Investing in Effective Employment & Training Strategies for English Language Learners

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CITY OF SEATTLE & OTHER LOCALITIES

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CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Research Scope 3

A Snapshot of Immigrants in Washington and Seattle 4

- An Overview of Washington State’s Immigrant Population 4
- English Language and Educational Attainment of Washington’s Immigrants 4
- Workforce Statistics on Washington’s Immigrants 5
- Immigrants in the City of Seattle 6

A Need for Skills 7

- The Need for English Language Proficiency, Skills and Education 7
- Barriers to Language and Skills Acquisition, and Employment 8

Effective Strategies for English Language Learners 14

- Training Program Models 15
- Components of Successful Programs 19

Strategies for Higher-Skilled Immigrants 27

Key Considerations for Program Investment 29

- Defining Clear Objectives and Measures of Success 29
- Program Design and Access 31
- Maximizing Impact by Building on Current Capacity 32

Conclusion 35

Appendix A: Program Profiles 36

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. immigrant population has been expanding rapidly in recent decades. At the start of 2011, there were roughly 40 million immigrants residing in the U.S., about 11 million of who were estimated to be undocumented.[1] This represents an increase of nearly 14 million immigrants since 2000, ranking the past decade as the highest for immigration in U.S. history. Immigrants today make up about 13 percent of the total U.S. population.[2] They also comprise about 16 percent of its workforce, up dramatically from just 7 percent of the workforce in 1980.[3]

The rapid increase in immigration has left many states and localities scrambling to employ strategies to successfully integrate immigrants into their local communities. While the federal government sets *immigration* policy (dealing with the admission, entry, legal status and deportation of immigrants), it naturally falls to states and localities (the communities where immigrants reside) to develop *immigrant* policy – that is, policy that assists or hampers immigrants in their ability to adapt to living in the United States.[4] The integration of immigrants has many facets. According to the Washington New Americans Policy Council, integration requires more than just citizenship and a voter registration card, it must also include: training and employment at one's highest potential; the ability to communicate in English; the opportunity to increase personal wealth through greater access to mainstream financial services; and the ability to meaningfully engage one's government.[5]

Arguably the most important gauge of immigrant integration is socioeconomic attainment, which includes measures of educational attainment, level of income, occupational status and homeownership.[6] The workplace specifically has been vital to the socioeconomic integration of immigrants in the U.S.[7] Yet the successful entry and advancement of immigrants in the workplace depends on many factors including immigrants' "education and skill levels, language ability,

duration of residence, and the entry route through which they reached the U.S."[8] What is clear is the imperative for local integration strategies to place a heavy focus on helping immigrants enter and succeed in the workforce. It is equally true, however, that there is no silver bullet for achieving this goal due to the wide diversity among immigrants' backgrounds and objectives, as well as the multitude of barriers that they face.

Strategies to help immigrants successfully join the workforce do not simply benefit immigrants themselves. The growth of the U.S., state and local economies also depends on the effectiveness of these strategies. Economies need skilled workers in order to grow. And immigrants and their children are expected to account for *all* workforce growth between 2010 and 2030 – when nearly one in five workers will be an immigrant. It is evident, then, that comparative advantages will go to those states and localities that realize the full potential of their immigrant workforces by transforming the current surplus of lower-skill workers into the higher-skilled workers and entrepreneurs that their economies require.[9]

It is surprising, given the value to both individuals and employers of supporting immigrants to acquire the job skills and English language proficiency they need to succeed in the workforce, that focused efforts to achieve these goals have been limited.[10] This is particularly true of efforts targeted to provide work-related skill-building for immigrants with low levels of English language ability and/or limited education. A growing array of promising programs have been implemented – often by community colleges independently or in partnership with community-based organizations – for immigrants with higher levels of education and English language attainment. Yet there remains a great need for investments in strategies serving lower-level English Language Learners (ELLs)[11], such as "ESL classes that combine work-related language and career exploration, accelerate language learning, and help students make the transition to integrated vocational and basic skills programs as quickly as possible."[12]

Divergent opinions exist on what the most effective strategies are for assisting lower-level ELLs to gain the skills and English proficiency necessary to secure family-sustaining employment. More than any other single factor driving this lack of consensus is how to meet the competing needs of many in this group for immediate (and often low-skill/low-wage) employment and for advancing along what is typically a very lengthy continuum of English language and skill-building in order to gain opportunities for more stable, *living-wage* careers. Despite this challenge, programs exist that have shown to be effective at serving low-level ELLs from which best practices can be drawn for meeting the often competing short- and long-term employment and training needs of these individuals. It is to these programs and practices that localities can look when determining how best to support the transition of ELLs to the workplace and their successful socioeconomic integration.

RESEARCH SCOPE

As stated, it is vital for localities to implement strategies to help immigrants enter and succeed in the workforce to increase their economic mobility and ability to integrate into the community, as well as to spur economic growth by ensuring an adequate supply of skilled workers. The City of Seattle is interested in investing in such strategies, with a specific focus on those that serve lower-level ELLs (levels 2 and 3) to respond to a dearth of local programs targeted to this subset of immigrants. Seattle has already taken some important steps recently in recognition of the need to better serve its growing immigrant population. This includes implementing the City-Wide Translation and Interpretation Policy (City of Seattle Executive Order 01-7) intended to improve the interface of immigrant communities with city government by minimizing the role of limited English proficiency as a barrier to this objective. It further includes the creation in 2012 of Seattle's new Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, as well as investments in employment and training of immigrants by the city's Office of Economic Development (e.g., in Seattle Jobs Initiative and Port Jobs) and its Human Services Department (e.g., Immigrant and Refugee Job Readiness Training Program, described in Appendix A).

To assist the City of Seattle in making the most impactful investment in the socioeconomic integration of its lower-level ELL population, the city's Office of Economic Development is seeking to gather valuable information on the skills, education and supports needed by this subset of immigrants as well as any local and national best practices that exist for providing these effectively. This gathering of information includes this research, based on both a literature review and interviews of more than a dozen local and national experts, as well as a process for input from the local community of providers focused on serving lower-level ELLs.

The purpose of this research component is first to provide a better understanding of the local immigrant population, the need of these individuals for employment and training services, as well as the barriers they may face in obtaining these. In addition, the research will present an overview of strategies for helping ELLs – and in particular lower-level ELLs – to secure and advance in good jobs through English language acquisition and skills attainment. It will also provide snapshots of some local and national employment and training programs focused on serving ELLs. Finally, it will cite some key considerations and possible opportunities and resources for making an impactful investment in the Seattle community to help the city's lower-level ELLs increase their economic mobility.

A SNAPSHOT OF IMMIGRANTS IN WASHINGTON AND SEATTLE

In order to devise strategies to help lower-level English Language Learners, it is helpful to have an understanding of the make-up of the local immigrant population. This includes basic demographic information, educational attainment, English language proficiency, and status within the local workforce. A significantly greater level of data is available – and thus will be set forth in this section – for Washington State than for the Seattle area.

AN OVERVIEW OF WASHINGTON STATE'S IMMIGRANT POPULATION

Compared to the U.S. as a whole, Washington State has a large and rapidly growing foreign-born population. In 2011, the state had the nation's ninth-largest immigrant population with roughly 910,000.[13] In 1990, the state's immigrant population totaled approximately 320,000, growing to about 615,000 in 2000 (a 90.7 percent increase) and then increasing another 48 percent (fifteenth fastest in the nation) from 2000-2010 to reach 910,000.[14]

Washington's 910,000 foreign-born residents made up 13.3 percent of the state's total population in 2011 (up from 10.4 percent in 2000 and only 6.6 percent in 1990), and fully 17.8 percent of the state's working-age population.[15] Many are recent immigrants (38.4 percent entered the U.S. during the 2000s and 28.4 percent during the 1990s) and fewer than half (46 percent) are naturalized citizens.[16] It is estimated that about 75 percent are legal residents and 25 percent are undocumented.[17]

Most of Washington State's immigrants originated from Asian (39.8 percent) and Latin American (30.7 percent) countries, with the top countries of origin being Mexico (25.8 percent), the Philippines (7.0 percent), Vietnam (6.4 percent), and China (5.8 percent).[18]

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF WASHINGTON'S IMMIGRANTS

In 2011, 46.7 percent of Washington's foreign-born population over the age of five had Limited English Proficiency (LEP, defined as speaking English less than "very well") – a subset that has

grown faster in the state over the past two decades than the immigrant population as a whole.[19] Nearly 230,000 – or more than a quarter – of the state's immigrants had even greater language barriers, speaking English either "not well" or "not at all". More than half of this group (about 118,000) is comprised of native Spanish speakers, and another third (about 71,000) is comprised of immigrants speaking Asian or Pacific Island languages.[20]

The educational profile of the state's immigrants – as is true at the national level – is reflective of a U.S. immigration system that has favored the admission of highly-educated individuals (e.g. through the H-1B visa system) as well as typically less-educated immigrants through family reunification, while also abiding to some extent the illegal entry of many immigrants (also less-educated).[21] Nearly one-third (29.8 percent) of the state's immigrants had a college degree in 2011, very comparable to the 32.3 percent of the state's native-born population with degrees. On the other hand, more than a quarter (26.9 percent) of immigrants had not completed high school (compared to only 6.5 percent of native-born).[22] Spanish-speaking immigrants as a group had the least amount of education, with 43.3 percent possessing less than a high school diploma (another 23.1 percent had *only* a high school diploma; 19.9 percent had some college/AA; and 13.7 percent had a BA or more). Among immigrants speaking Asian or Pacific Island languages, 17.5 percent had less than a high school diploma (another 21.2 percent had *only* a high school diploma; 24.2 percent had some college/AA; and 37.1 percent had at least a BA).[23]

WORKFORCE STATISTICS ON WASHINGTON'S IMMIGRANTS

In 2011, immigrants made up 16.5 percent of Washington's civilian employed workforce, compared to 11.3 percent in 2000 and 7.1 percent in 1990.[24] Immigrants accounted for more than half (54.4 percent) of the state's workers with no high school diploma, and 15.5 percent of college-educated workers aged 25 and older.[25] Many of Washington's immigrant workers can be considered under employed, meaning that while they possess advanced skills (college degrees) they are working in occupations where their skills are not being utilized. Estimates are that one in five immigrant workers in the state – as in the U.S. – fall into this category.[26]

