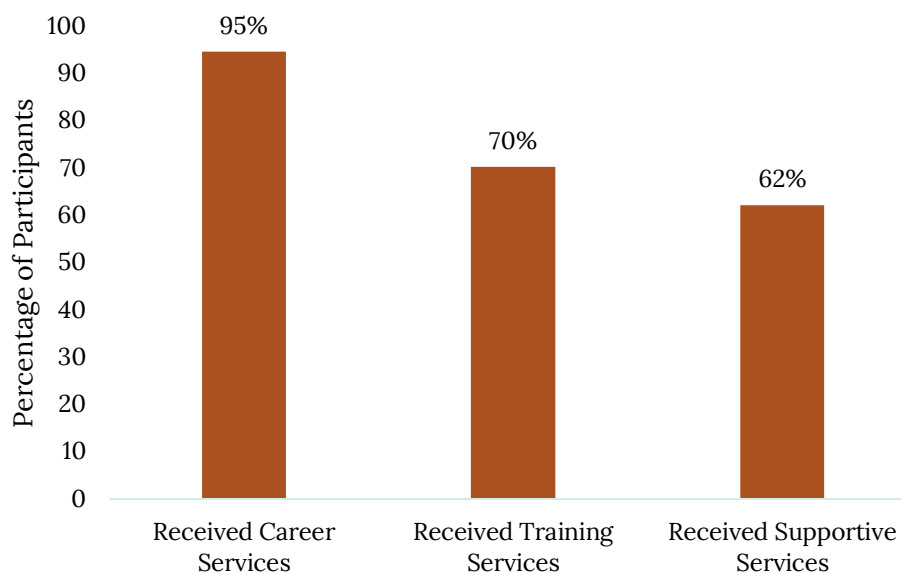
Grantees provided three main types of services:

- **Career services** supported participants in exploring their career interests and navigating their job search. Examples included activities such as, career guidance and planning, job search assistance, résumé-building, life skills education, and internship opportunities.

- **Training services** included classroom instruction and work-based learning focused on building job-specific skills and typically led to certifications and degrees.
- **Supportive services** included wraparound services, such as mental-health and substance-use treatment services, housing services, and transportation assistance. These services were designed to address barriers and to help support participants during their time in the program.

As shown in Exhibit III-1, most Breaking Barriers participants received each type of service. The most common service was career services, followed by training and supportive services. Overall, participants in both cohorts received roughly similar levels of each service type, with the exception of career services (Appendix B provides additional information on services and comparisons between Cohorts 2a and 2b).

Exhibit III-1: Percentage of Breaking Barriers Participants Receiving Different Service Areas



Source: Harmonized dataset.

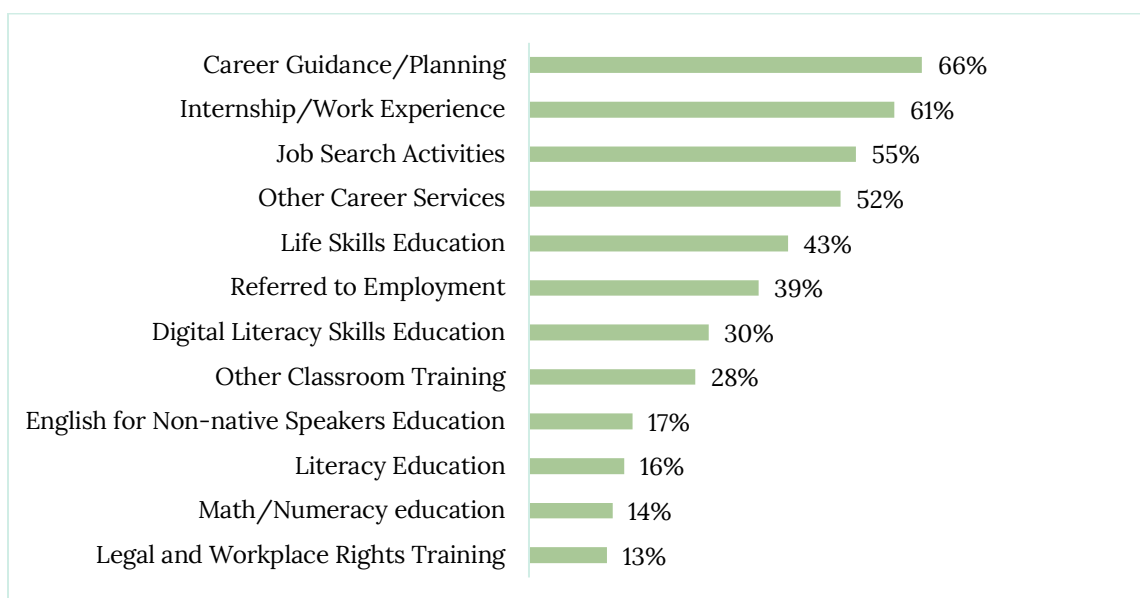
Note: The combined dataset contains 6,934 participants, including 5,922 2a participants and 1,012 2b participants.

Career Services

Grantees provided a wide variety of career services to Cohort 2 participants (see Exhibit III-2). Career guidance and planning services were the most common

services (66 percent), similar to the proportion of California WIOA adults who received individualized employment plan services (68 percent), as recorded in CalJOBS program year (PY) 2023 (SPR 2025). Internships and work experience were the next most common services (61 percent). The high percentage of Cohort 2 participants receiving internships and work experience is particularly notable, since those were not commonly provided to adults in WIOA or WP programs and were provided to only 7 percent of WIOA adults in PY 2023 (SPR 2025). Another career service provided to Breaking Barriers participants, not typical in WIOA adult programming, was life skills education, which was provided to 43 percent of participants.

Exhibit III-2: Number and Percentage of Participants Receiving Different Types of Career Services



Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: Percentages are calculated based on 6,934 participants. Since participants could receive more than one career service, the percentages total more than 100.

Counseling and Case Management

Evidence from grantee interviews and surveys indicates that counseling and case management were important components of service delivery. Although these activities are often classified under career services in WIOA, particularly within career planning or related categories, they were not explicitly captured in the

Breaking Barriers administrative data.¹⁰ However, in interviews, grantees highlighted that case management was a key strategy for supporting participants with multiple barriers. Grantee staff members routinely identified participant-specific barriers and goals and used this to guide service delivery. Research shows that intensive, participant-centered approaches, particularly those grounded in trauma-informed care and motivational interviewing, can improve workforce outcomes (Choitz and Wagner 2021; Calma and Sayin 2022). Consistent with this evidence, grantees explained that case management began at intake, where staff identified employment barriers and participants set individualized goals. Case managers then developed tailored service plans addressing needs such as transportation, childcare, housing instability, mental health, technology access, and work readiness. In many cases, support extended beyond training completion and into employment to promote job retention (Folsom et al. 2025).

Further, during interviews, grantee staff consistently characterized case management as intensive, emphasizing low caseloads, and relational, where trust-building was critical to responding to participants' evolving circumstances. Case managers and career coaches served as steady points of contact, coordinating referrals, offering encouragement, and helping participants navigate crises that might otherwise disrupt their progress. The frequency and duration of check-ins reflected this individualized approach, ranging from as-needed meetings to three sessions per month or weekly meetings throughout the program, with sessions typically lasting between 15 and 90 minutes (Folsom et al. 2025).

Staff emphasized case management's crucial role in addressing complex, overlapping barriers in interviews (Folsom et al. 2025). They highlighted the ways that low caseloads, frequent check-ins, and trust-building activities enabled them to adapt to participants' changing needs. Often, case managers or career coaches acted as consistent contacts, coordinating referrals, offering encouragement, and assisting with crises that could otherwise hinder participation. For priority populations experiencing multiple and often overlapping barriers to employment, a structured case management model provided individualized assessment,

¹⁰ Unlike CalJOBS data, which were used for the evaluation of Breaking Barriers Cohort 1, the SGDS and CEG data did not include a service category designed to capture the delivery of case management activities, which might have included information on the frequency and length of any meetings staff held with participants in helping to identify needs and coordinate service delivery.

coordination, and goal alignment to support meaningful progress. Taken together, counseling and case management services likely played a central role in supporting participants.

Training Services

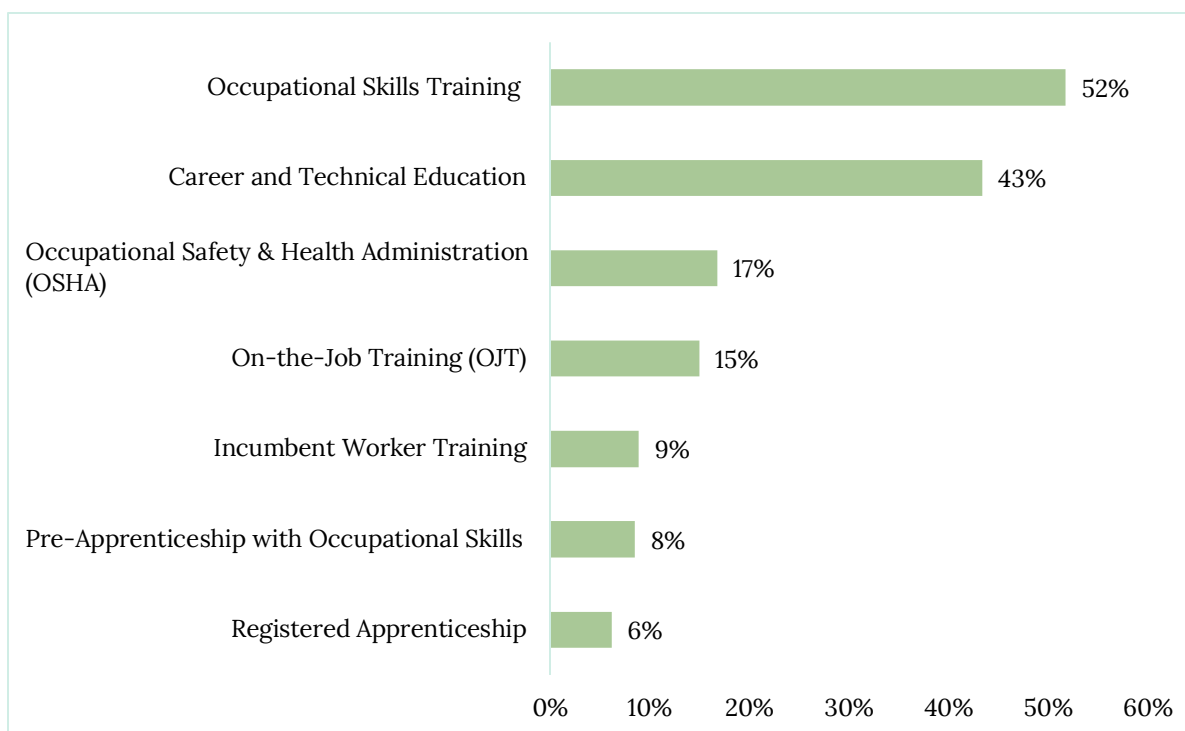
Cohort 2 participants accessed training at high rates (70 percent—see Exhibit III-1 above), which were substantially higher than what is typically provided to WIOA adults (35 percent in PY 2023) (SPR 2025). Overall, occupational skills training (OST) (52 percent) and career and technical education (CTE) (43 percent) were the most commonly provided training services to Cohort 2 participants (see Exhibit III-3). Participation in registered apprenticeships was the least common (6 percent). This is unsurprising given that apprenticeship placements tend to be costly and less widely implemented; moreover, at least in the trades, apprenticeship openings are

tightly regulated by trades councils to ensure they do not exceed demand or displace journeypersons from job lists.

While Cohort 2 participants broadly received higher rates of training services compared with what was provided to California WIOA adults in PY 2023, some differences in the training types emerged. Cohort 2 participants received OST at lower rates than WIOA adults, 82 percent of whom received OST in PY 2023. On the other hand, Cohort 2 received registered apprenticeship training at higher rates compared with fewer than 1 percent of WIOA adults in PY 2023 (SPR 2025). Cohort 2 participants received on-the-job training (OJT) at roughly the same rate as WIOA adults (SPR 2025).

WIOA and Training Services

In WIOA, OST provides structured vocational skills training that leads to skills proficiency and a recognized credential, and it must be outcome-oriented and aligned with an occupational goal (20 CFR § 681.540, 2024). CTE, by contrast, is delivered within the education system and aligns course content with state academic standards within in-demand industry sectors. CTE programs frequently lead to recognized postsecondary credentials and are structured under the Perkins V statutory framework (Zekus and Hyslop 2018).

Exhibit III-3: Percentage of Participants Receiving Different Types of Training Services

Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: Percentages are calculated based on 6,934 participants. Since participants could receive more than one training service, the percentages total more than 100.