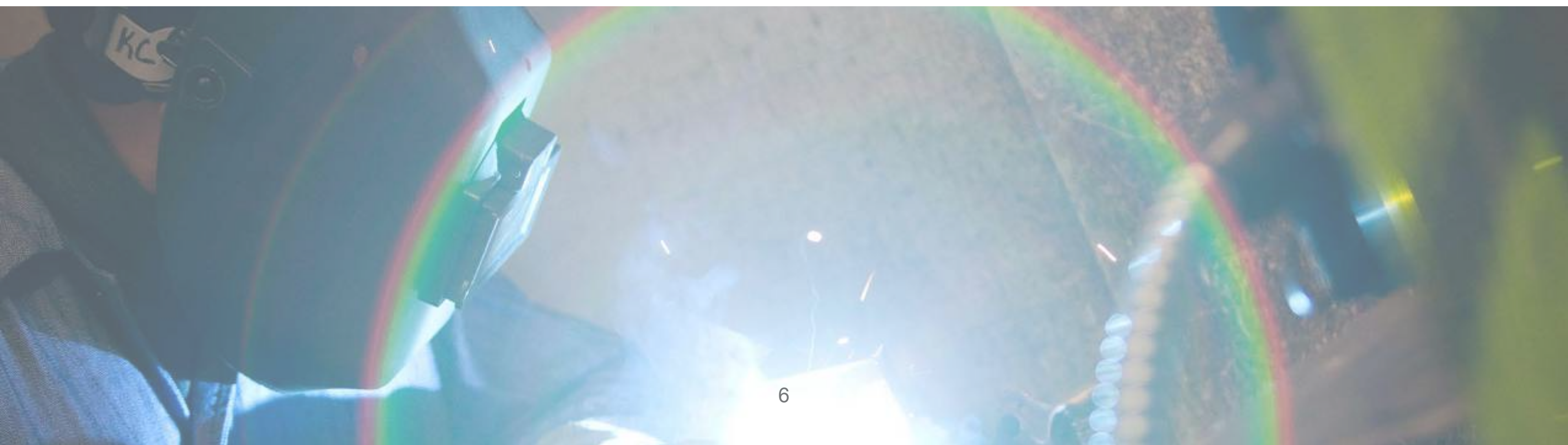
We can look more broadly at U.S. data to get a picture of where immigrants are generally employed. Immigrant workers, compared to native-born workers, are much more highly concentrated in service occupations (and two-thirds of immigrant service workers are employed in food preparation and serving related occupations in addition to building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations).[27] They are also more likely to be employed in blue collar occupations (e.g., natural resources, construction, production, and transportation-related occupations).[28] A recent study by

the Brookings Institution also found that foreign-born workers are over-represented in certain sectors, typically thought of as either low-skilled (private households, accommodation, agriculture, food services, construction) or high-skilled (information technology, high-tech manufacturing).[29] In 2005, when immigrants made up 15 percent of the U.S. workforce, they made up 21 percent of low-wage workers and fully 45 percent of low-skilled workers.[30] And they were highly concentrated in low-paying occupations lacking career advancement potential, making up half (49 percent) of workers in the farming, fishing and forestry sector; more than a third (36 percent) of building and grounds maintenance workers and a quarter (24 percent) of food service workers.[31] These are all occupations that require more limited skills, education and English language proficiency. The concentration of immigrants in low- skill occupations is reflected in their relative wages and benefits. In 2009, for example, immigrant workers earned only 79 cents for every dollar earned by native-born workers and were two-and-a-half times more likely to be uninsured.[32]

IMMIGRANTS IN THE CITY OF SEATTLE

Fewer data are available describing the immigrant population within the City of Seattle. In 2011, about 17.5 percent of the city's population (105,508 of 608,660 residents) was foreign-born.[33] Of these, just over half (52.3 percent) were naturalized citizens. More than a third (37.7 percent) of Seattle's immigrant population is comprised of recent immigrants, arriving in the U.S. in the past decade. The majority of Seattle's immigrants originated in Asia (54.4 percent), followed by Latin America (13.8 percent), Europe (13.7 percent), Africa (11.1 percent), and North America (5.5 percent).[34]

In more than one in five (21.8 percent) Seattle households, a language other than English is spoken (an Asian or Pacific Island language is spoken in 10.8 percent of Seattle households, Spanish in 4.7 percent of households). In about one in ten households (9.8 percent) English is spoken less than very well (LEP households). Households speaking an Asian or Pacific Island language also comprised the largest share of LEP households in Seattle: about half of households where an Asian or Pacific Island language is spoken are LEP.[35]



A NEED FOR SKILLS

Immigrants, of course, are diversely situated both in terms of their need for the English language acquisition and job skills that will help them advance to living-wage careers, and in the barriers they face in meeting this need. This section will make a case for why ELLs in general need more skills and education and describe the obstacles these individuals commonly confront in obtaining these.

THE NEED FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, SKILLS AND EDUCATION

Research demonstrates a growing need for workers with more skills and education – along with solid technical, critical thinking and communication skills – and that acquiring these leads to higher wages. The Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, for example, finds that about 60 percent of jobs in Washington State will require some education and training beyond high school by 2018.[36] At the local, state and national levels, if economies are to grow they will require immigrants to meet the increasing need for skilled workers. Yet, as set forth above, a very high percentage of immigrants have low levels of educational attainment: only about half of all immigrants in the U.S. have college education[37] and nearly a third (in Washington State, just over a quarter) have less than a high school diploma.

The challenge of skilling up immigrants is compounded by limited English language proficiency among many. As stated in the profile provided of Washington State immigrants, even highly-educated immigrants often end up working in low-skilled occupations because of their language ability. And for those with low skills, limited English language proficiency not only makes it more difficult to secure employment but to access education and training programs to increase their job-related skills. The dual challenge of limited education and English language proficiency is the primary cause of the disproportionately large representation of immigrants in low-wage and low-skill occupations.

Immigrants who speak English proficiently earn an estimated 17 to 24% more than immigrants who do not.[38] In fact, it has been shown that English proficient immigrants have a higher likelihood of earning family-sustaining wages than native-borns and twice the likelihood as immigrants with limited English proficiency.[39] In addition, a study by the Parthenon Group found that the lifetime earnings of ELLs increase by $386,000-$428,000 (depending on their level of

educational attainment) if they advance from speaking no English to speaking English well.[40] English proficiency is also critical to full integration into U.S. society, as most Americans believe that English language is a key aspect of our national identity. One national survey, for example, found that fully 94 percent of U.S. residents consider the ability to speak English to be somewhat or very important in determining if someone is a true American.[41]

Importantly, data also show that English language gains are not enough: they must go hand-in-hand with more job skills and education. A key reason that English-proficient immigrants as a group earn more than their ELL counterparts is that they are more likely to have higher levels of education. ELLs have on average six years of education while immigrants who speak English very well have an average of fourteen.[42] One pertinent study found that, because they are much more likely to possess marketable skills, immigrants with more than twelve years of education who became fluent in English experienced a 76 percent jump in earnings, while immigrants with less than eight years of education experienced a mere 4 percent gain in earnings after becoming fluent.[43] Ultimately, research demonstrates that for low-skill immigrants – as with all low-skill individuals – higher-level skills, and ideally a postsecondary credential with value in the local labor market, are needed for the economic benefits of English language proficiency to accrue.

There is another pressing reason why many immigrants need to acquire more English language skills and education. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program now provides an avenue for unauthorized immigrants who came to the U.S. prior to the age of sixteen – and who are currently thirty years old or younger – to obtain work authorization and relief from deportation. However, to qualify for relief, these individuals must be currently enrolled in school or workforce training, have graduated from high school or earned a high school equivalency, or have been honorably discharged from the armed forces. Moreover, current immigrant reform efforts are also placing an onus on unauthorized immigrants to show proof of integration by meeting English and educational attainment milestones if they wish to gain lawful status.[44]

BARRIERS TO LANGUAGE AND SKILLS ACQUISITION, AND EMPLOYMENT

English Language Learners, particularly those with low-levels of English proficiency and limited education, face numerous challenges to acquiring language proficiency and job-related skills as well as to achieving employment and career advancement. One of the most fundamental challenges for these individuals is the competition between the need to work and the need to attain more education and higher levels of English proficiency. The necessity of immediate,

subsistence level employment can serve as a major hurdle to completing the already long path to English proficiency, skills and credentials that can lead to *living-wage* careers. Yet the converse is also true: entering on a lengthy education and training pathway can defer much needed earnings. A multitude of other barriers exist, as will now be described.

English Acquisition is a Slow Process

English proficiency is critically important to success in most workplaces and, more broadly, to the socioeconomic integration of immigrants into the community. Yet, even putting aside the acquisition of job-related skills and education, simply improving one's English language ability can be a daunting task. Generally, it is estimated that it takes ELLs between three to five years to develop spoken fluency and even longer to master written English skills.[45]

More specifically, it can take an average of 85-150 hours of ESL instruction for a student to advance just one level of English proficiency on the six-level scale.[46] As a result, relatively few students persist in ESL classes. One study found that just over a third (37 percent) of ESL students remained in class a sufficient amount of time to progress one level of English proficiency.[47]

Lack of Access to ESL Classes

Exacerbating the difficulty of improving one's English is the fact that in many cases there are not a sufficient number of ESL classes to meet demand. Around Washington State, there is wide variation in the availability and accessibility of ESL classes, particularly at the lower levels.[48] It is community colleges that provide the vast majority of ESL courses in Washington, yet these institutions often struggle to meet demand for several reasons.

First, because ESL classes do not generate tuition dollars, they have been reduced in recent years as colleges have prioritized generating tuition to respond to state-level funding reductions. And courses are not always offered when ELLs need them (both in terms of course start dates and times of day and week). The NALEO Educational Fund researched ESL class availability specifically in the City of Seattle and discovered wait times of up to six months.[49] Classes offered outside of work hours, located offsite (i.e., not on college campuses) near where people live, that provided childcare, or that offered one-on-one assistance and/or technology skills along with English, had the highest waiting lists.[50]

Program Models Not Well-Designed for Successful Transition to Work or College

Beyond the difficulty of English language acquisition, for lower-skill ELLs there is the added challenge of acquiring more skills and education. Traditionally, states and localities have placed more emphasis on helping immigrants acquire English independent of job skills through traditional ESL programs, which "have a poor history of preparing adults for careers or postsecondary education."[51] The model that is frequently employed is a linear one in which English proficiency must be attained before one can matriculate to skills training. The problems with this model are the time it takes for someone, especially a working adult, to attain actual job skills or a credential, as well as the proven difficulty for individuals in making the transition from ABE/ESL to work-related courses.

Another frequent problem is the lack of alignment between the completion requirements for the highest levels of ESL and the entrance requirements for college-level coursework.[52] Not contextualizing ESL classes to the workplace or to specific sectors and occupations also can lead students not to persist because they may fail to see the relevance of the courses to their career or academic goals. Together, these barriers lead to low transition rates. For example, a study of Washington State community colleges found that only 10 percent of ESL students made the transition to workforce training within three years of enrollment, and only 2 percent earned a certificate or degree within five years of enrollment.[53] Results for ESL students with less than a high school diploma were even poorer.[54]

Challenge of Persisting in Postsecondary Education Programs

There are, of course, a growing number of examples of effective employment and training models that address the weaknesses just described by combining English and vocational skills. Washington State's I-BEST program is a well-documented example. But many of these programs – I-BEST included – are not designed for lower-level English Language Learners (levels 1–3). Moreover, ELLs who do make the transition to workforce or other postsecondary programs face the same challenges as most "non-traditional" students that make it difficult to persist. Foremost among these are the difficulty navigating the college system, a need for developmental education, and a need to attend part-time or off hours because of work or family obligations.[55] Immigrants often face heightened barriers to accessing financial aid to pay for college as well. Many feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar with borrowing,[56] and even when this is not the case, securing the requisite documentation can be a challenge. Moreover, though Washington State is one of the