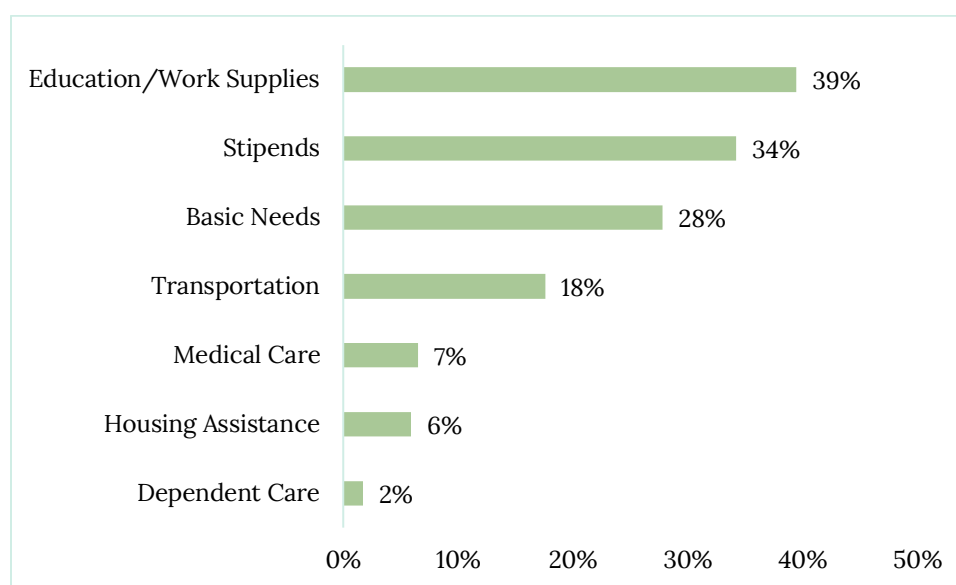
Grantees made training accessible to participants using flexible, cohort-based models to promote engagement and completion, and many incorporated culturally and linguistically responsive adaptations to ensure that training aligned with participants' needs. Training was also offered in person and through virtual and hybrid formats, which allowed participants to balance coursework with work and family responsibilities (Folsom et al. 2025). These strategies helped grantees make training opportunities accessible to a large share of participants with significant barriers to employment. Notably, although OST was provided to only 22 percent of Cohort 1 participants, those served by Breaking Barriers Cohort 1 programs experienced positive employment impacts (DeFever et al. 2025).

Supportive Services

The extent and range of supportive services that grantees delivered suggests that grantees prioritized addressing participants' practical and financial barriers as well as acknowledging that participants often faced multiple barriers. Breaking Barriers

grantees delivered seven types of supportive services (see Exhibit III-4), most commonly education or work supplies, followed by stipends and basic needs supports. Notably, Cohort 2 participants received more supportive services than WIOA adults—only 20 percent of WIOA adults received any supportive services in PY 2023 (SPR 2025). The high use of stipends is notable, since WIOA—the main federally funded program that offers supportive services—almost never provides participants with stipends. Research shows that performance-based stipends and other financial incentives are important for helping participants with living expenses and to increase their motivation and retention in programming (Per Scholas 2022; Urban Institute 2024). Lastly, these findings are consistent with what the study team observed for Cohort 1 supportive service delivery rates (DeFever et al. 2025), where there were notable impacts observed on employment.

Exhibit III-4: Percentage of Participants Receiving Different Types of Supportive Services



Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: Percentages are calculated based on 6,934 participants. Since participants could receive more than one supportive service, the percentages total more than 100.

Summary

Overall, service delivery across Cohort 2 emphasized building participants' occupational skills, supporting their career navigation, and reducing practical barriers to workforce participation. Most participants received career services,

followed by training services, which were primarily delivered through OST and CTE, and at higher rates than in Cohort 1. Supportive services—which are rarely provided to WIOA participants—including education or work supplies, stipends, and assistance with basic needs—helped participants overcome challenges and succeed in training. Together, these services shaped the positive outcomes described in the next chapter.

IV. Participant Outcomes

This chapter describes the outcomes that participants achieved. These include: milestones, denoting in-program progress and barrier removal; credential attainment; and post program outcomes, including placement in employment, registered apprenticeship programs, and postsecondary education. The chapter also discusses the benefits participants received as a result of their employment.

Key Findings

- **The majority of Cohort 2 participants achieved at least one in-program progress milestone.** Eighty-five percent achieved a training milestone and 81 percent received a skills gain milestone. Around half achieved a barrier-removal milestone related to improved personal finances, improved health or stabilized housing.
- **About 50 percent of participants earned a credential.** The most commonly earned credential was an occupational certificate.
- **Thirty-nine percent of participants achieved at least one of three positive post program outcomes, including employment, connection to postsecondary education, or transition to a registered apprenticeship.** Thirty-one percent of participants entered employment, 6 percent entered a registered apprenticeship, and 10 percent entered postsecondary education after exiting the program.

Milestone Outcomes

The State Board adopted a set of five interim milestones to track program progress and barrier removal during participation, including: skills gains in training and general skills progress, as well as improved housing stability, health, and personal finances. Together, these milestones reflect the progress participants made throughout the program and highlight the fact that job readiness requires addressing both skills-related and needs-related barriers. For instance, research has shown that it's harder for individuals experiencing homelessness or facing mental health challenges to obtain employment (Galeano et al. 2023). Moreover, research on approaches for improving employment outcomes shows that workforce programs combining job training with supportive services are more effective than traditional employment-only approaches in helping individuals with multiple challenges to enter and sustain employment (Spaulding and Gebrekristos 2018; Shanshory 2023). The State Board specifically included these milestones in its

data tracking system to measure short-term gains during program delivery, given that long-term employment or earnings data may not always be unavailable.

As shown in Exhibit IV-1, most participants for whom milestone data were available achieved at least one program milestone.¹¹ The most common milestone achieved across Cohort 2 participants were the two skills gains milestones.¹² The high rates reported for these two milestones suggest that most Cohort 2 participants for whom these data were captured made progress toward achieving their career goals. While these milestones are not directly comparable to the Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) performance measure used nationally in workforce system performance reporting (e.g., they are captured differently and include gains on different activities), MSG numbers for participants in other programs offer a useful point of comparison. For example, just 33 percent of Breaking Barriers Cohort 1 participants had an MSG (Geckeler et al. 2022) at an interim stage of implementation. Those measures may have been higher by the end of the program but were not captured at that point in time. Another point of comparison is the California state target for MSG, which is 60 percent under the WIOA adult program and the state saw 68 percent of WIOA adults having achieved an MSG in PY 2023 (SPR 2025). These comparisons suggest that Cohort 2 participants made good progress towards these types of milestones in the Breaking Barriers program.

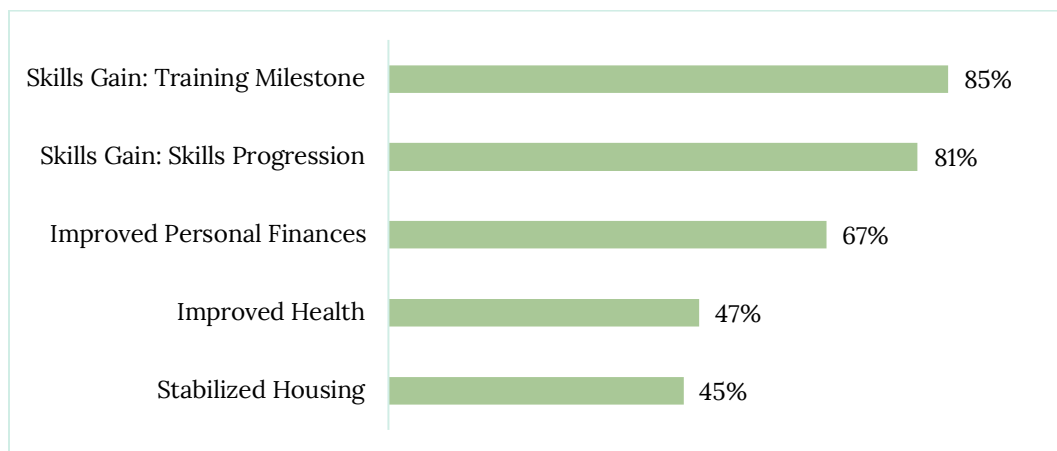
Grantees were also successful in supporting about two-thirds of participants in reaching improved personal finances milestones and slightly fewer than half in addressing housing and health barriers. While the study team was unable to measure any associations between service delivery and these outcomes, one theory

¹¹ Throughout this chapter, outcomes should be interpreted with some caution and may include either some under or over reporting of outcomes. Outcomes are based on data for 6,934 participants from 41 Cohort 2a and 11 Cohort 2b grantees. One Cohort 2a grantee was excluded from the analysis due to incomplete data. The study team noted to main issues with the data. First, many grantees did not report on certain measures, including, for example, no Cohort 2a grantee having training milestone data and six Cohort 2a grantees having no data across any milestones. This may reflect broader challenges grantees had with data entry, uncertainty about how to record specific milestones, variations in service models in which some milestone types were emphasized over others, or issues in working with the temporary SGDS data system in which Cohort 2a grantees input their data. Second, some grantees used the reporting options inconsistently, making entries difficult to interpret. To address this issue, the study team analyzed only cases in which grantees recorded a “yes” or “no” value for milestones, confirming whether a milestone was achieved or not.

¹² Although a higher percentage of participants achieved a training milestone, this outcome was reported only for Cohort 2b and reflects fewer participants than skills progression.

for this level of milestone achievement, worthy of additional exploration, is that these relatively high levels of milestone achievement around barrier removal are related to the relatively high levels of supportive services participants received, as indicated in the prior chapter.

Exhibit IV-1. Milestone Outcomes for Breaking Barrier Participants



Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: Due to variations in reporting practices by individual grantees across both cohorts, exhibit results were calculated by dividing the number of participants who achieved each milestone by the total number of participants with a recorded “yes” or “no” value for that specific milestone. Skills gain: Training Milestone data were available only for Cohort 2b grantees, and therefore Cohort 2a participants were excluded from the calculation.

Skills gained training milestone was only available for 742 Cohort 2 participants.

Skills Gained Progression was only available for 4,218 Cohort 2 participants.

Improved personal finances was only available for 2,387 Cohort 2 participants.

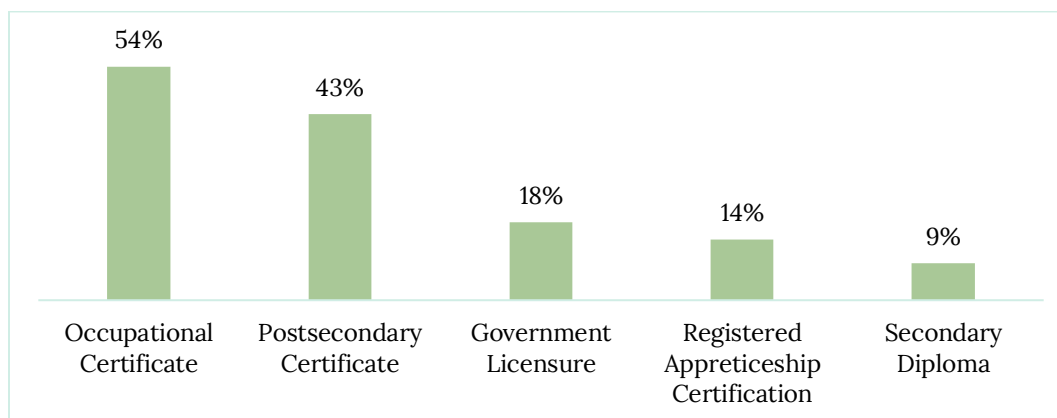
Improved health was only available for 4,218 participants. Stabilized housing was only available for 2,014 Cohort 2 participants.

Credential Attainment

Attainment of recognized educational or industry-recognized credentials is another important outcome to track because research has shown that these outcomes are associated with higher earnings, greater career advancement, and increased job security for employees (U.S. Department of Labor 2020). In total, 50 percent of the participants who received training ($n = 4,872$) received at least one credential while participating in a Breaking Barriers program. Exhibit IV-2 shows the most common types of credentials that Cohort 2 participants received. Most participants receiving a credential received some type of occupational certificate (54 percent) followed by those receiving postsecondary certificates (43 percent).

Participants also earned other types of credentials at lower rates, including Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) registered apprenticeship certifications, government licensures, and secondary school diplomas (e.g., high school diplomas).

Exhibit IV-2. Percentage of Participants in Training Who Received Credentials, by Type



Source: Harmonized dataset.

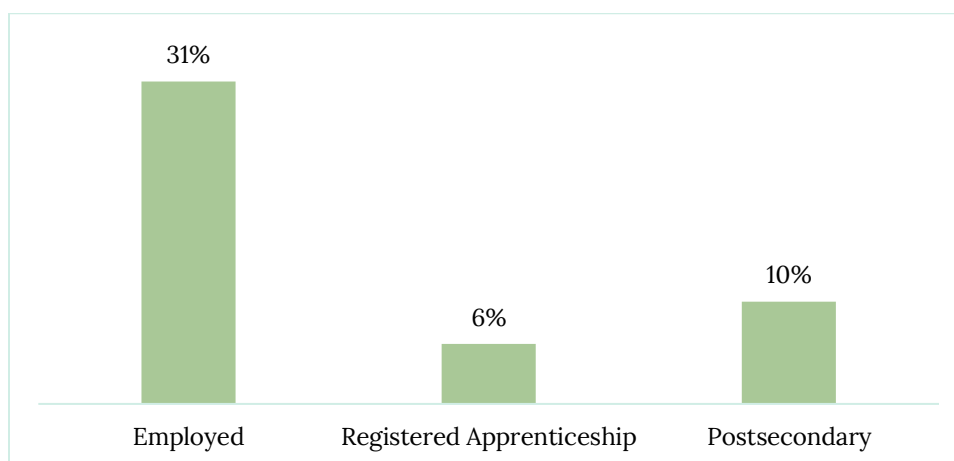
Note: Exhibit results were calculated by dividing the number of participants who earned each type of credential by the number of participants who earned a credential ($n = 2,419$). Some participants earned more than one credential. Therefore, the percentages in the exhibit do not sum up to 100 percent. Additional credentials earned by less than 1 percent of participants included associate's, bachelor's, and postgraduate degrees.

Employment, Education, and Training Outcomes

The study examined three post program participant outcomes, including employment, connection to postsecondary education, and transition to a registered apprenticeship at the end of the program. Based on program data ($n = 6,934$), 39 percent of participants had achieved at least one of these three post program outcomes. Of these, 32 percent entered paid work, either through paid employment or a registered apprenticeship. More specifically, as shown in Exhibit IV-3, 31 percent of participants entered employment, 6 percent entered a registered apprenticeship, and 10 percent entered postsecondary education after exiting the program. It is important to note that registered apprenticeships involve paid work in addition to skill development (U.S. Department of Labor, 2026); Because participants may have been engaged in both employment and registered apprenticeships, these categories are not mutually exclusive; when combined, they

show that 37 percent of participants were engaged in paid work after the program. Importantly, due to the self-reported nature of these administrative data, these outcomes may be underreported.¹³

Exhibit IV-3. Percentage of Breaking Barriers Participants Post-Exit Outcomes



Source: Harmonized dataset.

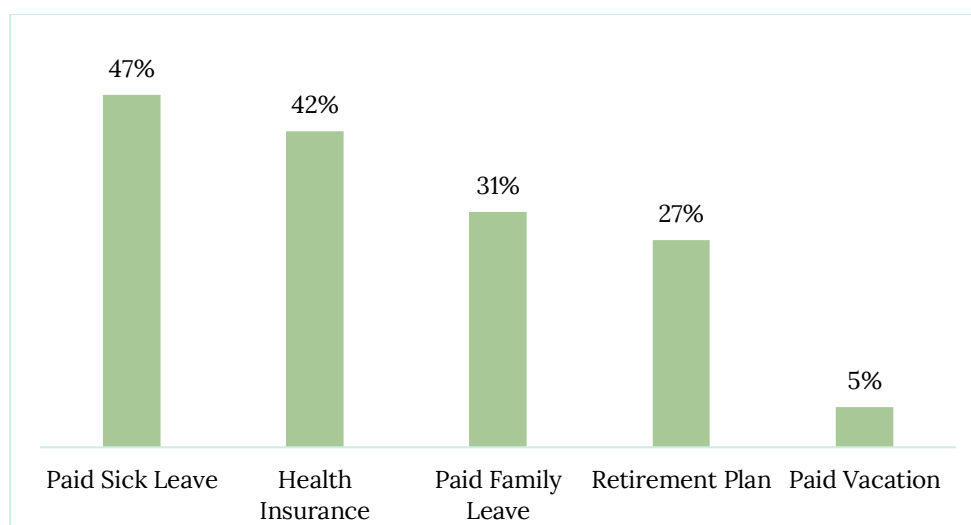
Note: $n = 6,934$. Some participants were recorded as having more than one of the three post-program outcomes, therefore the percentages in the exhibit do not sum up to 39 percent.

There were also notable differences in post program outcomes between the two cohorts of grantees, with a larger proportion of Cohort 2a participants entering employment and a larger share of Cohort 2b participants entering registered apprenticeships (shown in Appendix B). However, as noted above, registered apprenticeships included paid work so these differences may not be that notable. Furthermore, they likely reflect differences in grantee selection for the cohorts over any particular service delivery decisions on the part of grantees. The study team also examined differences across gender, race and ethnicity subgroups, and priority populations and found no substantial differences.

¹³ These post program outcomes are self-reported, by staff, based on their knowledge of participant placements or based on information provided to them by participants. As such, these data are somewhat similar to the “employment at exit” measure captured within CalJOBS. However, within CalJOBS, that field is ultimately replaced with more accurate unemployment insurance wage records, which are then used to determine employment rates and median earnings in the second and fourth quarters after program exit (U.S. Department of Labor 2024). The State Board is still working to acquire access to wage data for Cohort 2 participants, but these records were not available for this evaluation..

Among Cohort 2 participants who were employed after leaving the program, over half (54 percent) entered employment directly related to their training, indicating alignment between the program and participants' post program work. Additionally, nearly half (49 percent) of Cohort 2 participants who were employed at program exit secured jobs that offered at least one employment benefit. The most common benefits offered, as illustrated in Exhibit IV-4, were paid sick leave and health insurance. Participants received an average of three benefits in total.

Exhibit IV-4. Percentage of Post-Employed Participants Who Received Benefits, by Type



Source: Harmonized dataset.

Note: The results of this exhibit are based on the Breaking Barriers participants who were employed after leaving the program ($n = 2,164$). Data on paid family leave were only available for 1956 Cohort 2a participants and 208 Cohort 2b participants.

Summary

Overall, these findings show that Breaking Barriers participants made significant progress across milestones, credential attainment, and post program outcomes. While in the program, most achieved skills gains and improved personal finances, and half earned a credential, most commonly occupational or postsecondary certificates. Upon exiting the program, 39 percent of participants achieved at least one of three post program outcomes, including employment, registered apprenticeship, and connections to postsecondary education. In addition, over half of those employed after exiting the program were employed in jobs related to their program training, and nearly half were receiving at least one employment benefit.

V. Findings and Recommendations

This final chapter draws on lessons learned from all three Breaking Barriers cohorts—spanning grants that operated from 2017 through 2025—to offer recommendations for other federal and state programs that serve individuals with barriers to employment. It includes recommendations for strengthening CBO–LWDB partnerships, improving services for individuals with employment barriers, and enhancing data systems and reporting processes. While the state is not currently planning an additional round of Breaking Barriers funding, its implementation provides insights that are highly relevant to similar initiatives supporting people with barriers to employment, including programs tied to federal funding such as WIOA and the Wagner-Peyser program and other state-funded programs like the High Road Construction Careers (HRCC), High Road Training Partnerships (H RTP), and Emergency Medical Services Corps (EMS Corps).

Building Effective CBO and LWDB Partnerships

The partnership between CBOs and LWDBs was foundational to Breaking Barriers. It was designed to strengthen the state’s workforce system by pairing LWDBs, who have knowledge of the workforce system, with CBOs, who have distinct knowledge of and experience working with the priority population (California Legislature, 2017–2018). Under Breaking Barriers, CBOs led outreach, enrollment, and service delivery, leveraging trusted community relationships to engage individuals less likely to access workforce system services at American Job Centers of California (AJCCs) due to their barriers. LWDBs provided system alignment, access to WIOA-funded services, and connections to employer networks.

Research across all three Cohorts found that Breaking Barriers strengthened existing CBO–LWDB partnerships more than it transformed collaboration. Although most grantees reported having strong or moderately strong partnerships by the end of the grant, the strength of these relationships changed relatively little over the course of the initiative. Across both Cohorts 1 and 2, our research teams found that partnerships with a history of working together were more effective (Folsom et al. 2025; Geckeler et al. 2022). They often formalized their roles through contracts or memorandums of understanding (MOU), involved each other in program planning, integrated services more easily, supported co-enrollment in some cases, and communicated frequently. Newer partnerships, in contrast, needed more time

and support to build shared practices and trust. While the initiative aimed to promote collaboration, grantees had greater leeway in how partnerships were structured, which supported local innovation but resulted in inconsistent approaches to intake, case management, and data sharing.

Comparing Service Approaches and Outcomes Across Cohorts

Grantees successfully launched and operated Breaking Barriers programs, often with partner support and expanded workforce services. Grantees enrolled large numbers of people with barriers to employment and across all three Breaking Barriers cohorts. They also established programs that integrated career development, skills training, and supportive services through customized and culturally relevant approaches to address participants' complex and overlapping barriers. As outlined earlier in this report, nearly all Cohort 2 participants received at least one career service (95 percent). A majority of these participants also received at least one training or supportive service (70 and 62 percent, respectively). Further, Cohort 2 participants appear to have accessed training at higher rates than WIOA adults in PY 2023 overall, and while the mix of training types differed across programs, Breaking Barriers succeeded in expanding access to a broader range of training options—including apprenticeships—that are less commonly available through the traditional workforce system. Supportive services also appear to have been more widely provided to Breaking Barriers Cohort 2 participants compared with Cohort 1 and what is typically offered in the WIOA adult program. The expanded provision of supportive services in Breaking Barriers Cohort 2 demonstrates the initiative's ability to address participants' needs—an approach that may have contributed to higher engagement in training.

While the evaluation of Cohort 2 could not explore the impacts on employment that these grants had, the study team's earlier impact evaluation of Cohort 1—which provided similar services—found that Breaking Barriers had positive impacts on employment and earnings (DeFever et al. 2025). That research found that 82 percent of Cohort 1 participants received basic career services, 69 percent received individualized career services, and 42 percent received training services. While the Cohort 1 findings were not generalizable, the similar service models and even higher service receipt across Cohort 2 suggest that it is possible that Cohort 2 may have produced similar impacts to those documented in Cohort 1.

In addition to finding impacts on employment, the Cohort 1 impact evaluation (DeFever et al. 2025) found that, on average, participants earned an additional \$1,662 in the fourth quarter after exit. According to the State Board's own analysis, this generated nearly \$27 million in total benefits in the 18 months after program exit (California Workforce Development Board 2026), with the total cost of Cohort 1 (a little over \$11 million) resulting in a return on investment of 140 percent. Both the wage gains identified in the impact study and the State Board's ROI analysis suggest that there are potential economic gains and a return on public investment for programs like Breaking Barriers. These findings also support the need to keep studying the outcomes and, potentially, impacts of funding like that for Cohort 2 to see if the outcome trends observed for Cohort 1 persist, showing a persistence to the overall findings and the further potential for return on investment of continued funding for similar types of programs.

Data Systems and Reporting Processes

Consistent with the study team's planned approach, the evaluation of Cohort 2 examined participant- and system-level implementation and outcomes, including how it helped participants achieve both short-term milestones (e.g., skills progression and improved finance) and longer-term outcomes (e.g., credential attainment and employment). However, three limitations in the administrative data affect the quality of the outcomes analysis and have implications for interpreting these findings and for future research; importantly, these limitations did not exist in the prior evaluation of Cohort 1.

At the root of all three limitations is the newly developed data system that was first introduced to Breaking Barriers' Cohort 2a and 2b grantees. Prior to these two cohorts, State Board grantees input participant data into CalJOBS, which is the state's primary system of record for workforce system programs. CalJOBS was the source of the data that the study team used in evaluating Breaking Barriers Cohort 1 (Geckeler et al. 2022; DeFever et al. 2025). With Cohort 2a, the State Board introduced the Cal-E-Grants system because it was easier for many of its grantees to use and captured data for measures relevant to State Board data analysis (such as milestones or other measures related to barriers removal) that CalJOBS was not designed to easily collect. However, at the time Cohort 2a started, the Cal-E-Grants system was not yet fully operational. As a result, Cohort 2a grantees captured their

data within the SGDS data sheets, which were a temporary system for capturing data in the format of the Cal-E-Grants database.

With these new systems, the state's definitions for variables in both new systems were relatively sparse. Also, although considerable technical assistance was provided around program implementation, there was limited training around how to translate program activities and outcomes to elements in the database. For instance, guidance did not clearly define what types of activities might be counted as occupational skills training, when staff needed to measure post exit employment, or when or how to capture services delivered by partner providers. As a result, while these new data systems allowed for greater flexibility, there was likely variation in how grantees recorded certain measures. In some cases, this may have led to under-reporting of services and outcomes because grantees did not know how to record them. Similarly, it likely resulted in grantees capturing services or outcomes that were not comparable to those captured by other grantees or for other participants. Even where variable definitions were robust, data reporting was inconsistent. This was apparent, as data were missing for a number of variables where it should have been clear to grantees what to report (e.g., a small number of participants did not have any barriers listed for them).

This evaluation also had limited ability to assess Cohort 2's post program outcomes. Because no administrative wage-record data were available beyond participants' exit from the program, the evaluation could measure employment only through staff-reported information collected at or near exit. This constraint limited the ability to capture employment rates over time—a key workforce outcome with implications for understanding fiscal benefits, cost-effectiveness, and potential return on investment. Even with these limitations, Cohort 2 showed promising early results: 33 percent of participants were employed or placed into apprenticeships at the end of programming, reflecting strong engagement in work-based outcomes at exit. While this figure is lower than the employment rates reported for Cohort 1 in earlier studies—approximately 50 percent within nine months after exit (Geckeler et al. 2022) and 58 percent in the first quarter after exit (DeFever et al. 2025)—those Cohort 1 rates were drawn from Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records. UI wage data capture any employment, as reported by employers, during an entire quarter or longer after exit, making them a more comprehensive and typically better measure of employment. By contrast, the

Cohort 2 employment rate reflects a single point in time reported by program staff and is more comparable to the “employment at exit” measure used in CalJOBS, which is later replaced by UI wage data in formal WIOA performance reporting. Because of these differences in data sources and timing, Cohort 2’s staff-reported employment rate should not be interpreted as directly comparable to Cohort 1’s wage-record-based outcomes.

Recommendations for Future Funding and Program Design

As California’s workforce development system continues to administer and expand discretionary funding aimed at equity, regional coordination, and service to individuals with barriers to employment, the lessons from the study team’s collective Breaking Barriers evaluations offer several important considerations.

Strengthening CBO and LWDB Partnerships

The Breaking Barriers Initiative demonstrated that strong partnerships between CBOs and LWDBs are essential to effectively serving individuals with multiple barriers to employment. When these partnerships are grounded in clear roles, shared accountability, and intentional design, they expand access to services, improve coordination across systems, and strengthen connections between community-based providers and the public workforce system. When these elements are underdeveloped, partnerships tend to remain transactional, limiting their impact. This underscores the importance of clarifying expectations, aligning incentives, and investing in partnership infrastructure to support more consistent and durable collaboration. Based on implementation findings across the three cohorts, the study team suggests the following strategies for strengthening CBO–LWDB partnerships.

- **The research highlights the value of investing in partnership infrastructure.** While all Breaking Barriers grantees were required to operate through CBO–LWDB partnerships, the strength and depth of these partnerships varied. Programs with clearer role definition, stronger communication, and more consistent coordination were better positioned to leverage workforce system resources, including co-enrollment in WIOA and Wagner-Peyser programs. Future funding opportunities could build on this lesson by more explicitly supporting partnership development and integration as a core program component. Further, explicit expectations for

shared intake, coordinated case management, regular joint meetings, and shared responsibility for participant outcomes would provide a clearer foundation for collaboration while preserving flexibility in program design.