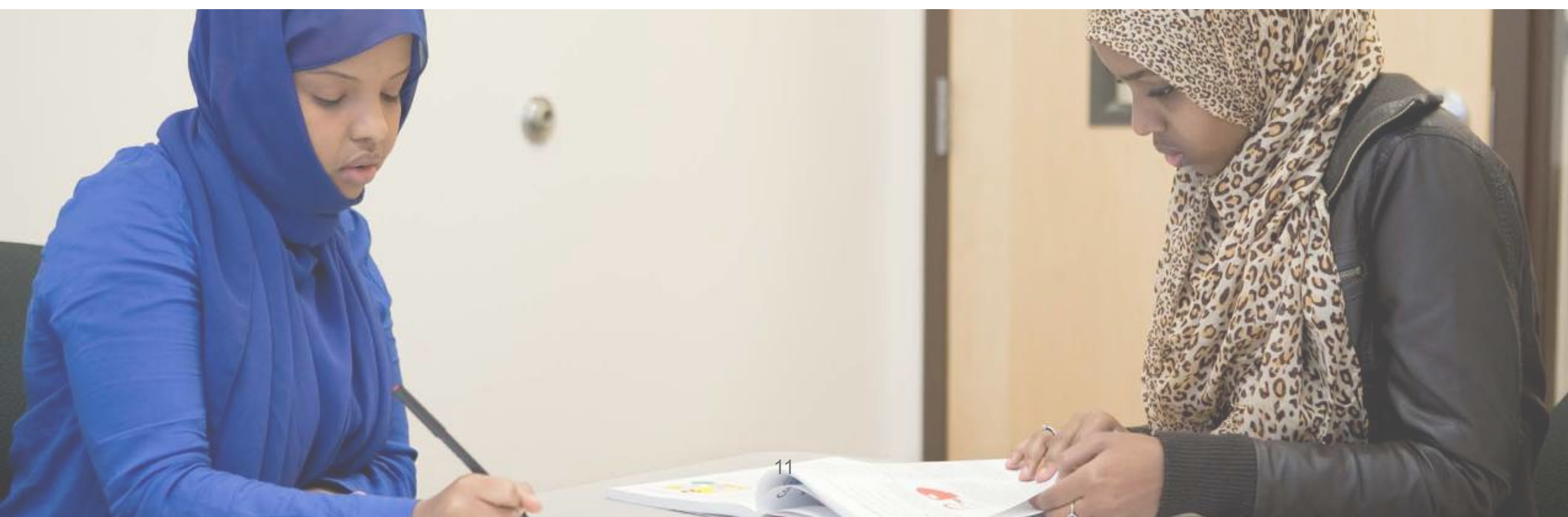
more generous states in terms of making financial aid available to immigrants, new federal rules eliminating the "ability to benefit" provision of Title IV of the Higher Education Act in 2012 mean that the large proportion of immigrants without a high school diploma is no longer qualified to receive Pell grants, the chief source of federal financial aid for college.

Need for Support Services

English Language Learners often face many life situational barriers to persistence in training and education programs, many of which are common to low-income or disadvantaged populations. These include a lack of access to affordable transportation, childcare and housing, as well as the occurrence of financial setbacks (e.g., episodes of emergent healthcare) that may require them to drop out of programs in order to go to work or to increase their work hours. Other challenges may be more relevant to recent immigrant populations, including legal and cross-cultural issues, and past trauma.

Challenges to Successful Job Search

A lack of job skills, education, and English proficiency constitute the major hurdles for securing well-paying employment among many immigrants. But other important challenges to securing good jobs – or any level of employment – exist for this group. One of these barriers is a lack of basic digital literacy, as today, more than ever, success in locating and applying for job openings requires the ability to use a computer and navigate the internet. In addition, many new immigrants with no experience in the U.S. workforce (and widely divergent sets of experiences working in their native countries) have limited knowledge of the culture of the American workplace – what are often termed "soft skills". This includes the ability to interview effectively. Further, though it is the case that immigrants often possess strong networks in their communities and within their specific ethnic enclaves that lead to employment, these networks often do not assist them in securing *well-paying* jobs at mainstream employers that place a higher value on English language proficiency.[57]



The attitudes and hiring practices of employers also contribute to the difficulty immigrants often have getting hired. According to the Institute for Work and the Economy, employers erect a variety of barriers for qualified immigrant jobseekers, including: 1) overemphasizing the importance of English (e.g., requiring perfect grammar for positions that don't require this); 2) eliminating candidates with foreign-sounding names or accents in phone screenings, never providing an opportunity for a face-to-face interview; 3) considering foreign postsecondary credentials to be "invalid or inferior", or not having the resources to validate these credentials; and 4) mandating candidates possess U.S. work experience.[58]

Limited On-the-Job Training Opportunities

While employer-based skills training is on the decline overall, this is particularly the case for low-skill and low-wage workers, including ELLs who are highly represented within these groups.[59] Employers often are unwilling to invest in low-skill workers because they feel that these employees tend to have high rates of turnover or that by skilling them up they are in effect subsidizing their competitors (i.e., that these newly-skilled workers will be able to leave and ply their skills for other businesses).[60] Other employers may be deterred from investing in training their low-skill immigrant workers because these individuals often need longer-term training to advance to higher-skilled positions.[61] Further, many employers may view immigrants as a contingent or transitory workforce and thus are unwilling to invest in their skill development.[62] Employers are most likely to provide on-the-job training, such as ESL, for their immigrant employees when they employ a high concentration of immigrants who share a native language. Yet often businesses with high concentrations of ELLs are found in industries that have limited advancement opportunities, even for individuals who improve their skills through on-the-job training.

Lack of Knowledge of Labor Market and Training Resources

Immigrants – namely lower-level ELLs – often have limited information about the ESL and job skills training programs that are available to them. There is also frequently a lack of information available on local labor markets, including where current and future job opportunities can be found and how additional training and education can lead one to secure these jobs and consequently to experience higher wages and lower rates of unemployment. And immigrants may not know how to avail themselves of other resources that would help support them while acquiring more skills or employment, such as how to utilize public transit, access public benefits or business assistance, or acquire a driver's license.[63] What information is available is often not accessible in immigrants' native language or in simple English, and it is rarely centralized.

Ineffective Assessment

Some experts interviewed for this research commented on the difficulty of effectively assessing ELLs, particularly those with very low levels of English, to ferret out information that can offer a holistic and accurate picture of an individual's current level of skills, education and work experience as well as his or her future career and educational goals.

This information is critical to helping ELLs connect to employment opportunities for which they may already be qualified (or for which they would qualify with improvements to their English proficiency), as well as working to develop education or career plans that take into account an individual's interests and aptitudes as well as the barriers – such as a need for childcare or transportation – that must be addressed in order to succeed.

Federal Workforce Programs Currently Do Not Serve Low-Skill Immigrants Well

In addition to the diminished availability of federal Pell grants to low-skill immigrants without a high school diploma, major federal workforce programs do not fully serve this population. Most programs funded through Title-I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – the primary federally-funded workforce program – are geared toward workers with at least a 9th-grade level of education. Yet among low-wage immigrant workers, 28 percent fall below this level of education.[64] One older study found that only 7 percent of adults receiving services through WIA Title-I in the year 2000 were Limited English Proficient.[65] A key driver of the lack of participation by this group in WIA programs is the programs' outcome measures, which can deter service delivery providers from enrolling those with low skills and other barriers – such as limited English proficiency – who are less likely to meet these standards. In addition to WIA, a key source of federal funds being widely utilized to help low-income immigrant and refugee parents is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Through TANF, these families receive much needed but time-limited financial assistance accompanied by stringent work participation requirements. While some states have tried to provide training to ELLs within the parameters of TANF, the work participation requirements are typically driving these programs to place individuals in the first available job, which for low-skill ELLs is often low-paying and dead-end.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

While there still appear to be few rigorous *scientific* studies on the best strategies for providing English language and job training to immigrant populations,[66] various successful programs from around the U.S. are illustrative of the types of strategies that are being employed as well as the key elements of these strategies. Most program models and the best practices that can be drawn from them – discussed in greater depth below – are community-college based, or are offered as partnerships between colleges and community-based organizations. There are fewer examples of strictly community-based programs that have been successful at providing skills training along with English language acquisition. Similarly, there are limited examples of programs that are specifically tailored to *lower-level* ELLs that also lead to long-term improvement in employment and particularly wage advancement. That said the strategies and key program elements that will be discussed are highly relevant to any strategy intended to assist lower-level ELLs starting on pathways to living-wage careers.

In general, programs designed to help ELLs to enter and advance in the workforce that mix education with skills training and job development have demonstrated consistently better outcomes than those focused on immediate employment and providing no training, or those that exclusively provide English language learning.[67] A core feature common to effective programs is thus the combination of English language and literacy with job skills training as – particularly for less educated immigrants – English alone will rarely lead to meaningful employment gains.[68]

And, as will be discussed in greater detail, integrating English language and job skills training (contextualization) can lead to improved language learning, greater retention of participants in training programs, and shortening of the time to program completion (acceleration).

While effective programs seem to share a common strategy of concurrent learning of English language and work-related skills, they do this in divergent ways. This divergence is often based on differing program objectives, which can range from quick attachment to the workforce, preparation for specific occupations or industry sectors, or preparation for higher-level workforce training, including postsecondary education. Programs might also diverge based on the specific population to be served. For lower-level ELLs, some programs focus on improving English language and literacy first (bringing in work skills content only when participants progress to an intermediate level of English); others focus on contextualizing learning early on. Instruction methods also vary depending on the level of English proficiency of program participants (as well as program objectives). For example, a program may provide training exclusively in English with ESL support, provide bilingual vocational training in which ELLs' native language is used to teach job skills and English is used to teach job-related language skills, or anything in between.[69] It might also combine face-to-face instruction with online learning, which affords a more flexible schedule and a platform for self-paced learning.

TRAINING PROGRAM MODELS

Most of the wide variety of programs focused on assisting ELLs to build their job skills and improve their English language proficiency fit into one of three main models: 1) Pre- Employment Vocational ESL; 2) Incumbent Worker Vocational ESL; and 3) Bridge Programs. While some programs, especially those serving lower-level ELLs, provide purely ESL training (that may or may not connect to vocational training) this approach will not be covered in this discussion.

Pre-Employment Vocational ESL

Pre-Employment Vocational ESL refers to strategies designed to provide education and training to help ELLs improve their English language and literacy while at the same time building general or industry/occupation-specific work skills, with a primary goal of assisting participants to move relatively rapidly into employment. Program lengths vary depending on the starting English proficiency level and work-related skills of participants, as well as on the employment outcomes sought, but they are generally short in duration. Programs employ different pedagogies as well.

Pre-Employment Vocational ESL program strategies diverge widely based on their objectives. A program might strive to assist ELLs in need of immediate work to gain employment as rapidly as possible in any jobs for which they may be already qualified. Such program typically focuses on building a foundation of English language skills in the context of developing employability skills "such as goal setting, finding a match between personal preferences and available jobs, job search and applications, as well as strategies for handling a job interview."[70] These programs often incorporate general workplace communication skills as well as soft skills to help participants become familiar with workplace culture in the U.S.[71] They are also likely to provide help with job search by offering connections to specific employers and job openings (job development), and may impart basic digital literacy skills needed to search for and apply for jobs.

In lieu of providing general work readiness skills, a Pre-Employment Vocational ESL program might seek to help participants to prepare for employment in specific occupations or clusters of occupations, providing ESL contextualized to these positions. Tailoring English language instruction and occupational training to the requirements of specific jobs has proved to lead to faster and more successful job placement, retention and advancement.[72] These types of programs typically provide connections to employers and job openings within the targeted fields. They may also maintain formal or informal arrangements with employers, offering to teach participants the specific skills desired by these employers in exchange for participants receiving job opportunities. One local example of this approach is found in a partnership of Harborview Medical Center and Seattle Central Community College (SSCC), described in more detail in Appendix A. The program trains ELLs living in Seattle's Yesler Terrace public housing development for entry-level janitorial and food service jobs at the hospital, imparting the specific skills that Harborview has asked for with the expectation that the hospital will hire program completers.

Selecting the occupations and industries to be targeted by Pre-Employment Vocational ESL strategies is a matter of matching up labor market demand and entry-level job requirements with the level of English and job-specific skills that will be acquired by program participants. In turn, the skills that can be acquired by participants depends upon their starting English proficiency and skill levels, as well as program intensity and duration. It is often the case – particularly for programs aimed at lower-level ELLs – that targeted occupations are relatively low skill and low-paying, with limited opportunity for advancement. A goal of many of programs is therefore to continue to engage participants after placement in their first job to connect them to additional learning opportunities that can lead to career advancement. Pre-Employment Vocational ESL classes may also prepare participants for credentialing exams for specific occupations, which certify that they have acquired the skills required for these occupations. For example, the Winnetka Learning Center in Minnesota (see Appendix A) provides training for ELLs to acquire the nationally-recognized Child Development Associate certification needed to work as a childcare provider.[73]

Incumbent Worker Vocational ESL

When thinking about the competing needs of many ELLs to earn wages *and* to attain additional job skills and English language proficiency so that they can advance on the job or obtain better-paying employment, the value of programs designed to allow individuals to accomplish both simultaneously is clear. Being able to receive training at the workplace "often solves lack of time, transportation, resources for education" and other problems associated with trying to acquire more skills at traditional providers (e.g., community colleges) while holding down a job.[74] As mentioned, it is not common for employers to invest in training their low-skill workers, and in particular low-level ELLs who may require longer-term investments in training in order to advance. Yet examples do exist, particularly at larger employers within industries that have high concentrations of ELLs and that may have difficulty meeting their workforce needs through external recruiting. Such employers are typically found in the healthcare, hospitality and food services industries. Given the industries in which these training programs are often supported, it can be the case that, even after making improvements to their skills and English, ELL workers completing these programs gain only limited upward mobility.

Incumbent Worker Vocational ESL programs usually include ESL instruction that is contextualized to the needs of the specific industry and employer. Content is often taught by a college- or community-based ESL instructor, and can be customized to the needs of the employer. It can also incorporate online learning to provide workers flexibility to learn and practice outside of the classroom setting. Employers might provide work-related incentives to employees for participating,[75] including offering paid or unpaid release time.

Release time is of particular importance as programs that provide training before or after workers' shifts are less likely to be attended and may be less effective. There are very few local examples Incumbent Worker VESL programs, demonstrating how rare they can be. One that is currently operating is the aforementioned partnership of Harborview Medical Center and SSCC (Appendix A). In addition to training Yesler Terrace residents, the program also gives incumbent hospital workers in janitorial and food services jobs release time for customized vocational ESL training that will allow them to meet the hospital's soon- to-be instituted new job classifications. Under the new classifications, these workers will essentially be performing the same functions but will be required to possess higher levels of English proficiency, and they will also receive better pay. The training is taught by an SSCC ESL instructor with the help of hospital staff members. Seattle's Asian Counseling and Referral Services and Seattle Goodwill Industries have also worked with local employers on Incumbent Worker Vocational ESL programs.

Bridge Programs

Rather than having a short-term objective of preparing ELLs to secure employment or advance in their current jobs, Bridge Programs are intended to help individuals to quickly obtain the English language, literacy and basic skills (e.g., math, computer literacy, study skills) they need to transition to more advanced job training or postsecondary vocational programs. They are therefore most appropriate for ELLs who either don't need immediate employment or who can participate while employed. These programs "bridge" the gap between ELLs' current level of skills and the skills needed to enter and succeed in these more advanced programs. The most effective Bridge Programs seek to combine English with skills training – rather than requiring several levels of English to be completed prior to learning specific skills – in order to improve learning, increase retention rates, and to shorten the time it takes for participants to be readied for higher-level training. The content of Bridge Programs varies depending on what program completers will bridge *to.* For example, they may begin to introduce specific fields of study and job skills; they may introduce more general employability or college-going skills; and/or they may focus mainly on improving reading, math and communication skills.[76]

The most well-known examples of Bridge Programs locally are I-BEST and On-Ramps to I- BEST programs offered at the state's community colleges, which are generally described in Appendix A. One specific example is Highline Community College's "Pathfinder" course, which in one quarter orients ELLs to its healthcare programs, providing general knowledge of healthcare careers, developing industry-specific basic skills, and preparing completers for entry into the college's I-BEST healthcare programs. Another example is Everett Community College's On-Ramp to I-BEST program which prepares low-level ELL participants to enroll in several different healthcare programs at the college. This program, described in greater detail in Appendix A, is fairly unique in that it simultaneously prepares students who want rapid employment for caregiving jobs – with the help of community-based job development partner Refugee Forum – as well as bridging participants to longer-term programs at the college, such as the Certified Nursing Assistant program. Other Bridge Programs are described in Appendix A, including the well-respected Carreras en Salud and Computerized Numerical Control programs operated by Chicago's Instituto del Progreso Latino in partnership with local community colleges.

COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Not all effective programs include each and every one of the key program components described in this section. However, these elements are features of many successful programs and/or were commented on by the experts interviewed as part of this research as being important aspects of successful employment and training program strategies for ELLs.

Outreach and Accessibility

Outreach and accessibility did not explicitly emerge as key program components from a literature review of programs serving ELLs, but these elements were frequently cited in interviews with local experts as being very important. Programs should have articulated plans for how they are going to make target participants aware of the services available, including the requirements and logistics of participation. In addition, programs must be as accessible as possible to the broadest segment of the target population. For example, there is a significant unmet demand for training for ELLs that is offered during off-work hours, including weekends, as well as for classes that are offered near where the target population lives and works, especially considering transportation challenges. Whenever possible, if they are not open-enrollment, programs should seek to provide reasonably frequent and reliable start dates, and these should be published as far in advance as possible.

Effective Assessment

Successful programs serving ELLs make effective use of participant assessments to help them get the instruction and other assistance they want and need. There is general consensus that properly assessing low-level ELLs in particular can be difficult, but that the process can be improved by employing interpreters and high-quality assessment tools. Information collected in assessments should include: 1) educational background; 2) native language literacy; 3) English language proficiency; 4) English language literacy; 5) occupational skill proficiency; and 6) work history.[77] In addition, information should be gathered on educational and career goals, a two-way conversation in which participants are also receiving information on what their options may be given their current skill sets, financial needs and timelines, and labor market opportunities. Financial, family and legal needs should be assessed, as well as other potential barriers to training or employment success. Assessment techniques often include one-on-one interviews, but group exercises can also be effective complements.

Connections to Local Labor Market Demand

Programs that are designed to prepare ELLs for specific occupations and industries should be tied to local labor market demand. That is, programs should target an ample and growing supply of entry-level job openings and employers that are willing – or better yet, incented because of worker shortages – to hire program participants once they receive the training that the program provides.[78] Programs should clearly tie the level of English and vocational skills that are taught to the targeted jobs. While it may not be feasible for programs designed to help lower-level ELLs achieve rapid employment, targeted occupations and industries ideally would provide career growth opportunities for participants who continue to gain English proficiency and skills over time. Ultimately, programs should seek to place participants on career pathways that culminate at some point in marketable credentials. A recognized credential with value in the local labor market can be particularly important for immigrants who may lack informal networks or have difficulty communicating their qualifications.[79]

Programs that are not designed to prepare individuals for specific occupations, such as those focused on providing ELLs general workplace readiness skills, should consider including in their curricula an overview of the local labor market. Understanding which occupations provide a significant number of job openings, which industries are growing or declining, and the wages and educational requirements associated with different types of occupations, is invaluable to help participants make good choices when seeking employment or planning to pursue additional education and training in the future.

Addressing of Cross-Cultural Barriers

Regardless of strategy, effective programs serving ELLs must account for cross-cultural barriers. For example, a challenge faced serving the Seattle immigrant community involves the large number of recently-arrived refugees from Iran, Bhutan and Afghanistan who (along with thousands of Somali immigrants) are predominantly Muslim. Many women within these communities may have had limited education or opportunity to work outside the home in their native countries, and may now be seeking employment and education for the first time (perhaps while still fully responsible for household duties and child-rearing). These women may require a different training approach from other subgroups of immigrants. Programs should be familiar with the cultural backgrounds of the specific groups and individual ELLs they are intending to serve, and adjust their tactics accordingly.

Enhancing Digital Literacy

Helping ELLs improve their digital literacy is increasingly being viewed as a critical component of any short- or long-term strategy to assist them to connect to employment and/or training. This serves two related purposes. First, regardless of their English language proficiency or specific job-related skill sets, ELLs need to gain sufficient familiarity with computers and the internet in order to successfully find and apply for employment. Today, not only are most open positions posted online, but many now require completing and filing of an online application. In addition, basic computer skills are required to complete a resume, and more advanced skills, including the use of social media, can be deployed to build informal networks that can lead to employment. Beyond the critical role it plays in the process of finding and applying for work, basic digital literacy is increasingly important to qualify for jobs, and in particularly higher-skill, better-paying positions. Earlier research by Seattle Jobs Initiative found that even for most entry-level positions in the Seattle/King County area, employers are expecting that employees have basic computer skills, including the ability to compose professional e-mails to communicate with colleagues and customers and to utilize Microsoft Office Suite programs such as Outlook, Word and Excel.[80]

Workplace Literacy/Soft Skills

Whether a program is designed to prepare an individual for employment generally or for a specific occupation, workplace literacy/soft skills are imperative. Earlier research by Seattle Jobs Initiative found that most employers find soft skills to be as or more important than technical skills for candidates for their entry-level positions.[81] Many low-level ELLs – in particular new immigrants – have limited or no experience in the U.S. workforce (and many have had very different experiences, if any, working in their home countries). As a result, they need to quickly gain the soft skills associated with American workplace norms. This includes everything from punctuality and reliability to wearing appropriate attire, and from communicating effectively with coworkers and supervisors to conflict resolution and team work. Further, training in soft skills should also include learning how to interview effectively as well as develop networking skills. The native cultures of new immigrants, as well as language barriers they may face, can make it particularly challenging for some individuals to learn the soft skills they need to successfully secure employment, so it is important that adequate time be spent imparting and practicing these skills.

College Navigation and Education Planning

For community college programs as well as community-based programs designed to connect ELLs to college (either immediately or as part of a longer-term strategy), college navigation is essential. College navigation describes a set of (typically) community-based services that can be provided to program participants to impart information about college-going, usually through ongoing, intensive one-on-one advising or coaching.[82] Navigation includes, but is not limited to, helping individuals to: 1) prepare for college admissions testing; 2) select the right college, program of study and specific courses; 3) hone their study skills; 4) complete the admissions and registration process, including accessing and maximizing their financial aid; 5) persist to completion (through coaching and encouragement, help balancing school, work and family life, and accessing college-based supports); and 6) preparing for and securing employment, including prior to program completion, if needed.[83]

Providing college navigation support to ELLs is perhaps best done by community-based organizations, both because they likely have greater familiarity with the immigrant populations they are focused on serving and because they can provide more intensive, one-on-one coaching. However, community colleges can certainly offer these services as well. For example, Highline Community College, which serves a large population of ELLs, operates the Transition Resource and Referral Center to help its Adult Basic Education and ESL students to navigate college. The Center was established in recognition of the higher level of one-on-one support required by ELLs to develop their college knowledge and consequently transition from ABE/ESL courses to college-level programs (see Appendix A).

For many if not most low-level ELLs, advancing to a living-wage career will mean enrolling in and completing a college credential at some point, which is why college navigation becomes so critical. Even for program strategies designed to help low-level ELLs obtain rapid employment, elements of college navigation can be integrated early on in order to lay the groundwork for participants to continue on their educational pathways post-employment. This work can focus first on helping individuals to understand the value of postsecondary attainment in the labor market and, for immigrant parents, to their children's future success. Further, it can focus on helping participants to create educational plans that set out their long-term career objectives and the steps they will need to take to achieve these.