- **Technical assistance should be more intentionally aligned with partnership development.** Evaluation findings point to the value of differentiating technical assistance based on partnership maturity. Newer or less integrated partnerships receive targeted support for development, role clarification, data sharing, and front-line coordination, while more established partnerships receive support in documenting and scaling effective practices.
- **Partnership frameworks should explicitly link collaboration to equity and outreach goals.** The State Board should develop partnership frameworks that clarify how CBO–LWDB partnerships should expand access to underserved populations and improve responsiveness to participant needs. This support would help align partnership development with the initiative’s broader equity objectives.

Identifying Key Program Features to Understand Potential Drivers of Participant Outcomes

Neither evaluation was able to isolate which programmatic features drove impacts or positive outcomes. Because grantees implemented a wide range of services and strategies, it is difficult to determine which approaches were most strongly associated with employment and earning outcomes. Identifying which services contribute most to positive outcomes, particularly for participants facing multiple barriers to employment, could help the state better target resources or refine program design in future initiatives. Similarly, identifying populations with lower success rates would allow the state to target improvements and better tailor services to those with the greatest needs.

Nevertheless, high rates of training, supportive service access, and intensive and tailored services emerged as key features of Breaking Barriers programs.

Participants received training and supportive services at substantially higher rates than those in WIOA adult programs—about 70 percent received training and 62 percent received supportive services. Looking back at Cohort 1, the impact study found even lower rates of overall supportive service receipt (35 percent) for Cohort

1 participants (DeFever et al. 2025), and even so, there were positive impacts on employment and earnings. This pattern suggests that Breaking Barriers was more successful than the traditional workforce system in connecting participants to wraparound supports that can help them persist in training and employment activities. Other research highlights the importance of supportive services in improving engagement, reducing barriers, and strengthening employment outcomes within workforce initiatives. For instance, workforce initiatives are most successful when they combine flexible, skills-based training with strong wraparound supports (Jobs for the Future 2024) and programs that provide wraparound services, such as mental-health counseling, substance-use treatment, emergency housing, and transportation assistance, can improve employment outcomes for underserved populations (Redcross et al. 2012). Given this evidence, further analysis could help identify which supportive services were most valuable for participants and how they can be effectively integrated with training and career services.

Interview findings also highlighted another potential strength in Breaking Barriers programming: a tailored and culturally relevant approach to service delivery. In particular, grantees emphasized intensive, relationship-based case management as a core component of their model. This approach aligns with evidence-based practices documented in workforce development literature (Choitz and Wagner 2021; Calma and Sayin 2022). Cohort 2 grantees consistently described their case management model as relational and intensive, which was particularly crucial for participants navigating complex, overlapping barriers. They also highlighted low caseloads and frequency of check-ins. However, there was considerable variation in meeting frequency and time allocated to case management. Taken together, these findings suggest recommendations for documenting effective service strategies.

- **To ensure consistent delivery across all programs, future initiatives may want to assess and create formal standards around maximum caseload sizes that enable frequent check-ins and personalized support, and set guidelines for the frequency and timing of check-ins, as well as the capturing of data around these measures.** Future funding could also provide technical assistance centered around trauma-informed care or motivational interviewing, as grantees shared how these types of training help inform

their client communication and de-escalation techniques (Folsom et al. 2025).

- **To better identify and scale effective practices, the State Board should consider identifying organizations achieving the strongest employment and earnings outcomes.** Selecting three to five high-performing grantees for deeper study would allow the state to understand how these grantees support participant success. These grantees could then be funded to lead workshops or develop practice guides for peer organizations. Furthermore, the state could support more rigorous outcomes or impact studies with high-performing grantees to generate stronger evidence on the strategies that are most effective in improving participant outcomes. Such approaches would expand structured opportunities for peer-to-peer learning where grantees could share strategies, troubleshoot common challenges, and deepen their understanding of what works for people with barriers to employment.

Strengthening Administrative Data

Moving forward, the study team recommends that the State Board develop additional specifications around the definitions of each variable in Cal-E-Grants. Clearer guidance about what to report in Cal-E-Grants would help grantees to report more accurately and help the State Board and its evaluators more effectively explain what is being measured and what programs have accomplished. Key administrative data recommendations are as follows.

- **The State Board should provide grantees with technical assistance on Cal-E-Grant reporting, including clear guidance, training, and opportunities for future support.** In addition, the State Board should consider implementing enhanced data quality monitoring to ensure that grantees report key services and outcomes consistently and accurately. Establishing regular feedback loops with grantees could also help identify recurring reporting challenges and improve overall data reliability.
- **This research highlights the importance of aligning performance measures and expectations with the complex needs facing participants who have barriers to employment.** Breaking Barriers programs were tasked with serving individuals facing multiple barriers to employment. The evaluation

indicates that future initiatives may benefit from performance measures and timelines that better reflect the realities of serving high-need populations. These include the time required for stabilization and engagement prior to employment and the need to capture complex sets of outcomes indicating both short-term barrier removal and longer-term measures in addition to employment, such as the receipt of various benefits and other life-stabilizing outcomes.

- **The State Board has in place a system for obtaining and using UI wage records in the future**, which should help to remedy data reporting limitations in future analyses, but the study team was unable to use it for this analysis due to the recency of that arrangement. The State Board will continue to explore the feasibility of wage data analysis for Cohorts 2a and 2b and may provide updated findings around these outcomes in the future.

As the State Board and others within California consider programs like Breaking Barriers and similar initiatives in the future, the evidence points toward a clear path forward: invest in partnership infrastructure, formalize effective service strategies, and strengthen barrier removal within the broader workforce and economic development system. Doing so will not only sustain the gains achieved through Breaking Barriers but also advance California's broader goals of inclusive economic mobility and high-road employment for all. By grounding future investments in the lessons learned from Breaking Barriers, the state can strengthen its ability to serve individuals with the greatest barriers to employment and build a more equitable, resilient workforce system that complements and enhances California's core workforce programs.

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Appendix A: General Grantee Information

The following exhibit provides basic information about each of the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative grantees, including their full name, primary partner organization, project name, summary of proposed project, region, and funding amount.

Exhibit A-1: 2A Grantees

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
Compass Family Services	San Francisco Workforce Investment Board	<i>Early Childhood Education Employment Pathway Project</i>	This project/partnership will work to address a very significant need in San Francisco: the need for more Early Childhood Education (ECE) staff, particularly staff who reflect the population of families being served.	Bay-Peninsula	\$719,904
*Dev/Mission	San Francisco Workforce Investment Board	<i>Pre-Apprenticeship Technology Training Program</i>	Dev/Mission trains youth in the most up to date and in-demand technology skills, places them into jobs with San Francisco's leading technology companies, and benefits the community by building young leaders who bring grassroots technology education.	Bay-Peninsula	\$300,000
Episcopal Community Services of San Francisco	San Francisco Workforce Investment Board	<i>Social Services Sector Training Program</i>	Will leverage Breaking Barriers to expand jobseeker access, deepen system integration, and amplify labor market impact	Bay-Peninsula	\$750,000

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
			for an early stage workforce program with significant opening results and tailwinds from both an employer and jobseeker perspective.		
PRC	San Francisco Workforce Investment Board	<i>Addressing Barriers to Work</i>	Project serves people living with HIV, substance use, and mental health issues by participating in an integrated community service system which assesses and addresses their vocational rehabilitation needs and provides employment services.	Bay-Peninsula	\$750,000
Step Into a Job	Work2Future RichmondWORKS	<i>Creating Opportunities for Marginalized Workers through Careers in Healthcare</i>	Project helps workers launch new careers as Medical Assistants in the high-growth healthcare industry by providing nationally accredited technical skills training, hands-on job experience, supportive services, and job placements.	Bay-Peninsula	\$540,650
Swords to Plowshares	San Francisco Workforce Investment Board	<i>Employment and Training Services to Increase Bay Area Veterans' Job Access</i>	Will provide veterans with veteran-specific workforce development services including individualized case management, connection to Local Workforce Investment Board networks, and access to	Bay-Peninsula	\$332,079

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
			wraparound supportive services.		
International Rescue Committee	Sacramento Employment and Training Agency	<i>Refugee And Immigrant Skills for Employment (RAISE)</i>	The International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Sacramento proposes the Refugee And Immigrant Skills for Employment (RAISE) program to break past barriers refugees and immigrants, hereinafter referred to as “new Americans”, face achieving economic prosperity.	Capital	\$750,000
Saint John's Program for Real Change	Sacramento Employment and Training Agency	<i>Employment Training for Homeless Women</i>	Saint John's Program for Real Change (Saint John's) addresses addiction, mental health issues and barriers to employment before hands-on job training begins. Program length is up to 18 months.	Capital	\$641,787
Climb Hire	NOVA WORKS Work2Future Alameda County Workforce Development Board San Diego Workforce Partnership	<i>Climb Hire California</i>	In partnership with leading employers, Climb Hire empowers “Climbers” to leverage technical skills alongside social capital and professional networks in order to navigate structural barriers to economic opportunity and career advancement.	East Bay; Southern Border	\$749,813

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
Goodwill of the San Francisco Bay	NOVA WORKS Alameda Workforce Development Board Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County	<i>Expanding Opportunities for Low Income Immigrant Communities</i>	Goodwill is seeking funding from AB628 to further refine and expand our ESL program, and to offer targeted pathways to career advancement for English learner populations that face significant barriers in the workplace.	East Bay	\$585,220
Opportunity Junction, Inc.	Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County	<i>Healthcare Career Pathway for Job Seekers Overcoming Barriers</i>	The overall goals of the Healthcare Career Pathway (HCP) are to help low-income job seekers overcome barriers to employment to launch healthcare careers, achieve financial security, and support their continued career advancement.	East Bay	\$750,000
Rubicon Programs	Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County	<i>Incentives & Stipends for Training Enhancement and Placement Success</i>	We propose the implementation of a new Incentives & Stipends for Training Enhancement and Placement Success (In-STEP) program to build on our learnings and strategically leverage countywide systems, partnerships and resources in a dynamic model.	East Bay	\$750,000

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
The Unity Council	Oakland Workforce Development Board	<i>The Unity Council Breaking Barriers Program</i>	This program will establish a customized pipeline for immigrant and BIPOC job seekers into pre-apprenticeship and related programs that incorporate ESL (including ESL math for the trades) and intensive case management and coaching as primary components.	East Bay	\$676,958
El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center	Riverside County Workforce Development Board	<i>Inland Intercultural Initiative to Increase Equity in Employment</i>	The project is based on the Life Coach Model who will assist eligible applicants in addressing barriers to employment by providing key services they need to enter, participate in, and complete broader workforce preparation, training and education programs.	Inland Empire	\$750,000
Starting Over, Inc.	Riverside County Workforce Development Board	<i>Path to Staffing, Employment, & Entrepreneurial Development (Path to SEED)</i>	Project assists formerly incarcerated people to prepare for, obtain, and retain living wage employment through delivery of a comprehensive employment readiness training with supportive services for housing, counseling, recovery programs, etc.	Inland Empire	\$750,000

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
*Sterling Solutions	San Bernardino County Workforce Development Department	BeHOPE (Behavioral Health Occupations & Peer Engagement) Workforce	The BeHOPE Workforce project is a continuation of Sterling Solutions' current BeHOPE Peer Specialist Training program that provides peer support specialist job training, career counseling, certification and placement into the mental health field.	Inland Empire	\$240,000
Chinatown Service Center	City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board County of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board	Workforce Program for Low-Income Asian, Hispanic and Other Diverse Populations	The Workforce program will be implemented using the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) evidence-based model, which allows participants to pursue career paths based on their own interests and strengths.	Los Angeles Basin	\$750,000
Downtown Women's Center	City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board	DWC's Employment and Supportive Services Program	Project identifies opportunities for unemployed/ underemployed women with histories of homelessness in Los Angeles to create sustainable pipelines to career pathways and provide gainful employment in response to regional demand in relevant sectors.	Los Angeles Basin	\$750,000

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
NPower	City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board	NPower LA Tech Career Accelerator	The NPower LA Tech Career Accelerator will establish a powerful engine of tech workforce development that benefits a wide range of economically disadvantaged people and enriches the Los Angeles tech workforce with more diverse skilled talent.	Los Angeles Basin	\$742,500
Pacific Asian Consortium In Employment	City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board	<i>Breaking Barriers: Equity in Early Education Employment Training Program (E4)</i>	Program accelerates equity in employment for immigrant participants by removing barriers to education and employment; connect them to education and Work Based Learning opportunities place them on career pathways in the growing ECE sector.	Los Angeles Basin	\$750,000
Per Scholas	City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board	<i>Los Angeles Technical Training Project</i>	The overall goal of the Per Scholas Los Angeles Technical Training Project is to deliver increased access to quality tech sector employment to 90 Los Angeles residents who have been historically underrepresented in tech.	Los Angeles Basin	\$242,562
*TransCanWork	City of Los Angeles Workforce	<i>Access for TGI Individuals to Employment</i>	Project will 1) Empower job seekers through workshop offerings 2) Improve our staff	Los Angeles Basin	\$300,000

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
	Development Board		skill sets and referrals to include mental health, housing, and more resources for monolingual non-English speakers; 3) Continue and expand DEI trainings with corporations.		
UNITE-LA INC	City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board	<i>Overcoming Obstacles - Connecting to STEAM Careers</i>	Project will increase employment outcomes for individuals by connecting them to STEAM career education, training and private sector work experiences in sustainable, high mobility industries.	Los Angeles Basin	\$720,000
*Women In Non Traditional Employment Roles	Workforce Alliance of the North Bay	<i>Hard Hat Women Equity Initiative</i>	Utilizing the career pathways approach we will increase women's educational and skills attainment and improve their employment outcomes while meeting the needs of local employers and growing needs of the union construction industries.	Los Angeles Basin	\$300,000
Canal Alliance	Workforce Alliance of the North Bay	<i>Canal Alliance Breaking Barriers to Employment for Latino Workers</i>	This project provides low-income Spanish speaking Latino immigrants with services they need to enter, participate in, and complete	North Bay	\$524,161

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
			broader workforce preparation, training and education programs aligned with regional labor market needs.		
Homeward Bound of Marin	Workforce Alliance of the North Bay	<i>Breaking Barriers & Building Pathways to Employment in the North Bay</i>	Project will offer workforce preparation, training, and support services for unhoused and underinvested individuals. Each participant will be provided comprehensive and individualized support needed to develop career ladders and achieve success.	North Bay	\$750,000
North Coast opportunities	Workforce Alliance of the North Bay CareerPoint Lake	<i>Building Up Individuals and Local Development (BUILD) Project</i>	Project will help people who are experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed develop construction skills, acquire soft job skills, receive case management support, complete on-the-job training, gain certificates, and access job or apprenticeships.	North Bay	\$144,000
Digital NEST, Inc.	Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board Monterey County Workforce	<i>Digital NEST Youth Workforce Development</i>	Our program empowers youth and provides them with the resources they need to thrive in the 21st-century workforce. Our ultimate goal is to create economic mobility for	North Central Coast	\$434,765

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
	Development Board		underserved youth. Digital NEST centers are collaborative co-working spaces for youth.		
Santa Barbara County Workforce Development Board	Center for Employment Training	<i>Summer Youth Empowerment and Employment Program (SYEEP)</i>	SYEEP was designed to provide youth empowerment and tools to process socio cultural and race-based traumatic stress; to develop and institutionalize summer youth employment financially supported/driven by local employers; and foster community engagement.	North Central Coast	\$747,744
County of Humboldt (Humboldt Workforce Development Board)	Westside Community Improvement Association	<i>Roc-Rol (Revitalizing our Community, Reclaiming our Lives)</i>	Project provides justice-involved participants with greater economic stability, achieved through on-the-job (OTJ) training that provides a pathway to careers in construction and historic preservation.	North Coast County	\$288,306
Farmworkers Institute of Education & Leadership Development (FIELD)	Kern-Inyo-Mono Workforce Development Board	<i>Road to Self-Sufficiency</i>	Project will provide individuals the services they need through FIELD's English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, high school diploma program, Career Technical Education program in 8 pathways, and Conservation Corps which provides paid work experience.	San Joaquin Valley	\$750,000

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
*Get Focused, Stay Focused	Kern-Inyo-Mono Workforce Development Board	<i>CTE Pathways to Self-Sufficiency for Adult Learners</i>	This project aims to support underserved populations in California's Central Valley through participation in an innovative, evidence-based career readiness education program designed to close equity and participation gaps in CTE skills and employment.	San Joaquin Valley	\$299,888
Ready To Work	San Joaquin County WorkNet	<i>UPLIFT Breaking Barriers to Career Pathways</i>	Ready to Work (dba UPLIFT Project California), the program offers individualized, intensive, and flexible employment support to assist individuals to integrate in the workforce and create fulfilling lives.	San Joaquin Valley	\$750,000
Root & Rebound	Workforce Development Board of Madera County Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County	<i>Legal Services as a Gateway to Employment for Previously Incarcerated Women</i>	The goal of this project is to connect formerly incarcerated women in the Central Valley, particularly in the under-served areas of Madera and Tulare counties, who are disproportionately women of color and people, with low-incomes, with employment.	San Joaquin Valley	\$480,000
Eckerd Connects	San Luis Obispo Workforce Development Board	<i>SLO - Breaking Barriers to Employment</i>	Our program model provides participants with the necessary remedial skills development, support services, service	South Central Coast	\$480,000

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
			coordination, and wrap around services required to prepare individuals for participation in workforce programming.		
*Dreams for Change	San Diego Workforce Partnership	<i>Dreams Cuisine</i>	The project will offer short-term, transitional employment coupled with weekly personal development training and case management. The workforce training program uses a social enterprise model to provide the trainees skill development and paid experience.	Southern Border	\$270,000
Kitchens for Good	San Diego Workforce Partnership	<i>Project Launch Apprenticeship Programs</i>	Project Launch apprenticeship program prepares individuals with barriers to employment to be work ready, places them into jobs, and then tracks, mentors, and supports students during employment to ensure that wages/skills continue to grow.	Southern Border	\$443,514
Mission Edge San Diego	San Diego Workforce Partnership	<i>Project for Refugee and Immigrant Successful Employment (Project RISE)</i>	This project builds on the foundation of MAKE Projects' proven, hands-on and paid job training program for refugee and immigrant women and youth. As an employment social enterprise (ESE),MAKE	Southern Border	\$294,395

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
			Café and Farm provides first jobs for participants.		
*National Foundation for Autism Research	San Diego Workforce Partnership	<i>Advancing High Tech Employment for Individuals with Autism</i>	NFAR offers comprehensive, autism-specific technical training, utilizing hands-on instruction, and real work samples in a simulated work environment to help participants develop technical proficiency, work skills and industry recognized certifications.	Southern Border	\$300,000
*Nile Sisters Development Initiative	San Diego Workforce Partnership	<i>LearnMore</i>	LearnMore is a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Home Health Aide (HHA) Vocational Training program, in which NSDI provides training and supportive services for qualified candidates so they can become equipped with skills necessary to obtain careers.	Southern Border	\$300,000
*Rise Up Industries	San Diego Workforce Partnership	<i>Reentry Program</i>	RUI's 18-month Reentry Program pairs employment with wraparound reentry supports for members. RUI aligns with and contributes toward the Southern Border	Southern Border	\$300,000

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
			Region's aim to expand our impact on reducing recidivism.		
San Diego Youth Services	San Diego Workforce Partnership	TAYWORKS!	TAY WORKS! innovatively addresses deficiencies in developmentally and culturally responsive workforce development in San Diego by offering trauma-informed workshops and services.	Southern Border	\$600,000

* Small Community Based Organization

Appendix A-2: 2B Grantees

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
Able Community Development Foundation*	Contra Costa Workforce Development Board	<i>Contra Costa Asian American Pacific Islander Economic Justice Fellowship Program</i>	This project will ensure that individuals from the low-income, first-generation, low English proficiency, immigrant, refugee Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations in Contra Costa County receive the wraparound services to successfully enter, participate in, and complete workforce and education programs and enter, be retained, and advance in the labor market.	East Bay	\$299,015.00
Community Cycles of California*	Work2Future	<i>Bicycle Mechanic and Retail Training Program</i>	The project consists of a full-time paid training program for justice-involved individuals in which they will gain a strong foundation of retail, inventory, and warehouse skills; learn the basics of starting and running a small business; and train as bicycle mechanics in the Community Cycles of California (CCofCA) bicycle shop.	Bay-Peninsula	\$300,000.00
Hospitality Industry Training and Education Fund	City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board	<i>The POWER Partnership</i>	Formerly incarcerated individuals and other priority populations will be identified by the outreach team at the Hospitality Industry Training And Education Fund (HTA) through its partnership with community-	Los Angeles Basin	\$500,000.00

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
			based organizations. HTA will train participants in its State of California and U.S. Department of Labor registered Line Cook/Chef de Partie Apprenticeship program.		
Lao Family Community Development, Inc.	Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) - Sacramento Works, Inc.	<i>Breaking Barriers to Employment in Greater Sacramento</i>	This project's goal is to break and reduce the barrier to entry into specialized healthcare sectors, increase advancement opportunities, and improve inclusiveness, diversity, equity, and access of lower socioeconomic status populations.	Capital	\$499,999.00
Love Never Fails	Alameda County Workforce Development Board	<i>ITbiz Tech Academy: Breaking Employment Barriers for Vulnerable Communities</i>	Love Never Fails serves victims/survivors of human trafficking and other high-risk populations in the San Francisco Bay Area through workforce preparation, wraparound services, and job placement services to enter high-pay careers. ITbiz Tech Academy, offered by Love Never Fails, is a free Cisco Networking Academy and Pre-Apprenticeship program that provides IT education for high-demand and financially sustainable careers.	East Bay	\$491,569.82
PCS Family Services*	San Bernardino County Workforce	<i>Breaking Barriers to Employment in</i>	This project's primary goal and service is to transition low-income,	Inland Empire	\$299,000.00

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
	Development Board	San Bernardino County	rural, underserved, marginalized, and underrepresented populations (with a special focus on English Language Learners and disconnected youth) into postsecondary programs, work-based learning opportunities, and jobs that are high-skill, high-wage in the Health industry sector and occupations in Health and Business and Entrepreneurship (Occupations: Medical Assistant, Health Care Worker, Marketing, Customer Service).		
Sonoma Family Meal*	Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board	<i>Sonoma Family Meal Culinary Training and Placement Program</i>	Sonoma Family Meal partners with local CBOs to recruit our priority populations of economically disadvantaged individuals facing multiple employment barriers for SFM's no-cost, bilingual (Spanish), bicultural CJT Program. Students are supported with individualized case management which include wrap-around social services addressing housing and food insecurity and mental and physical health.	North Bay	\$300,000.00
Teamsters1932	San Bernardino County Workforce	<i>The Teamsters Inland Empire</i>	Teamsters1932will apply lessons learned as an H RTP provider to develop the Inland Empire Training	Inland Empire	\$300,000.00

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
	Development Board	<i>Training and Job Innovation Project</i>	and Job Innovation project. In partnership with the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Department, this project will offer a robust range of wraparound and support services aimed at participants' long-term success in high-road career pathways and partner with Youth Helpers, a youth empowerment community-based Based Organization to establish a Youth Bridge program that integrates training, wraparound support services, and employer partnerships to bridge the gap for high school graduates under 18 who cannot enter into union jobs until they are 18		
The San Diego Workforce Partnership	San Diego Electrical Training Institute, San Diego Futures Foundation, Able Disabled Advocacy, National Foundation for Autism Research	<i>Project 2.0</i>	This project will offer two distinct career program pathways designed to serve job seekers with high employment barriers: CyberHire and Construction Career Jumpstart. These programs offer training pathways in Information Technology (IT) support and construction and offer comprehensive and specialized wraparound supportive services and	Southern Border	\$493,041.72

Grantee	Primary Partner Organization	Project	Summary of the Proposed Project	Region	Grant Amount
			1:1 case management to enhance the success of the participant.		
Westside Community Improvement Association*	Humboldt Workforce Development Board	Skyhorse Rising	Skyhorse Rising serves justice-involved, marginalized individuals. The Skyhorse Rising Field Lab teaches historic preservation and construction trade skills through intensive, paid, vocational and job skills training. Graduates of Skyhorse are connected to employers, including Union Apprenticeships, with the goal of long-term financial security.	North Coast County	\$299,998.03
Women's Economic Ventures	Santa Barbara County Workforce Development Board	Emprendimiento (Entrepreneurs)	Women's Economic Ventures (WEV) and Children's Resource and Referral of Santa Barbara County (CRR) propose to serve women, Latinx, and limited English Proficient (LEP) entrepreneurs living in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties through the continuation of WEV's Emprendimiento (Entrepreneurship) program.	Coastal-South	\$400,000.00

* Small Community Based Organization

Appendix B: Technical Appendix

The following sections provide additional details about the study team's research approach, data, and analyses.

Regional Planning Units

Grantees from Cohort 2 were based in 11 of the 15 regional planning units (RPUs) across the state (See Exhibit B-1 for more details). Several RPUs were located in the state's largest metropolitan areas, including the Bay-Peninsula and East Bay RPUs in the Bay Area, and the Los Angeles (LA) Basin RPU in the LA Metro Area. They also included less populated RPUs, such as the North Coast RPU. The Los Angeles Basin and Southern Border RPUs had the most grantees (nine each), followed by the Bay-Peninsula and East Bay RPUs (seven grantees each). Four RPUs did not have any Cohort 2a or 2b grantees: North State, Middle Sierra, Ventura, and Orange.

Exhibit B-1: Breaking Barriers Regional Planning Unit (RPU) Representation



Evaluation Overview and Approach

Through a multi-year, mixed-method implementation and outcomes study of Cohorts 2a and 2b, the evaluation sought to assess whether and how Breaking Barriers achieved its programmatic objectives. The study team specifically examined the extent to and manner in which grantees collaborated with their partners to enroll individuals into services that prepared them for entry into broader workforce and educational systems and, ideally, into long-term employment or other education and training programs. The study also sought to assess the implementation process in order to guide the development and sustainability of similar programs in California and nationwide.

The study team was also tasked with preparing materials for the State Board to help meet its reporting requirements under AB 628. These requirements included summarizing, in aggregate, the outcomes data collected pursuant to Unemployment Insurance Code (UIC) section 14033, including any available information on the following:¹⁴

- Grantees' ability to provide the services proposed in the grant to the number of individuals specified in the grant, as evidenced by, among other factors, whether the grantee completed the work proposed.
- Participants' ability to successfully complete relevant programming funded under the grant as demonstrated by relevant measures. Measures must directly relate to the program's purpose.
- Participants' ability to transition into the broader workforce and education system as evidenced by employment and enrollment in relevant programs.
- Participants' ability to succeed in both the broader workforce and education system and labor market once they transition into the broader system.

¹⁴ The RFA also notes four additional objectives that were not easily addressed by the evaluation, including: 1) Program participants' ability to provide feedback on program elements and inform the evaluation of program performance and success. 2) The degree to which program activities acknowledge and address historic racial inequity and socioeconomic barriers to labor force participation for target population groups. 3) The degree to which leadership at the executive and board level of the organization serving as the lead applicant reflects the demographics of the application's target populations. 4) The degree to which at least 25 percent of the lead applicant organization's staff reflects the demographics of the application's target populations.