Contextualization

The importance of contextualization to the effectiveness employment and training programs for ELLs has already been touched on. To briefly reiterate, contextualization in the case of these programs means providing English language and literacy instruction in the context of teaching the terminology and skills necessary for general work readiness, for securing entry-level jobs in specific occupations or career fields, or for preparing for entry into specific training programs. Contextualization has several benefits for program participants. It has been demonstrated that ELLs can learn English better through contextualized, hands-on approaches, and that they are more likely to persist in contextualized classes because they are viewed as more relevant to their career goals. Moreover, combining English language with job skills training can decrease the time it takes for participants to be ready for employment or more advanced training. There are multiple examples of contextualized learning among the programs described in Appendix A.

Compression/Acceleration

Ultimately, lower-level ELLs face lengthy training pathways in acquiring the English language proficiency, job-related skills and college credentials required to secure living-wage careers. Anything that can be done to accelerate their ability to advance along these pathways – to compress the time to completion – will be beneficial. Contextualizing training is perhaps the primary acceleration strategy, as the integration of English and basic skills learning with job skills training can shorten the time needed for program completion, whether the goal is obtaining the requisite skills for employment or a college credential. If the primary or eventual goal of a program is a college credential, programs might be designed to allow ELLs to earn college-level credits while they are honing their English and/or obtaining entry-level job skills in order to compress time to completion. There are other ways to accelerate learning that have to do with accessibility rather than the content of training. This includes offering intensive training schedules,

which can promote learning,[84] and providing training at off-work hours in convenient locations. It can also involve online learning that not only affords accessibility but allows individuals to progress at their own pace. The aforementioned On-Ramps to I-BEST and I-BEST are local examples of accelerated learning. In addition, a new online learning initiative, called Project I-DEA, will be launched at several of the state's community colleges the fall of 2013. A partnership of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the program will provide online and in-person ESL and technology coaching to help ELLs more quickly improve their English and digital literacy (see Appendix A).

Career Pathways/Continuous Learning

"Career pathways" refers to strategies in which education and training programs, typically those designed to lead to a postsecondary credential, are broken down into smaller articulated units. Completion of each unit qualifies a participant to secure a progressively better job, helping them to advance along a career ladder in a specific field or sector.[85] Many low-skill individuals have a long road to completion of a college credential, often accompanied by a need to exit and re-enter training due to a need to work. Career pathways are designed to address this reality by affording individuals the opportunity to meet their long-term educational objectives in more readily attainable segments that allow them to transition to employment after the completion of each segment with a more advanced, employer-recognized skill set in their field. And when ready, career pathways allow individuals to seamlessly transition back into their educational pathways.

If the best opportunity for securing a living-wage job is a postsecondary credential, and lower-level ELLs typically face both long paths to reach this level of attainment as well as a competing need for immediate employment, then career pathways make sense for programs designed to serve this population. In short, career pathways can provide a framework to align education and support services to provide "a seamless, coherent path that moves [ELL] students from native language literacy and beginning levels of ESL to English language instruction and job training or employment."[86] While career pathways strategies are most often found within community colleges and accordingly might be extended down into college-based bridge programs, they can also be utilized in community-based Vocational ESL programs, as is the case with the Northern Virginia Family Services Training Futures program, described in Appendix A.

A career pathways approach can help address the critical challenge faced by many low-level ELLs (and the programs that serve them) of balancing the need for rapid employment, often in jobs with low wages and limited opportunities for advancement, with the need to acquire significantly higher levels of skills and English in order to obtain *living-wage* careers. Even if the short-term goal of a program is to assist an ELL to obtain whatever job he or she can get quickly with limited skills, if that program is structured as part of a career pathway it then becomes a training step along the educational continuum, rather than an end in itself. Such a program serves this purpose by helping participants to complete education and careers plans that get them thinking about continuing on long-term educational pathways even after obtaining initial employment, and by seeking to align the training provided with more advanced training programs in the community or at the community colleges. A key aspect of making a program part of a career pathway is re-engagement of program participants once they complete and move on to the work place to help them continuously advance their English proficiency and job skills.

Job Development and Employer Connections

Whether or not employment is the immediate goal of a program designed to serve ELLs, effective programs provide participants opportunities to connect to jobs available to workers with their skill sets.[87] As set out earlier in this research, ELLs and particularly new immigrants can be at a serious disadvantage when competing for jobs, even those for which their current level of English proficiency, skills, experience and education qualifies them. Some of the reasons have been mentioned: employer discrimination, lack of informal employment networks, and a lack of familiarity with the culture of the U.S. workplace that diminishes the rate of success in applying for jobs.[88]

Programs serving ELLs can assist their participants not only by honing their workplace literacy/general employability skills, but by helping them connect to specific employers and job opportunities for which they are qualified. Connection to employers is something that community-based organizations are particularly experienced in doing, more so than community colleges. Organizations focused on serving immigrants should have well-developed relationships with specific local employers who are apt to hire these individuals. For long-term training programs, including Bridge Programs, the inclusion of internships may be very effective not only at providing ELLs with job experience and a real-time opportunity to practice their English, but also at demonstrating to employers the ability of these individuals to be valuable employees, thus enhancing the chances that they will hire ELLs. The Northern Virginia Family Services Training Futures program, for example, provides ELLs preparing for office occupations internships with local business partners (see Appendix A).

Case Management and Support Services

Case management and support services are key components of successful employment and training programs targeted to low-income ELLs. Ideally, for programs designed to help low-level ELLs quickly secure employment, these supports would continue post-job placement to help ensure a successful transition to work, job retention and assistance and encouragement in pursuing additional education and training needed to advance to better-paying work. This is particularly important because ELLs can be cut off from some public benefits once they obtain work, even though it may be relatively low-wage.

Local experts interviewed generally agreed that the number one support service need for low-income ELLs is transportation assistance, which is typically provided in the form of bus passes. This support must often be accompanied by guidance on how to access and navigate the public transportation system. Childcare was also listed as a primary need, followed by a less frequent but reportedly growing need for housing. While all of these support services may be available to many low-income ELLs, it is often the case, particularly for newer immigrants, that they are not aware of this assistance or that they are uncomfortable with the idea of government supports. In addition to assessing individuals to learn what supports they may need, good case managers will familiarize ELLs with the concept of public supports, make them aware of what is available, and connect them to services. Beyond college navigation assistance, job development and support services, case managers can also facilitate the socioeconomic integration of ELLs (and their ability to work) by assisting them with obtaining drivers licenses, opening bank accounts, using credit wisely, and so forth.

STRATEGIES FOR HIGHER-SKILLED IMMIGRANTS

Many among the local immigrant population can be considered *high-skill,* possessing a college credential from their home countries. About 30 percent of immigrants in Washington State have at least a B.A., and this number is very likely higher in Seattle and King County. Yet, as has been mentioned, it is estimated that about one in five immigrants with a four-year degree works in an unskilled occupation, typically with low wages and limited opportunities for advancement.[89] The primary causes of what has been termed "brain waste" are lack of English language proficiency; unfamiliarity with U.S. work place norms (limited soft skills); lack of knowledge, including the basic computer skills, needed to effectively apply and interview for available positions; and the inability to translate foreign work experience and credentials into accomplishments that U.S. employers will recognize, which can be due to language barriers and/or state-, industry- or employer-based credentialing policies that do not recognize non-U.S. credentials. Other higher-skill ELLs may have difficulty securing well-paying employment due to a lack of established networks and even employer discrimination.

Both the literature reviewed and experts interviewed were in general agreement that first and foremost, high-skill ELLs need high-quality ESL classes to improve their English language and

literacy. Since these individuals have significant job skills yet diverse employment goals, these classes can be contextualized to provide general work readiness or employability skills.[90] This Vocational ESL approach can incorporate the general vocabulary of the U.S. workplace and provide instruction on soft skills as well as basic computer skills to improve participants' chances of successfully securing employment that suits their respective skill sets. Because these high-skill immigrants are more accustomed to learning environments than are low-skill immigrants, many tend to improve their English relatively quickly. Further, as one practitioner interviewed reported, many high-skill ELLs, once they overcome the barriers preventing them from obtaining their first "good" job, tend to quickly advance in their careers.

Some programs targeted to high-skill ELLs are focused less on language acquisition and building general employability skills, and more on helping these immigrants transfer the professional skills and credentials they have acquired in their native countries to the U.S. labor market. This often includes helping these individuals improve their English proficiency while learning more about the U.S. industry and occupational equivalents to the professions in which they have been trained. These programs may also seek to prepare these immigrants for board certification tests or to navigate their way through state or industry licensing procedures. Locally, the Puget Sound Welcome Back Center operates this type of program at Highline Community College. Launched in 2008, the Welcome Back Center is specifically focused on helping immigrant healthcare professionals to transition to jobs within the U.S. healthcare system.[91] There are similar Welcome Back Centers in many other states as well, also focused on the healthcare sector. Another organization focused on helping high-skill, ready-to-work immigrants connect to employers is Upwardly Global, described in Appendix A. It is important to note that in many cases it is state governments that oversee professional licensing procedures, such that the ability of high-skill immigrants to transfer their credentials/licenses to U.S. professions may be an issue to be addressed through state policy action.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROGRAM INVESTMENT

There are multiple strategies for assisting ELLs to acquire the English language and work-related skills they need in order to secure employment and begin to advance up career ladders. Because of the diverse skill sets, barriers, and short- and long-term employment and educational objectives of ELLs, there is no single *best* strategy for everyone. Assisting low-skill, low-level ELLs is a particular challenge for the reasons described. Effective program models for serving ELLs, as well as the key components of these programs, should be considered in determining the strategies in which to invest. Any strategy selected for investment should be clear about the target group to be served and its key characteristics, including: native language and literacy; current educational attainment; income level; current employment status; immigrant status; and English skill level. It should take into account what the target group identifies as its most pressing employment, training and support services needs, and be clear about how the specific intervention will address these needs.[92] In addition to these considerations, devising a strategy for ELL program investment requires answering some larger questions in order to describe a theory of change.

DEFINING CLEAR OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Programmatic investments in employment and training strategies for ELLs should, of course, have clearly defined objectives and measures for whether these objectives are being met. This can be more difficult than it may initially seem. If the end-goal is assisting lower-level ELLs to advance to living-wage jobs, then the overall strategy is apt to be one that involves an extended training pathway – perhaps culminating in a postsecondary credential – that may take years to complete. This lengthy pathway may be a continuum of steps that build on one another, likely to include

acquiring increasing levels of English proficiency, gaining general work readiness skills and basic digital literacy, acquiring job-specific skills, enrolling in college and earning a credential. This extended pathway is rarely one that is a straight line, and interspersed with the skill-building steps will likely be other important milestones, such as finding stable housing or obtaining a first or better job, even if it is low-wage and does not have the potential for career advancement.

Given the long journey to a living-wage career for the typical low-skill, low-level ELL and the multitude of training and non-training steps that may constitute this journey, investing limited resources in programs to assist these individuals means making difficult choices pertaining to the scope and objectives of this investment. For example, an investment might be made in programs that seek to support ELLs to complete the entire pathway to a living-wage career, including attaining a college credential and a career job. Alternatively, investment might be made in programs that support ELLs to complete one or a series of specific steps along the pathway, such as:

- Gaining one or more levels of English proficiency;
- Acquiring general labor market and/or work-readiness knowledge and skills;
- Acquiring job-related skills for specific occupations, industries or employers;
- Obtaining an occupational certification or license;
- Completing an education/career plan to demonstrate commitment to a career pathway;
- Enrolling in a pre-college bridge program;
- Enrolling in a college-level program;
- Completing a postsecondary credential with value in the local labor market;
- Completing other steps toward socioeconomic integration, such as obtaining stable housing, passing the citizenship test, or obtaining a drivers' license;
- Securing "subsistence" level employment (that does not necessarily meet any specified standards for wages, benefits, FTE, or career advancement);
- Attaining career/wage advancement with a current employer;
- Securing a "career" job (training/credential-related; meeting specified wage, benefits, FTE and career advancement standards)

An investment strategy in services for ELLs should be precise in which of these objectives – intended to lead to the broader goal of helping these individuals obtain living-wage careers – it is supporting, and develop clear measures for each of these.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND ACCESS

With investment objectives and measures of success clearly defined, the types of programs in which investment might be made can be discerned, as can the subset of ELLs who will be most appropriate for these strategies. As has been stated, employment and training strategies for ELLs, even with clearly-defined objectives, are not one-size-fits-all, so more than a single program design can be effective in meeting investment goals. That said, the objectives will dictate general program model(s) employed (Vocational ESL, Incumbent Worker Vocational ESL, Bridge Program), and effective program designs should make liberal use of the many effective program elements (best practices) described previously.