To address these evaluation objectives, the study team sought to answer several research questions, organized into two main lines of inquiry.

1. **Analysis of the Program Implementation of Cohorts 2a and 2b.** This line of inquiry examines the initiative's operational aspects by focusing on the types of grantee organizations, the priority populations they serve, the barriers faced by participants, and how the CBO-LWDB partnerships evolved and impacted service delivery.¹⁵ It also examines grantees' strategies for outreach and recruitment of individuals facing barriers to employment.
2. **Analysis of Participant Enrollment, Service Receipt, and Outcomes.** This line of inquiry focuses on enrollment, demographics, service participation, and outcomes, specifically participants' completion of grant programs, transitions into the workforce or education systems, and success in achieving performance metrics.¹⁶

An earlier interim report primarily addressed the first line of inquiry—program implementation and some aspects—dealing with enrollment and service delivery—of the second (Folsom et al., 2025). Based on the collection of additional data, this final report addresses the second line of inquiry and presents final data on participant enrollment, service receipt, and participant outcomes.

These requirements also included summarizing, in aggregate, the outcomes data collected pursuant to Unemployment Insurance Code (UIC) section 14033, including any available information on the following:¹⁷

¹⁵ The study team previously completed a report exploring the implementation and early outcomes of Breaking Barriers Cohort 1 (Geckeler et al., 2022).

¹⁶ The study team is also conducting an outcomes and impact study of Breaking Barriers Cohort 1, which will be released in a separate report and will compare Cohort 1 participant outcomes to a comparable group of Wagner-Peyser program participants.

¹⁷ The RFA also notes four additional objectives that were not easily addressed by the evaluation, including: 1) Program participants' ability to provide feedback on program elements and inform the evaluation of program performance and success. 2) The degree to which program activities acknowledge and address historic racial inequity and socioeconomic barriers to labor force participation for target population groups. 3) The degree to which leadership at the executive and board level of the organization serving as the lead applicant reflects the demographics of the application's target populations. 4) The degree to which at least 25 percent of the lead applicant organization's staff reflects the demographics of the application's target populations.

- Grantees' ability to provide the services proposed in the grant to the number of individuals specified in the grant, as evidenced by, among other factors, whether the grantee completed the work proposed.
- Participants' ability to successfully complete relevant programming funded under the grant as demonstrated by relevant measures. Measures must directly relate to the program's purpose.
- Participants' ability to transition into the broader workforce and education system as evidenced by employment and enrollment in relevant programs.
- Participants' ability to succeed in both the broader workforce and education system and labor market once they transition into the broader system.

Research Questions

This evaluation was designed to answer a series of research questions, organized into three main lines of inquiry.

Analysis of Cohort 2 Program Implementation

This line of inquiry examines the initiative's operational aspects by focusing on the types of grantee organizations, the priority populations they serve, the barriers faced by participants, and how CBO-LWDB partnerships evolved and influenced service delivery. It also examines grantee strategies to address disparities in the labor market.

Our evaluation explored the structure, scope, implementation, uptake, coordination, service delivery, and outcomes of Breaking Barriers programs. Our initial research questions for this line of inquiry included the following:

- Who are the grantee organizations, where are they located, and what is their history of operating similar programs within the workforce system?
- Who are the grantees' partners, what program responsibilities do they assume, and what is the history and strength of these partnerships?
- What is the history and strength of other key partnerships (i.e., those with formalized agreements) that grantees leverage to run their programs?
- What priority population(s) are most frequently served, and what are their barriers to employment?

- Why did grantees choose to work with these populations, and what was their experience working with them prior to the grant?
- What types of services do Breaking Barriers programs provide, and what approach is taken to deliver them?
- How do the different services provided address participants' needs and barriers?
- What progress toward sustainability will grantees have made by the end of their grants, if any, and what will have supported or hindered it?
- What are the similarities and differences across the Breaking Barriers cohorts?

Analysis of Breaking Barriers Participant Outcomes

This line of inquiry focuses on enrollment, demographics, service participation, and outcomes, specifically participants' completion of grant programs, transitions into the workforce or education systems, and success in achieving performance metrics. Our initial research questions for this analysis were:

- How many participants enroll in Breaking Barriers, and what are their barriers, priority populations, and demographics?
- What services does each cohort receive, and how does service delivery compare across cohorts and grantees, where is the comparison possible?
- To what extent do participants achieve shorter-term outcomes such as program completion (e.g., both in-program and post-exit performance measures excluding employment and earnings)?¹⁸
- To what extent do participants achieve employment, and what are their earnings? Do Cohort 1 participants obtain employment outcomes at a higher rate than a comparable group of Wagner-Peyser program participants?¹⁹

¹⁸ At the time of this report, data on participants' employment outcomes were not yet available. Therefore, longer-term transitions into employment will be explored in the final evaluation report.

¹⁹ This research question is addressed in our AB 1111 impact report (DeFever, et al., 2025).

Data Sources

Chapter I described the data sources used to answer the study's research questions. Below is additional information on our data sources and how they were collected.

Grantee Background Documents

To manage Breaking Barriers grants, FCCC collected several types of documents from grantees, both at the start of and throughout the grant period. These documents helped the study team understand the design and composition of Breaking Barriers programs. They included grantee proposal narratives, planning documents (e.g., work plans and project matrices created after receipt of the award), and contract updates that reflected changes to initial program plans.

Quarterly Narrative Reports

Grantees were required to provide the FCCC with quarterly narrative reports documenting progress and activities engaged in, technical assistance received and utilized, participant goals and outcomes, fiscal and budgetary activity, and promotional and marketing activities. FCCC collected eight quarterly reports and provided the study team with a summary in the grantee hub. These reports helped to clarify program goals and reflect grantees' implementation progress.

Grantee Survey

The study team designed and administered an online survey for grantee coordinators to share their progress in implementation, services, strategies, CBO-LWDB partnerships, and plans for and progress toward sustainability. The survey was administered to Cohort 2a grantees in March and April 2024 and to Cohort 2b grantees in December 2024 and January 2025. Ninety-one percent of grantees responded to the survey (39 Cohort 2a grantees and nine Cohort 2b grantees).

Grantee Interviews

The study team designed and conducted interviews with grantee directors and/or program coordinators from 24 of the 53 Cohort 2 grantee organizations, including 18 2a grantees and six 2b grantees. We asked them about their approaches to program design, the nature of their CBO-LWDB partnership, co-enrollment of Breaking Barriers participants into other workforce system services, priority populations, and lessons learned. These 90-minute phone interviews were

conducted with about forty percent of Cohort 2a grantees from May through June 2024 and fifty percent of Cohort 2b grantees from January to February 2025.

Administrative Data

- **Administrative data**, obtained from the State Board, that came from two systems: the State Grant Data Solution (SGDS), a temporary system used for Cohort 2a, and Cal-E-Grants (CEG), the long-term system used for Cohort 2b. SGDS included records for 5,922 Cohort 2a participants enrolled between January 1, 2023, and March 31, 2025. CEG included records for 1,012 Cohort 2b participants enrolled between May 1, 2024, and July 31, 2025. These datasets were merged into a single harmonized dataset using data received on January 28, 2026.

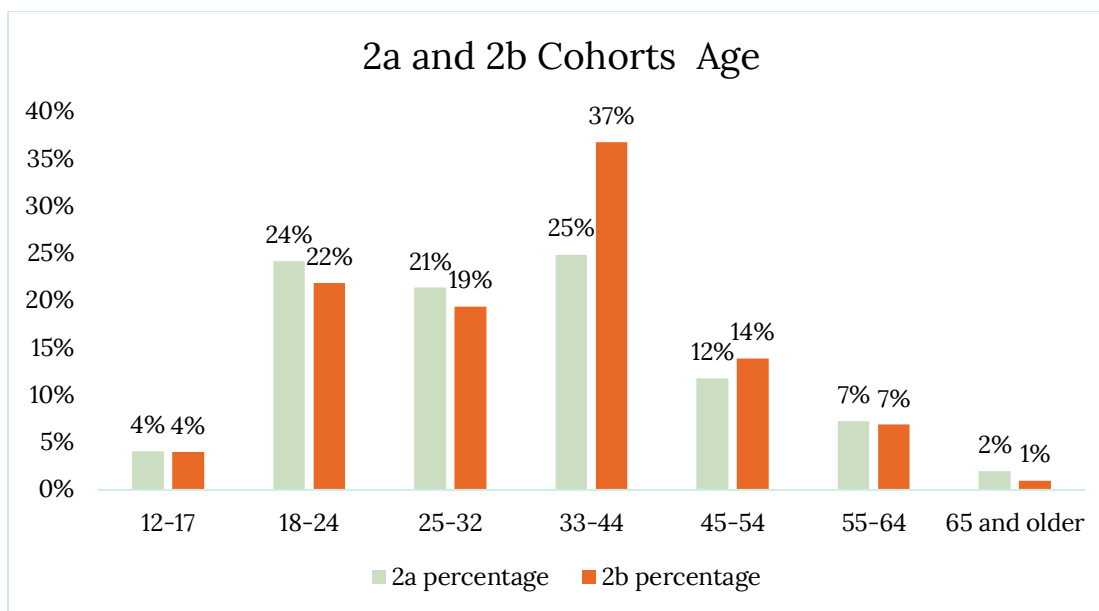
These data include information on the services participants received as captured by grantee staff, based on the State Board's and FCCC's guidance.

Participant Demographics

In Chapter II, the study team described Cohort 2's overall demographics. We also compared Cohort 2a participant demographics to those of Cohort 2b participants. Some of the key features of Breaking Barriers Cohort 2a and Cohort 2b participant demographics include the following (See Exhibits B-2 and B-3):

As shown in Exhibit B-2 below, most Cohort 2a and 2b participants were under the age of 44. The median age of Cohort 2a participants was 34 years old, and the median age of Cohort 2b participants was 35. The youngest participant was 12, and the oldest participant was 79. Notably, Cohort 2a grantees served slightly more youth aged 12 to 17 (5 percent compared to four percent, respectively).

Exhibit B-2: Cohorts 2a and 2b Participants' Ages

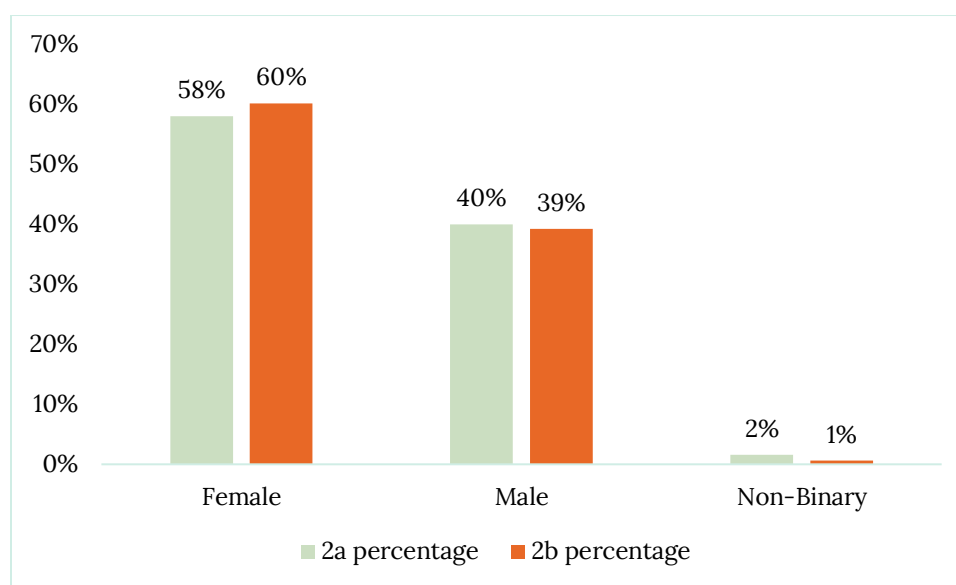


Source: Harmonized dataset

Note: Age is provided for 5,674 Cohort 2a participants and 1,007 Cohort 2b participants.

Most Cohort 2a and 2b participants identified as female (58 and 61 percent, respectively). Two percent of Cohort 2a grantees identified as non-binary compared to zero Cohort 2b grantees (see Exhibit B-3).

Exhibit B-3: Cohorts 2a and 2b Participants' Gender

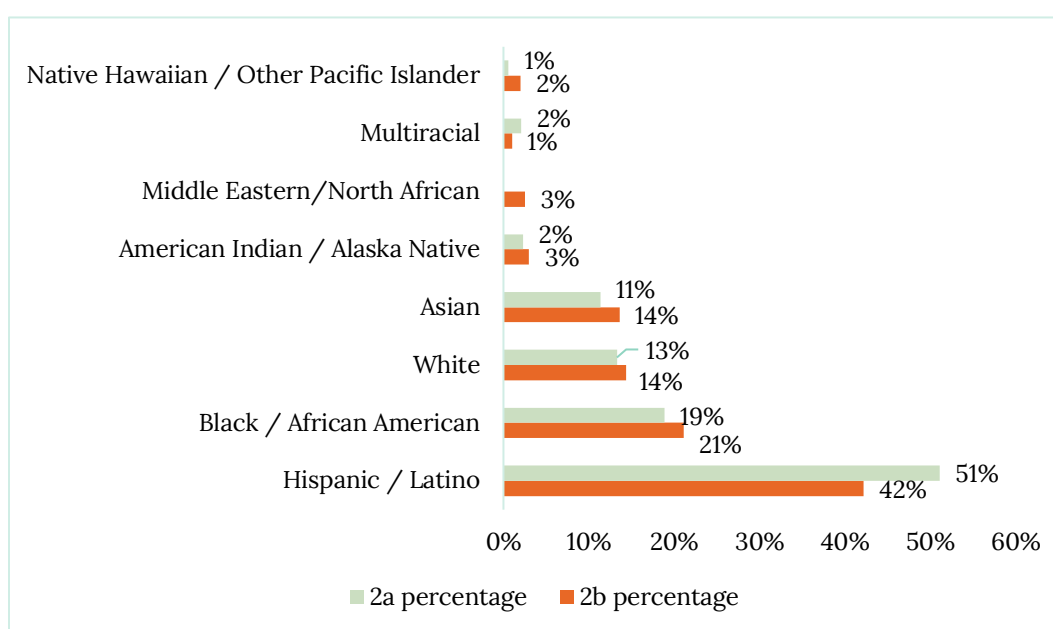


Source: Harmonized dataset

Note: Gender is provided for 5,869 Cohort 2a participants and 994 Cohort 2b participants.

Most Cohort 2a and 2b participants were people of color. Most Cohort 2a and 2b participants identified as Latino/Hispanic (51 and 42 percent, respectively), followed by Black/African American (19 and 21 percent, respectively), and White (13 and 14 percent, respectively) (see Exhibit B-4).

Exhibit B-4: Cohorts 2a and 2b Participants' Race/Ethnicity



Source: Harmonized dataset

Note: Race/Ethnicity is provided for 5,559 Cohort 2a participants and 973 Cohort 2b participants. Cohort 2a did not collect information on participants identified as Middle Eastern/North African.

Priority Populations

In Chapter II, the study team described the Cohort 2 priority populations served by the initiative. We also compared the Cohort 2a priority populations to the Cohort 2b participants, which are shown in Exhibit B-5 below.

Exhibit B-5: Number and Percentage Participants Enrolled by Priority Population for Cohorts 2a and 2b

Priority populations	Number of 2a Grantees Serving	Number of 2b Grantees Serving	Number of Cohort 2a Participants	Percentage of Cohort 2a Participants	Number of Cohort 2b Participants	Percentage of Cohort 2b Participants
Economically disadvantaged individuals	30	10	2164	37	545	54%
English language learners	27	9	1780	30	168	17%
Immigrants	30	8	1406	24	131	13%
Displaced workers/long-term unemployed	34	10	1312	22	244	24%
Basic Skills Deficient / Low Levels of Literacy†	27	7	1276	22	111	11%
Ex-offenders	31	7	802	14%	197	19%
Homeless individuals/Runaway Youth†	31	7	803	14%	109	11%
Women in nontraditional fields of employment*	24	0	720	12%	0	0%
Single parents (include single pregnant women)†	32	10	704	12	135	13%
Individuals with disabilities	35	10	678	11	86	8%
CalWORKS*	31	0	590	10	0	0%

Dislocated Worker†	22	9	465	8%	63	6%
Victims of domestic violence or community violence*	24	0	467	8%	0	0%
Disconnected and/or At-risk Youth*	19	0	416	7%	0	0%
Returning veterans	23	7	315	5%	17	2%
Individuals over 50 years of age and retraining*	24	0	240	4%	0	0%
Migrants or seasonal workers	4	2	149	3%	2	0%
Displaced homemakers	15	5	124	2%	8	1%
Native American	28	6	127	2%	29	3%
Foster youth†	11	5	116	2%	38	4%
Diagnosed with autism	14	0	21	0%	0	0%

Source: Harmonized dataset

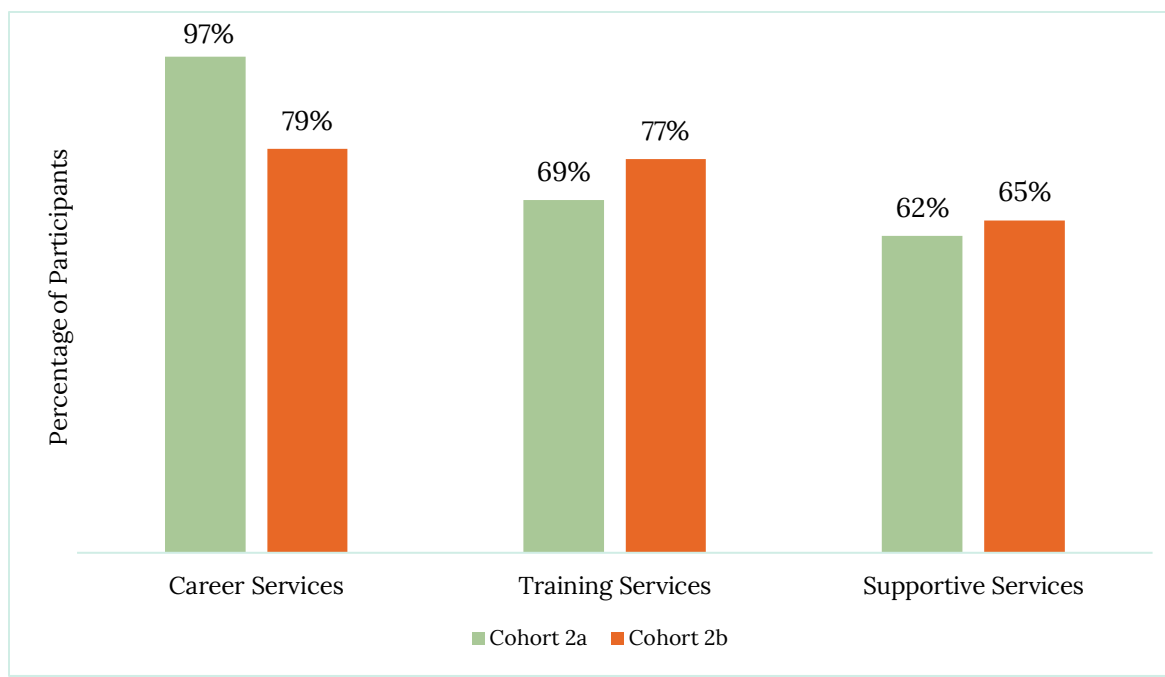
Note: Note: The numbers and percentages are based on 5,922 participants for Cohort 2a and 1,012 participants for Cohort 2b. Since participants could belong to more than one priority population, the percentages total more than 100.

†Grantees reported serving participants described by these four barriers, which were categorized as other populations with barriers to employment as identified in subdivision Unemployment Insurance Code Section 14005(j).

Detailed Service Delivery by Cohort

In Chapter III, the study team described the services provided to Cohort 2 participants. Differences in service provision between Cohort 2a and 2b are described in Exhibits B-6, B-7, B-8, and B-9 below.

Grantees provided career services to 97 percent of Cohort 2a participants compared to 79 percent of Cohort 2b participants. Cohort 2a participants receive a broader range of career services than Cohort 2b participants, including over half of participants receiving career guidance and planning, internships, and job search activities.

Exhibit B-6: Percentage of Breaking Barriers Participants Receiving Different Service Areas

Source: Harmonized dataset

Note: The combined datasets include 6,934 participants, including 5,922 2a participants and 1,012 2b participants

Career Services (Cohorts 2a and 2b)

Career services were widely provided across both cohorts, though Cohort 2a participants generally received services at higher rates and across a broader range of categories. In Cohort 2a, internships or work experience (70 percent), career guidance and planning (65 percent), and job search activities (59 percent) were the most common services. Cohort 2b showed a more concentrated pattern, with career guidance and planning reaching the largest share of participants (72 percent), followed by job search activities (33 percent) and other career services (36 percent).

percent). Foundational academic supports, such as literacy, math, and English language education, were less common in both cohorts, particularly in Cohort 2b.

Exhibit B-7: Number and Percentage of Career Services Provided to Cohorts 2a and 2b

Service Category	Number of 2a Grantees Providing	Number of 2b Grantees Providing	Number of Cohort 2a Participants Receiving	Percentage of Cohort 2a Participants Receiving	Number of Cohort 2b Participants Receiving	Percentage of Cohort 2b Participants Receiving
Career Guidance/Planning	37	8	3,840	65%	730	72%
Digital Literacy Skills Education	21	5	1,948	33%	140	14%
English for Non-Native Speakers Education	12	4	1,159	20%	44	4%
Internship / Work Experience	38	4	4,169	70%	77	8%
Job Search Activities	35	6	3,474	59%	329	33%
Legal and Workplace Rights Training	13	5	844	14%	64	6%
Life Skills Education	32	6	2,843	48%	168	17%
Literacy Education	7	4	1,050	18%	59	6%
Math/Numeracy Education	14	3	902	15%	73	7%
Other Career Services	31	7	3,259	55%	367	36%

Other Classroom Training	16	0	1,934	33%	0	0%
Referred to Employment	33	5	2,510	42%	160	16%

Training Services (Cohorts 2a and 2b)

Training offerings were broadly similar across cohorts, with both emphasizing skills-based and credential-aligned instruction. In Cohort 2a, Occupational Skill Training (OST) and Career and Technical Education accounted for the largest shares of participants, at 56 percent and 44 percent, respectively. While OST and CTE were also widely available in Cohort 2b, a larger share of Cohort 2b participants engaged in pre-apprenticeship programs paired with occupational skill training, with 30 percent participating compared to 5 percent in Cohort 2a. Participation in registered apprenticeships and incumbent worker training remained limited in both cohorts, indicating that these models were more targeted and less widely implemented.

Exhibit B-8: Number and Percentage of Training Services Provided to Cohorts 2a and 2b

Service Category	Number of 2a Grantees Providing	Number of 2b Grantees Providing	Number of Cohort 2a Participants Receiving	Percentage of Cohort 2a Participants Receiving	Number of Cohort 2b Participants Receiving	Percentage of Cohort 2b Participants Receiving
Registered Apprenticeship	5	2	371	6%	58	6%
Career and Technical Education	24	7	2,628	44%	382	38%
Occupational Safety and Health	21	3	1,063	18%	103	10%

Administration (OSHA)						
Incumbent Worker Training	13	1	618	10%	1	0%
Occupational Skills Training (OST)	35	6	3,336	56%	254	25%
On-the-Job Training (OJT)	18	6	952	16%	87	9%
Pre-Apprenticeship with Occupational Training	9	4	284	5%	305	30%

Supportive Services (Cohorts 2a and 2b)

Supportive services played an important role in both cohorts, though the mix of supports differed. In Cohort 2a, education- and work-related supplies (43 percent) and stipends (31 percent) were the most frequently provided supports, followed by transportation assistance (19 percent). In Cohort 2b, stipends were the most prevalent supportive service, reaching more than half of participants (55 percent), while smaller shares received education or work supplies (17 percent) or transportation assistance (9 percent). Housing, medical care, and dependent care supports were less common across both cohorts.

Exhibit B-9: Number and Percentage of Supportive Services Provided to Cohorts 2a and 2b

Service Category	Number of 2a Grantees Providing	Number of 2b Grantees Providing	Number of Cohort 2a Participants Receiving	Percentage of Cohort 2a Participants Receiving	Number of Cohort 2b Participants Receiving	Percentage of Cohort 2b Participants Receiving
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Basic Needs	28	6	1592	27%	337	33%
Dependent Care	10	2	46	1%	72	7%
Education/Work Supplies	32	7	2,565	43%	173	17%
Housing Assistance	17	2	302	5%	108	11%
Medical Care	13	1	379	6%	73	7%
Stipends	22	8	1821	31%	553	55%
Transportation	33	5	1130	19%	91	9%

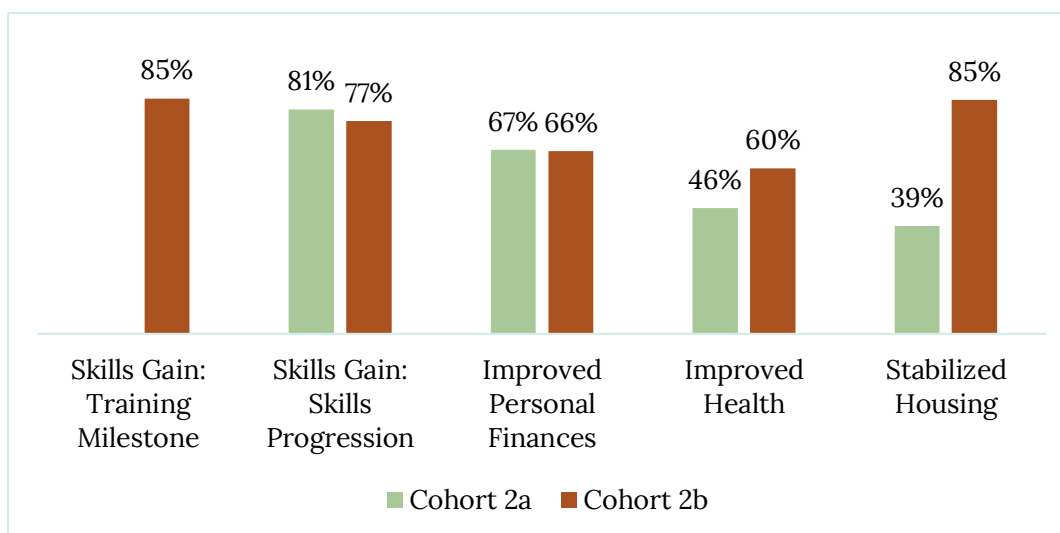
Participant Outcomes by Cohort

In the main body of the report, participant outcomes were presented using combined data from Cohort 2a and Cohort 2b to provide an overall picture of Breaking Barriers program results. This appendix presents the same participant outcomes, separately, by cohort to highlight any differences in progress and outcomes.