Strategic objectives will further determine which ELLs will be served. Even within the low-level ELL population, some experts interviewed believe that Level 1 and perhaps many Level 2 ELLs (on the 6-point scale) may not be ready for any significant job-related training, but should focus on intensive English improvement, perhaps at most incorporating general workplace literacy skills. There seems to be much greater concensus that Level 3 ELLs are generally ready for more contextualized learning. There are some fundamental questions related to designing or investing in effective programs for ELLs that will determine who and how many people these programs will serve, not to mention the outcomes they will get. Some of these questions have been set forth by the Migration Policy Institute (speaking specifically to educational programs but they are apropos to community-based employment and training programs as well) and will be paraphrased and adapted here.[93]

- ACCESS VS. RIGOR – there is a natural tension between the desire to increase access to training programs for ELLs and the desire to maintain the necessary rigor of these programs to ensure they are able to impart the desired content. This question arises when, for example, determining how low of a level of English an immigrant can have and still qualify for a program.
- MAINSTREAMING VS. SHELTERING – this question is most frequently debated within the educational system (particularly K-12) and asks whether ELLs are best served by including them in mainstream programs or by placing them in sheltered learning environments focused on their specific needs. For employment and training programs serving low-level ELLs, a related question is at what point their English is sufficient to articulate to mainstream (non-ELL) workforce programs.

- SCALE VS. INTENSITY – this question, which applies well beyond programs designed for ELLs, posits whether it is better to serve a greater number of individuals or to focus limited resources to provide more intensive services to fewer individuals. Low-skill, low- level ELLs will normally require more extended services if a program's intended outcome is completion of long-term education and training pathways and living-wage jobs; less extended services may be needed if the intended outcome is making measurable English language gains or rapid attachment to the labor market. These objectives will determine the number a program can serve.
- FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS VS. HIGH EXPECTATIONS – another question frequently debated within the educational system (particularly K-12), but applicable to employment and training programs for ELLs as well, asks whether a program should be flexible to meet the needs of ELLs (perhaps to lower anticipated outcomes and/or increase the time available to meet these outcomes) or whether it should hold these individuals to higher standards and expectations.

MAXIMIZING IMPACT BY BUILDING ON CURRENT CAPACITY

Investments in employment and training strategies for ELLs, whether made in support of new programs or to build the capacity of successful existing programs, may have greater impact if they facilitate connections among current efforts to assist the target population. Taking an expansive view of the initiatives, programs and resources that are now in place – or that could be put in place – to assist ELLs affords a unique opportunity to make investments that can lead to better alignment of programs and resources and consequently have a greater overall impact. What follows are a few ideas for accomplishing this at the local level.

Spurring Community-Based Organization – Community College Linkages

Some local experts interviewed for this research stated a belief that while there currently exist a multitude of different programs providing employment and training services to ELLs – both at community-based organizations and community-colleges – overall there are very poor linkages between these efforts. At a basic level, it would be beneficial if these programs were aware of one another, potentially via a centralized online information source and/or opportunities to periodically convene. This would help these organizations, as well as ELLs seeking assistance, to gain a picture of the training options that are available in the community. It would also help providers to make appropriate cross-referrals. Beyond this, if the long-term objective is to help ELLs to eventually reach and succeed in postsecondary programs, then community-based employment and training programs and colleges must create better linkages between their programs and services. This may take a number of different forms, including: 1) working together to ensure that community-based

programs *bridge* to specific college-based programs; 2) allowing community-based programs to qualify for college credits, where appropriate; and 3) partnerships in which community-based organizations provide college navigation, support services and/or employer connections to ELL students at the colleges. In general, community-based organizations and community colleges can work together to align their respective programs for ELLs into career pathways, such that all training provided is part of a continuum.

Building on Community Initiatives

Initiatives are currently underway that, though they may be considered peripheral to the workforce development system, could be valuable assets in increasing the impact of an investment in employment and training for ELLs. For example, the Seattle Public School system – via Head Start, the Refugee School Impact Grant program, and other efforts – currently offers programs for immigrant parents help them support the success of their children in school. These well-trusted programs might provide an avenue for employment and training program recruitment or for disseminating information on the labor market, workforce readiness, and/or employment and training options. A similar platform might be provided by the work now being undertaken by the City of Seattle's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (see Appendix A), which is conducting outreach efforts to new immigrants in the city focused on increasing access to government resources. Finally, there are multiple efforts focused primarily on increasing English literacy among ELLs, including innovative online learning initiatives such as OneAmerica's English Innovations and Project I-DEA (see Appendix A). An investment might facilitate linkages between the programs it supports and new technology initiatives like these to maximize its impact.

Alignment with State & Federal Investments: Basic Food E&T & LEP Pathway (TANF)

A local investment might have more impact if it were aligned – or complementary to – other significant public investments in employment and training services for ELLs, including the Basic Food Employment

& Training (BFET) program and the Limited English Proficient (LEP) Pathway program, which primarily service ELLs enrolled in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

Washington State's BFET program, operated by the state's Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), supports employment and training services for low-income residents who are enrolled in Basic Food (food stamps). These services – which can include any combination of job search, job readiness, vocational training and basic education, as well as qualifying support services – are provided by participating community colleges (nearly all of the state's college participate) and community-based organizations. BFET builds the capacity of colleges and CBOs to serve greater numbers because it provides 50 percent matching funds via the federal Supplementation Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) to these entities based on their expenditures for BFET services.

An investment in employment and training services for ELLs can seek to leverage BFET to increase its impact by funding community-based organizations and/or colleges offering BFET services. At present, all Seattle community colleges and at least ten Seattle-based CBOs are BFET providers. There are restrictions on who qualifies for BFET among ELLs, however. First, they must be low-income (under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level) and not on TANF. In addition, immigrants who are not U.S. citizens must meet fairly stringent criteria to qualify. Refugees and asylees qualify, but those who do not fit this category – especially new immigrants – typically do not qualify.[94] And it is also true that among ELLs who do qualify for BFET, some are reluctant to enroll in Basic Food because of the perceived stigma attached to doing so, or because of a mistrust of government.

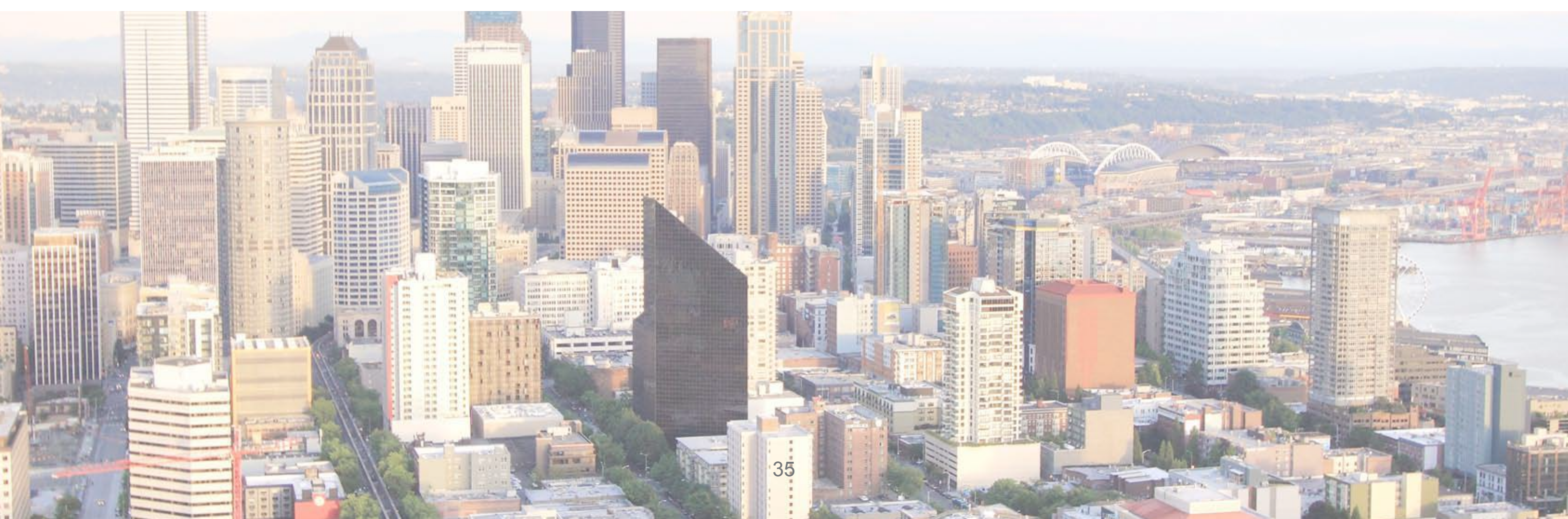
In addition, Washington's Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA, part of DSHS), is currently investing significant resources in employment and training services for ELLs in the greater Seattle area through its LEP Pathway Program. Described in more detail in Appendix A, this program mainly serves individuals receiving cash assistance through the TANF program, and supports ESL, job search assistance, job placement, job retention, skills training and support services. Services are provided through community colleges and community-based organizations, including several in the greater Seattle area. Due to the pressure for TANF participants to secure rapid employment, ORIA reports difficulty in its ability to support longer-term training efforts through the LEP Pathway Program. On the other hand, community-based organizations often view ELLs enrolled in LEP Pathway as having more time than other ELLs they serve for training prior to employment, since these individuals have cash support from TANF.

CONCLUSION

Today, there are increasing numbers of U.S. immigrants seeking gainful entry into or advancement within the labor market, and economies will lean heavily on the availability of skilled immigrant workers in order to grow. With a significant percentage of immigrants possessing low educational attainment compounded by limited English proficiency, it is imperative that states and localities that are most responsible for the socioeconomic integration of their immigrant populations to step up their efforts to skill up these individuals. This presents a significant challenge, as the wide diversity among immigrants' cultural backgrounds, educational and employment histories and objectives, and barriers, mean that there is no single employment and training strategy that will prove most effective for everyone.

What is clear is that, for lower-level ELLs in particular, gaining the job-related skills and English proficiency typically required for a *living-wage* career can be a journey of many years. This is not only because these individuals start with low skills, but because the attainment of more skills and education is often necessarily interrupted by the need for immediate (and often low-skill/low-wage) employment. It is also the result of several other key barriers that can be more readily addressed, from poorly-designed programs to insufficient access to information on the labor market, ESL training and support services.

Despite the challenges, there are many programs and practices that have proven effective at serving ELLs, meeting their oft-competing short- and long-term employment and training needs. These programs and practices should be considered by localities in devising strategies to support the transition of ELLs to the workplace and their successful socioeconomic integration. Any successful strategy should also clearly define the subset of ELLs to be served, the outcomes to be achieved, and the measures for success. And whenever possible, it should facilitate partnerships and alignment of current employment and efforts serving ELLs in order to maximize impact.