Milestone Outcomes

As shown in Exhibit B-10, participants most frequently demonstrated progress through a skills progression, with 81 percent of Cohort 2a participants and 77 percent of Cohort 2b participants achieving a skills progression milestone. Both cohorts of grantees were also successful in supporting participants to reach improved personal finances milestones, with similar proportions of participants achieving this outcome across the two. In contrast, achievement rates for the remaining milestone outcomes varied across cohorts, with Cohort 2b participants consistently reaching improved health and stabilized housing milestones at higher rates compared to Cohort 2a participants. Training milestone data were available only for Cohort 2b, where 85 percent of participants achieved this outcome. Cohort 2a training milestone data were not reported and therefore are not comparable across cohorts.²⁰

²⁰ Although a higher percentage of participants in Cohort 2b achieved a training milestone, as that milestone was only reported for Cohort 2b, the numbers are smaller than for skills progression.

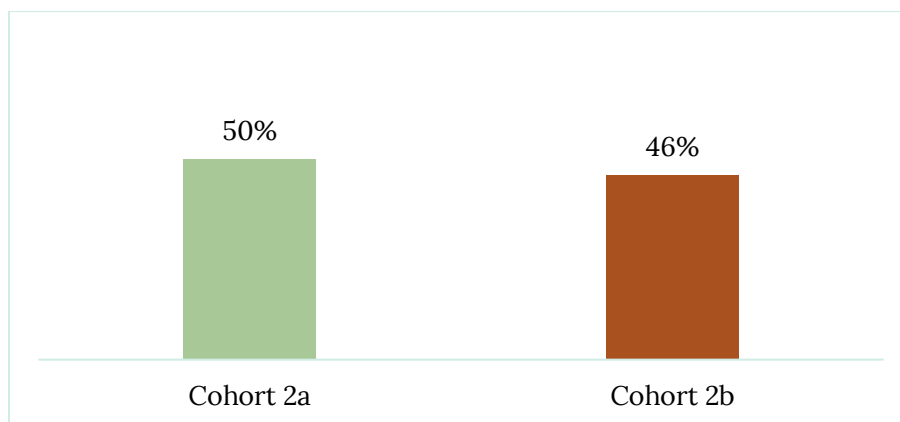
Exhibit B-10. Milestone Outcomes for Breaking Barrier Participants, by Cohort

Source: Harmonized Dataset

Note: Due to variations in reporting practices by individual grantees across both cohorts, exhibit results were calculated by dividing the number of participants who achieved each milestone by the total number of participants with a recorded “yes” or “no” value for that specific milestone. Skills Gain, Training Milestone was only available for 42 Cohort 2 participants. Skills Gain, Skills Progression was available for 3,572 Cohort 2a participants and 646 Cohort 2b participants. Improved Personal Finances was available for 2,141 Cohort 2a participants and 246 Cohort 2b participants. Improved Health was available for 1,625 Cohort 2a participants and 220 Cohort 2b participants. Stabilized housing was available for 1,756 Cohort 2a participants and 258 Cohort 2b participants.

Credential Attainment

As shown in Exhibit B-11, credential attainment was similar across cohorts, as 40 percent of Cohort 2a participants and 38 percent of Cohort 2b participants earned a credential. Note that these results should be considered preliminary due to missing data and because many grants ended before credential results for all participants could be captured.

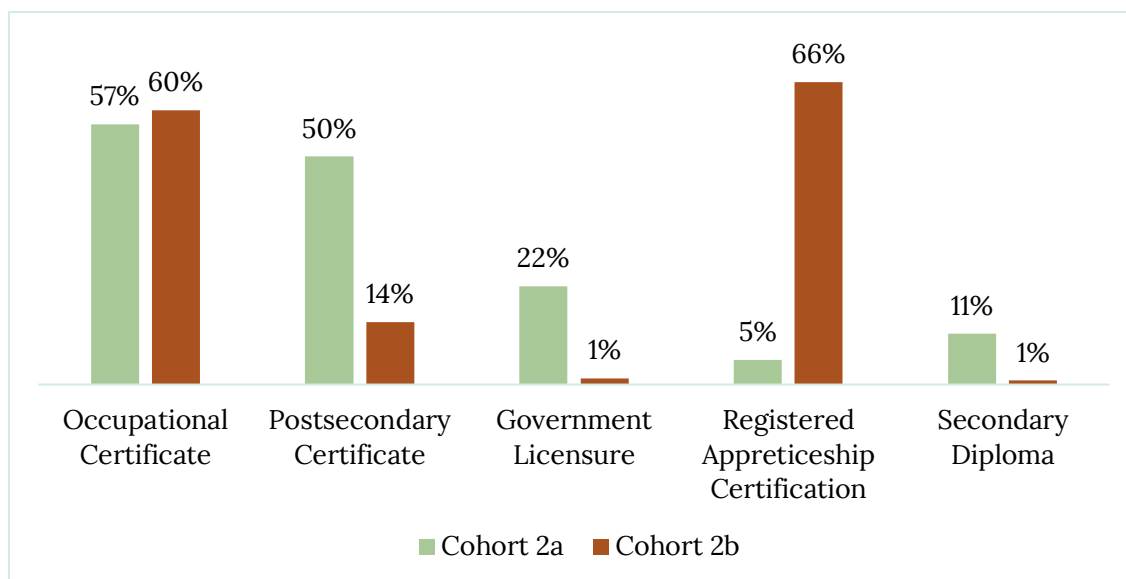
Exhibit B-11. Percentage of Participants Who Received a Credential, by Cohort

Source: Harmonized Dataset

Note: Exhibit results are calculated by dividing the number of participants who earned a credential by the total number of participants who received training. Data was available for 4,097 Cohort 2a participants and 775 Cohort 2b participants.

As illustrated in Exhibit B-12, across the two Cohorts, more than half of participants who earned a credential obtained an occupational certificate: 57 percent of Cohort 2a and 60 percent of Cohort 2b participants. Other credentials earned varied much more widely across cohorts. For example, although 43 percent of all Cohort 2 participants (N = 2,419) earned a postsecondary certificate, most were earned by participants in Cohort 2a (50 percent compared to 14 percent for Cohort 2b). A similar pattern emerged for government licensure and secondary diplomas, as Cohort 2a participants earned these credentials at higher rates than those in Cohort 2b. In contrast, Cohort 2b participants were more likely to earn a certificate through a registered apprenticeship compared to Cohort 2a (66 percent compared to 5 percent respectively). In total, 742 Cohort 2a and 86 Cohort 2b participants earned more than one recognized credential.

Exhibit B-12. Percentage of Participants Who Received Credentials and the Types of Credentials Earned, by Cohort

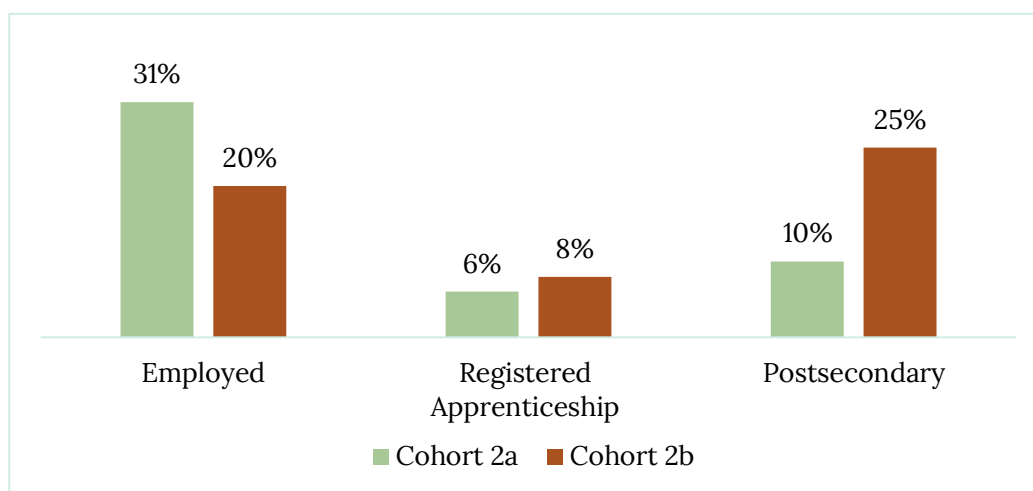


Source: Harmonized Dataset

Note: Exhibit results were calculated by dividing the number of participants who earned a specific credential by the total number of participants who earned a credential per cohort group. Cohort 2a: n = 2,323. Cohort 2b: n = 380. Participants can earn more than one credential, therefore the percentages in the exhibit do not sum up to 100 percent. Additional credentials earned by less than one percent of participants included: Associates, Bachelors, and post-graduate degrees.

Employment, Education, and Training Outcomes

Thirty-one percent of Cohort 2a and 2b participants, combined, had obtained employment post-exit. This result is based on all 6,934 Breaking Barriers participants. As shown in Exhibit B-13, across the two Cohorts, Breaking Barriers Cohort 2a participants had a greater proportion of individuals who were employed after leaving the program (33 percent) compared to Cohort 2b participants (20 percent). In contrast, a greater proportion of Cohort 2b participants entered a registered apprenticeship program (25 percent) compared to Cohort 2a participants (two percent). Lastly, Cohort 2a and 2b participants had similar rates of postsecondary education enrollment. The differences in the rates of those who transitioned to employment and entered registered apprenticeships may reflect variations in program design and the geographic distribution of employment opportunities available to participants across the two cohorts.

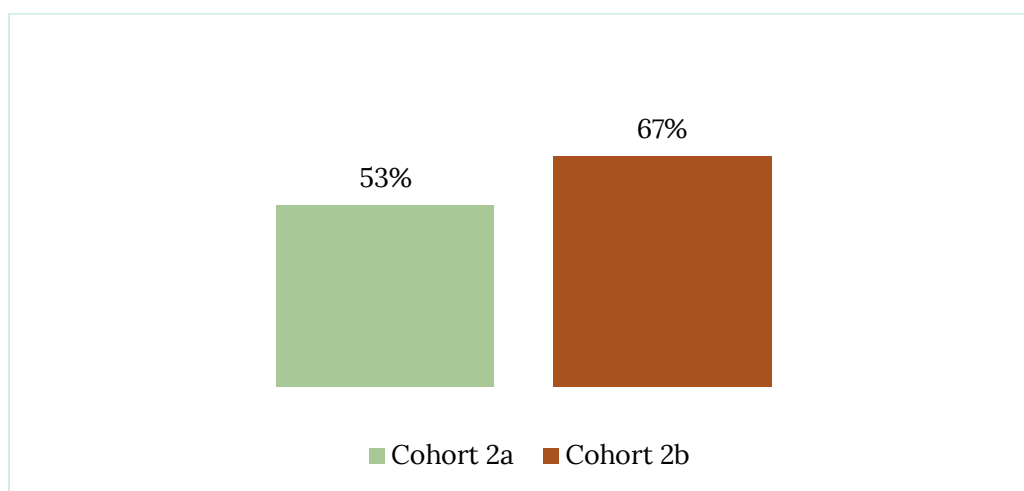
Exhibit B-13. Percentage of Breaking Barriers Participants Post-Exit Outcomes

Source: Harmonized Dataset

Note: N = 6,934.

Training-Related Employment and Job Benefits

As shown in Exhibit B-14, 53 percent of Cohort 2a participants and 67 percent of Cohort 2b participants entered employed related to their training.

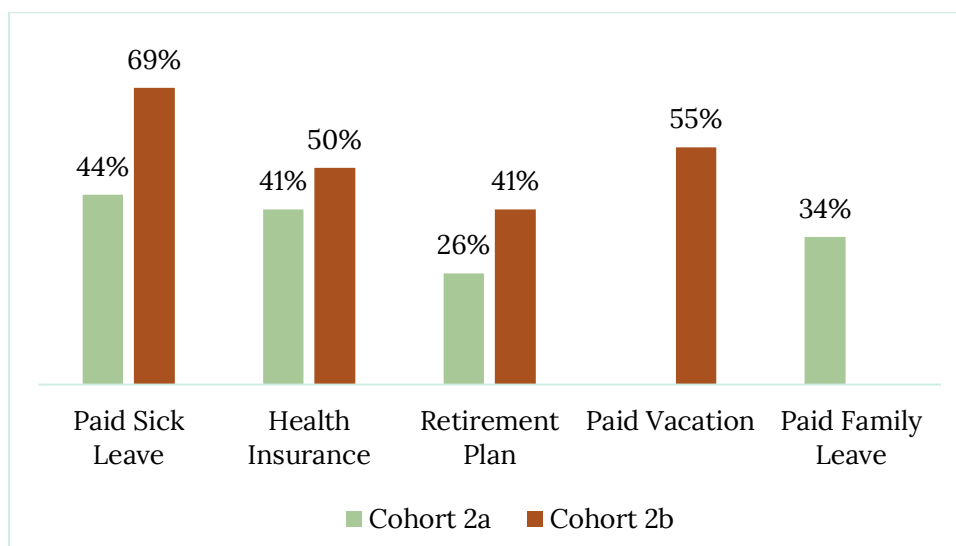
Exhibit B-14. Percentage of Breaking Barriers Participants Employed in Occupation Related to Training

Source: Harmonized Dataset

Note: This exhibit reflects only those participants who were employed after leaving the program. Data was available for 1,956 Cohort 2a participants and 208 Cohort 2b participants.

Across both cohorts, the most common benefits participants' employers offered, as illustrated by Exhibit B-15, were paid sick leave and health insurance.

Exhibit B-15. Percentage of Breaking Barriers Post-Employed Participants That Received Benefits, by Cohort



Source: Harmonized Dataset

Note: The results of this exhibit are based on the participants who were employed after leaving the program. Data on paid sick leave, health insurance, and retirement plan were available for 1,956 Cohort 2a participants and 208 Cohort 2b participants. Data on paid vacation was available only for 208 Cohort 2b participants. Data on paid family leave was available only for 1,956 participants.