APPENDIX A: PROGRAM PROFILES

This appendix provides examples of local and non-local employment and training programs serving English Language Learners. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but instead to provide a representative sample of various program models.

I. LOCAL PROGRAMS

Community College-Based Programs (including those in partnership with community-based organizations)

I-BEST

Washington's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model has been well-described so it will only be summarized here. The team-taught program, instituted at the state's community colleges, combines adult education (including ESL) with college-level workforce training courses. This integrated approach is designed to help students with low basic skills and limited English proficiency to more quickly gain college credits and transition from ABE/ESL to college coursework and credentials. Many ESL students have not been able to take advantage of I-BEST because programs are designed to serve those with higher levels of English language proficiency (at least level 4) in order, according to college faculty, to maintain the programs' rigor. Thus, while ESL students comprise roughly half of all adult education students in Washington, they represent less than a quarter of I-BEST students.

On-Ramps to I-BEST (Skill Link)

Addressing the restriction of I-BEST to higher level English Language Learners, the On- Ramp to I-BEST program was created by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and launched in the 2011-12 academic year. The program is intended to serve young adults (18 to 24) with lower levels of basic skills/ English proficiency (levels 1–3) to accelerate their readiness to connect to I-BEST programs. On-Ramp to I-BEST programs are also team-taught and combine literacy with technical skills, college and career exploration and wrap around supports.

Project I-DEA

A project of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Integrated Digital English Acquisition (Project I-DEA) was launched at select community colleges and community-based organizations in the fall of 2013. Building on the *English Innovations* program approach of OneAmerica, and targeted to low-level English Language Learners, Project I-DEA will offer English language courses that blend online and in-person instruction and that are designed to build both language skills and digital literacy. Students will receive loaned laptops and will be team taught by an ESL instructor and a technology coach. Plans are to serve 1,600 students during a three-year demonstration period.

Seattle Central Community College – Harborview Hospital On-Ramp

This recently-instituted program originated when Seattle Housing Authority reached out to Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) and Harborview to help residents of its Yesler Terrace public housing development – who are low-income and primarily ELLs – to connect with jobs at the nearby hospital. Many Yesler Terrace residents were nearly qualified for food services and custodial positions at the hospital but simply needed to improve their English. A partnership developed whereby a SCCC ESL instructor provides English instruction onsite at Harborview to participants, who have to be ELL level 3 or higher. Instruction is contextualized to the jobs to be filled, and combines face-to-face with online training to improve digital literacy (laptops are provided).

Beyond Yesler Terrace residents, SCCC and Harborview are partnering to provide additional ESL instruction to incumbent workers at the Hospital (again, in food services and custodial positions). Harborview is currently in the process of reclassifying these jobs to require a higher level of English proficiency – and offer better pay – and many current workers need to improve their English to meet the new language threshold. Harborview offers release time to workers to receive training, and provides guest speakers who offer job skills-related content. SCCC classifies the incumbent worker training at Harborview as an I-BEST program, and the Yesler program as an "On-Ramp to Work" program. Only two quarters have been completed of these programs, so an evaluation of their outcomes has yet to be conducted. Clearly, participants hired or retained by Harborview will be employed in relatively low-paying positions with limited advancement opportunities, but they will have full-time jobs with benefits. SCCC is including information on career pathways in its training to get participants thinking about continuing their education in the future.

Everett Community College Healthcare On-Ramp to I-BEST

The Everett Community College (ECC) Healthcare On-Ramp to I-BEST program is included in this Appendix because it is frequently cited as one of the rare examples of an On-Ramp to I-BEST that not only prepares students for I-BEST, but also for rapid employment if that is the preferred short-term objective. The program is designed for ELLs levels 2 and 3 and provides ESL contextualized to the general healthcare field. Participants wanting rapid employment can quickly transition to jobs in the care-giving field after 12 weeks of instruction with the help of a partner community-based organization, Refugee and Immigrant Services Northwest, which maintains relationships with employers in the care-giving field. Students may also continue on to transition to short-term training for Certified Nursing Assistant, medical transcription, phlebotomy or other healthcare-related programs. Intensive counseling is provided to students to help address their personal and academic barriers.

Highline Community College – Transition Referral and Resource Center

Highline Community College's Transition Referral and Resource Center provides about 1,000 immigrants annually with one-on-one advising services to help them transition from ESL into college-credit courses and to persist toward a credential. The Center is focused primarily on higher-level ELLs, and was created to respond to the fact that very few ABE/ESL students were ever enrolling in college-level programs.

Highline Community College – Intensive ESL/Integration

Highline Community College has recently launched a new ESL program targeted to low-level ELLs (levels 1 and 2) that provides intensive English and that is focused on helping students to start to integrate as fast as possible into their communities. This includes instruction on general job readiness and finding/applying for jobs, setting up daycare for children, helping children navigate the school system, general financial literacy, and related topics. Indicators include primarily language gains but also whether students take steps toward integration such as opening bank accounts, using public transportation, completing phone calls to make appointments, and so on.

Clover Park Technical College – United Union of Roofers, Local 153

This partnership is an example of union-based training efforts for ELLs, offered by United Union of Roofers, Local 153, in partnership with Clover Park Technical College in Pierce County, Washington. Focused on serving Latino immigrants with intermediate or higher-level English, the program integrates ESL instruction and an apprenticeship in roofing, and combines classroom and in-the-field learning. Because students are starting in an apprenticeship program, they are earning as they learn (up to $17 per hour). The apprenticeship lasts two years, after which apprentices advance to journeymen wages, nearly $30 per hour.

Community-Based Programs

OneAmerica English Innovations Program

English Innovations seeks to respond to the unmet demand for English Language Learning programs by making them more accessible. The program utilizes technology and community access so that learning English is not tied to a classroom setting but can be done almost anywhere. It has been used at job sites (Sea-Tac Airport and Tutta Bella) as well as community-based organizations and public libraries. Students receive free laptops and learning takes place online (through a partnership with Live Mocha) with the help of technology coaches and volunteers. The program includes three 12-week cycles that include pre- and post-testing to measure language gains.

Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) – Multiple Programs

Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) describes itself as "a multi-ethnic, community-based organization that provides comprehensive culturally and linguistically appropriate services to refugee and immigrant communities throughout King and Snohomish Counties". It operates in ten sites, and via bilingual and bicultural services helps immigrants and refugees gain English and job-related skills, find employment, and meet other objectives. ReWA's Education and Vocational Training program provides ESL classes, as well as skills training to WorkFirst participants (those on TANF) through a registered nursing assistant program and a State Training and Registry System (STAR) basic childcare program leading to certification as childcare teachers. Trainings are essentially full-time and include classroom instruction and internships. Participants also receive workshops on job readiness, pre-employment ESL and computer basics, as well as wrap around supports.

Asian Counseling & Referral Service – Multiple Programs

Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) provides a multitude of human services, employment and behavioral health programs to Asian Pacific Americans in King County. It is the largest multiservice organization serving these communities in the Northwest. ACRS provides employment and training programs for its target service population as well as low-income jobseekers. Programs include community college-based training programs (healthcare, office, manufacturing, and others); customized, industry-specific Vocational ESL courses; 20-hour job readiness training; and worksite literacy classes. ACRS also provides career counseling, job placement, job retention, case management and wrap around support services.

Casa Latina

Casa Latina provides a Day Workers' Center that connects immigrants – primarily Spanish-speaking – with temporary employment (that can lead to full-time, permanent jobs). Those served by the Center receive training in on-the-job health and safety, including key English terminology related to these critical facets of employment. Casa Latina also provides education programs, including free ESL courses that are focused on contextualizing English language learning specifically to helping participants to attain long-term employment and self-sufficiency. ESL classes are offered off-work hours, six days per week. Casa Latina also provides workshops on various topics related to integrating into the community and individual and worker rights. Finally, Casa Latina has recently instituted a mobile computer lab, teaching ELLs basic and intermediate computer skills in Spanish.

Puget Sound Training Center

The Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC) is a nonprofit based in Renton, Washington, that works to provide training and employment services to individuals with limited skills, education and English language proficiency who are un- or under-employed. It trains clients of the state's Labor and Industry and Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and also works with Refugee Federation Service Center to provide training under an ORIA-funded project (LEP Pathway). Clients are generally ELL level 2 or higher. PSTC's training programs, which run from 4–36 weeks, include basic computer skills, customer service, forklift operation, and warehouse/distribution logistics, with most graduates placed in warehouse jobs. PSTC also offers workshops in job readiness and computer skills and an ESL class in partnership with Renton Technical College. It also offers case management, job placement and job retention services.

Port Jobs – Multiple Programs

Port Jobs offers several programs that serve individuals seeking employment or advancement in Airport-related jobs, many of whom are ELLs. Port Jobs helps connect jobseekers to airport-related employers, work which includes assisting jobseekers to apply for these jobs and access community-based supports. Airport University, offered in partnership with South Seattle Community College and Highline Community College, provides flexibly-scheduled, credit-bearing, job-related courses to airport employees to help them advance to better jobs. Course offerings include: supervision/leadership, basic computer skills, online classes, job search basics, and more. A newer initiative of Port Jobs, Whole Family Jobs Pipeline, is targeted specifically to low-income ELLs to increase

their access to jobs at the airport. The Pipeline provides pre-employment training, computer skills, and job readiness, coupled with ESL and wrap around supports.

Literacy Source

Based in the Fremont neighborhood of Seattle, Literacy Source provides ESL classes (all levels), ESL tutoring, computer literacy skills, workplace basic skills, and a high school diploma program. Most training is offered onsite, though Literacy Source has partnerships with the King County Correctional Facility, schools, community centers and churches in both Seattle and South King County to offer classes offsite. ESL classes are free and provide a variety of structures (self-study, one-on-one, small groups, and larger classes). Classes meet twice per week for 90 minutes, and participants must agree to attend class regularly (at least 12 hours per month) for at least three months. Literacy Source also provides high school completion programs (GED and NEDP) and offers employers customized, on-site English language classes for ELL employees.

Seattle Goodwill Industries

Seattle Goodwill Industries provides employment and training services to low-income individuals throughout Western Washington at ten job training centers. The agency provides several ESL classes for low- and intermediate-level ELLs, including classes that are contextualized to provide general workplace readiness/ customer service skills. ESL classes run two to four times per week. In addition, Goodwill offers online job search and basic computer skills classes for ELLs, as well as workshops for ELLs on interviewing, selling oneself to employers and an introduction to the American workplace.

Jewish Family Service

Jewish Family Service's Refugee & Immigrant Service Centers provide refugees and immigrants with ESL classes, employment assistance and related social services. Employment services include employment assessment, job readiness, employment counseling, job placement and job retention. The target population also receives assistance with low-cost housing, citizenship applications, childcare (for parents attending ESL classes), and other support and referral services.

Labor-Based Programs

SEIU 1199NW Employer Training Fund

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 1199NW, a local union branch representing around 10,000 healthcare workers in Washington State, has developed a training program for member employees as part of its labor-management partnership with local healthcare employers, including Swedish Medical Center, Group Health Cooperative, Northwest Hospital, Valley Medical Center and Highline Medical Center. The Training Fund offers ESL workshops for incumbent healthcare workers at these employers (most of whom are Level 3 or 4 English speakers and are working in environmental services, parking and dietary services positions) to help them improve their

English. Workshops are offered onsite and off hours, and are contextualized to participants' current occupations in the healthcare field. While SEIU 1199NW has no formal agreement with employers creating pathways for workers who improve their English to advance to higher-level positions, the intent is that more doors will be opened to workers with better English. SEIU 1199NW staff also encourages workers to gain more skills and education at local community colleges, and the Training Fund provides college readiness workshops as well as tuition, case management and tutoring support for workers who enroll in college programs, such as I-BEST, as long as they maintain their employment at least part-time. The Training Fund supports about fifty individuals a year in its ESL workshops; it provides tuition assistance to about 600 individuals annually (though not all of these are ELLs).

State and Local Government Programs

City of Seattle's Immigrant and Refugee Job Readiness Training Program

Launched in the spring of 2012 by the City of Seattle's Department of Human Services, the Immigrant and Refugee Job Readiness Training Program serves low-income English Language Learners ages 15-20, affiliated with the Seattle Public School system. Through grants to community-based agencies, the program provides bilingual, bicultural services for immigrant youth and families. Lasting one year, the program provides work readiness training/employability skills followed by internships with local employers. It also includes bilingual parent engagement efforts around school engagement, career pathways and self- sufficiency.

Seattle Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs

Formed in 2012 by Mayor Mike McGinn, the Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs was created to improve the relationship between city government and the immigrant and refugee communities of Seattle. The Office's website states that its goal "will be to set measurable outcomes to ensure a consistent implementation of principles of social justice issues which include employment, economic development, public health, student achievement, citizenship, public safety and criminal justice, civic engagement and protection of civil rights". Working in partnership with other city departments and the community, the Office is engaged in intensive outreach efforts to help immigrants and refugees to better interface with the government, as well as learn about and connect to available services.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Pathway – State of Washington (ORIA)

The LEP Pathway Program, operated by the state's Office of Refugee & Immigrant Assistance (part of DSHS), is designed to provide specialized and culturally appropriate services to Limited English Proficient residents to help them obtain employment. It specifically serves LEP adults on TANF, State Family Assistance (SFA), or Refugee Cash Assistance (FCA), as well as refugees who are not enrolled in RCA but who have lived in the U.S. for five or fewer years. LEP Pathways contracts funds to multiple community-based organization providers – as well as the state's Employment Security Department – to offer services such as employability assessments, pre-employment preparation (job readiness), ESL, job search assistance and job placement, skills training, and job retention services. The program also allows contractors to provide transportation services to participants.

II. PROGRAMS OUTSIDE OF WASHINGTON STATE

Jewish Vocational Services – Boston (Multiple programs)

JVS Boston provides a variety of Vocational ESOL programs (contextualized English), including a 14-week *Caring for Our Seniors* training to prepare people for work as geriatric Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and a *Pharmacy Technician* program to prepare people for career ladder positions at retail pharmacies. In addition, every year JVS helps more than 400 recent immigrants and refugees with very limited English who need to gain employment quickly. To do this, JVS offers different levels of vocational ESOL (including during off-work hours) combined with job placement, career coaching and post-placement support and retention services.

Jewish Vocational Services – San Francisco (Multiple programs)

JVS San Francisco provides several programs for ELLs to help them connect to better employment opportunities. These include *Vocational ESL for Nurses*, *Vocational ESL for Homecare Workers*, and the *Garment Worker Training* program. *Vocational ESL for Nurses* prepares students to enter the Licensed Vocational Nurse Refresher program at City College or to pursue entry-level healthcare employment. Using multiple instructors, the program provides high quality English language instruction in the context of a healthcare work environment. Funded by the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, the *Garment Worker Training* program (which has now ended) provided intensive English and vocational skills instruction to Chinese immigrants displaced from the garment industry who were low- level English speakers with few transferrable skills. This 18-month "Back to Work" program provided English language and skills training for the healthcare industry and provided a living stipend allowing participants to train full-time. Finally, JVS' *Vocational ESL for Homecare Workers* provides intensive language classes that incorporate vocabulary and communication skills necessary for success in the homecare industry.

El Paso Community College/MET Introduction to Construction Technology Program

An example of bilingual vocational training paired with vocational ESL, the Introduction to Construction Technology program is run by a partnership of El Paso Community College and the nonprofit, Motivation, Education and Training (MET). It provides entry-level employment in the construction industry for low-skill workers (primary Hispanic) with very limited employment opportunities. The model combines technical classes (taught in Spanish) with a linked *ESL for Construction* class which shores up the technical classes while teaching key construction-related English terminology.

Northern Virginia Family Services/NOVA Training Futures Program

Offered by a partnership of Northern Virginia Family Services and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), *Training Futures* is a 25-week skills training program providing primarily low-income immigrants with office skills training. The program is designed to prepare participants for entry-level office jobs (particularly in healthcare administration), while providing them college credit (up to 17 credits) for further advancement. The program also includes internships and makes extensive use of volunteers from the business community as guest speakers and mentors. *Training Futures* seeks to have students continue their education at NOVA or another college in order to persist to a business-related credential.

Winnetka Learning Center Child Development Associate Certification Program

The Winnetka Learning Center program is an example of an effort to help ELLs to quickly gain entry into the workforce by assisting them to attain a non-college credential that is widely recognized and in demand in the local labor market. The Learning Center, based in New Hope, Minnesota, is part of the public school system, and trains ELLs to qualify for the nationally-recognized Child Development Associate (CDA) certification needed to work in child care centers. Typically, CDA students need 120 hours of training, but the Learning Center program is 140 hours because of the additional time needed for English language instruction. The center also connects students directly to internships at local childcare centers (volunteer hours are required for the CDA certificate).

San Francisco Department of Human Services/City College of San Francisco VESL Immersion Program

The VESL Immersion Program (VIP) was launched in 2001 as a partnership of the City of San Francisco and the City College of San Francisco to help low-level ELLs on welfare to improve their English and secure mainstream employment. The VIP provides intensive English language instruction contextualized to the workplace, computer skills and soft skills (including searching and applying for jobs). Three cohort program options are available for the 18-week course, ranging from 10 to 30 hours per week, to accommodate participant schedules. Participants receive vocational and English proficiency assessment before, during and after completing the programs, and develop both short- and long-term employment goals. After program completion, participants receive bilingual job search, placement and retention services.

Instituto Del Progreso Latino – Bridge Programs for Spanish-Speaking ELLs

Instituto del Progreso Latino serves the Latino immigrant community in Chicago, and over a period of more than 30 years has grown to become a leading educational institution serving this population. The organization provides ESL classes (along with GED and Spanish literacy), and has developed widely-recognized bridge programs that assist ELLs to enter into careers in healthcare and manufacturing. The first of these, *Carreras in Salud*, bridges ELLs into Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN), and Registered Nurse (RN) positions. Offered in partnership with other community-based organizations and colleges, the program offers seven levels that students can enter and complete according to their capacity and test scores, with each level lasting 16 weeks. At the lower level, students can enroll in ESL for Healthcare/Pre-CAN, then progress to a Vocational ESL for Certified Nursing Assistant. Students can enroll in a Pre-LPN track to prepare for EKG and phlebotomy certification, as well as a Pre-LPN track that prepares them to bridge into college prerequisites for the LPN program. Instituto also partners with Wilbur Wright Community College to offer a *Computerized Numerical Control* (CNC) machinist bridge program. This Vocational ESL program prepares participants for a 320-hour (non-credit) bilingual CNC program at the college. Completers of the CNC program are prepared for jobs as CNC operators, or enrollment into a nine-month Advanced Certificate program to become CNC programmers. Instituto also operates a Center for Working Families that supports the asset development of its constituents through job readiness, job placement, financial counseling and access to public benefits.

Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians

Based in Philadelphia, the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians is included here as an example of an effort to respond to the fact that in Philadelphia (as in many cities) services for immigrants – though available – were fragmented and difficult to access. The Center opened in 2003 to provide a centralized employment and referral center, helping immigrants to find jobs and to serve as a liaison between area businesses and immigrant communities (providing guidance and encouragement to employers to hire immigrants).

Spring Institute WorkStyles and WorkWise

The Denver-based Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning is a nonprofit, training and consulting organization with a focus on language and culture. The Institute provides language training, direct services, technical assistance and consulting for individuals, communities, organizations, and corporations regionally, nationally, and abroad. The agency has developed several different ESL courses contextualized to the workplace for ELLs, including *WorkWise* and *WorkStyles*. *WorkWise* is a pre-employment competency-based training for ELLs with very basic English language skills and limited education. A 4-week, 120-hour course, the program teaches workplace values including critical thinking, time management and quality control with sector specific skills for a variety of entry level positions. Participants complete 4-6 service learning-work experience activities at neighboring companies. *WorkStyles* is geared toward ELLs with at least intermediate level English, and is a 2-week, 60-hour training on finding and retaining a job (interviewing, completing applications, confidence-building). A modification of this program – *WorkStyles Fundamentals* – is provided to individuals with lower-level English proficiency.

Upwardly Global

Currently based in three major U.S. cities, Updwardly Global is an example of an organization seeking to help *highly-skilled* immigrants who are un- or under-employed due to limited English or other barriers. The organization provides customized training and support for these immigrants to help them secure skill-appropriate employment. Training is focused on the job search process, crafting effective resumes and applications, interviewing skills, and networking. While the agency does not directly place individuals into jobs, it maintains a network of employer partners to help immigrants connect to employers in their fields. If needed, the agency refers jobseekers to outside partners for English, computer and other vocational training programs serving the immigrant community.

NOTES

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5. The Washington New Americans Policy Council, "A Plan for Today, A Plan for Tomorrow: Building a Stronger Washington through Immigrant Integration," (October 2009), pp.13-14.

6. Tomas R. Jimenez, "Immigrants in the United States: How Well Are They Integrating into Society?," *Migration Policy Institute* (May 2011), p.7.

7. Aaron Terrazas, "The Economic Integration of Immigrants in the United States: Long- and Short-Term Perspectives," *Migration Policy Institute* (July 2011), p.3.

8. *Id*., p.2.

9. Robin Spence, "Sound Investments: Building Immigrants' Skills to Fuel Economic Growth," *Economic Mobility Corporation* (December 2010), p.1.

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11. Included in this research are the related terms, English Language Learner (ELL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and Limited English Proficiency (LEP). An English Language Learner is one "who is in the process of actively acquiring English, and whose primary language is one other than English. This student often benefits from language support programs to improve academic performance in English due to challenges with reading, comprehension, speaking and/or writing skills in English." While English as a Second Language (ESL) is sometimes used to designate a similar student, it has become much less common than ELL, and is now more frequently used – as in this research – to describe an educational *approach* to support ELLs. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is a more specific term used by the U.S. Department of Education to describe ELLs who are enrolled or preparing to enroll in school and who have an insufficient level of English to meet a state's English requirements. The more general term, ELL, is beginning to supplant LEP, but LEP is utilized in some of the research cited in this report. From the American Institutes for Research: http://www.air.org/files/NEW_-_Common_ELL_TERMS_AND_DEFINITIONS_6_22_10.pdf/

12. *Id*. p.38.

13. Migration Policy Institute's Data Hub. *See* http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/state.cfm?ID=WA

14. *Ibid*.

15. *Ibid*.

16. *Ibid*.

17. Pramilla Jayapal "Undocumented Reform: What D.C.'s New Immigration Mojo Means for Washington State," Crosscut (February 4, 2013).

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20. *Ibid*.

21. Terrazas, “The Economic Integration of Immigrants in the United States: Long- and Short-Term Perspectives,” p.6.
22. Migration Policy Institute’s Data Hub.
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41. Jimenez, “Immigrants in the United States: How Well Are They Integrating into Society?” p.5.
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43. *Ibid*.
44. Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, Michael Fix, and Randy Capps, “Shaping Our Futures: The Educational and Career Success of Washington State’s Immigrant Youth,” *Migration Policy Institute* (June 2013), pp.2,10.
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