

## ELL Convening – Afternoon Breakout Session – Best Practices for Effective Community Engagement

### Panelists

- Erica Bouris – IRC, Technical Advisor in Workforce Development (supports IRC offices in developing and implementing their workforce programs – IRC works with refugees, immigrants, and low-income families. Refugees, youth services, asset building programming, etc.)
- Sasha Feldstein – CIPC, Economic Justice Policy Analyst (Statewide policy advocacy organization, inclusive policies across the state for all Californians including immigrants and refugees – work with deportation defense, equity and access to public health, economic justice (worker’s rights, workforce development, impact on the future of work on immigrant communities, local community organizing e.g. Long Beach, LA, Inland Empire, etc.), engaging local communities on engaging in the WIOA planning process.

*Presenters will discuss strategies for effective community engagement to 1) help workforce system partners to meet the needs of ELL communities; 2) deepen relationships between community stakeholders and the public workforce system; and, 3) build relationships with new community stakeholders to strengthen the effectiveness of the workforce system in serving diverse communities. This session will be interactive and is designed for workforce board staff, adult education providers, and community organizations, so come prepared to share your stories, set goals, and take action.*

### Theme

- CBOs are important for serving immigrants and refugees (all vulnerable populations)
- Deepening partnerships
- Building partnerships

### Workforce System and ELLs: Do you know (Questions)

- Do you know what percentage of those served in workforce community are ELLs?
- Do you know how that relates to the local demographics of your community?
- How does an ELL worker with variable, shift-based work would access workforce development programming?
- What CBO-based workforce services are being provided to ELLs? How effective are they?
- How many opportunity youth ELLs are there in your community?
- What skills training programs have bridge programs or on-ramps for ELLs?
- Do you know if there are ELL-accessible skills training programs that are accessible to people with lots of formal education and those with none?
- What messages do ELLs hear in ESL classes, at an AJCC, in the community, and in their workplace about career advancement?

- What do immigrants think about accessibly publicly funded workforce development programs as it relates to their immigration status?

>> If you cannot answer all of these answers definitively and with positive responses, then there is probably more work to do for your program to effectively serve ELLs.

Previously was asked what is an effective employment program for refugees? This does not address the range of education various refugees may have.

#### What Can You Do: Workforce System

- Collect data
  - In addition to whatever you already collect, there may be more data that you need
  - You may not look at CalJOBS as closely as you could
  - Also do not look at how long an individual has been in the US. Can be helpful to understand whether we are serving newcomers or people who have been in the US for a number of years
- Organize targeted listening sessions – with interpretation and in diverse locations
  - Despite being required, it is not uncommon to hear that there is zero information about these sessions being publicized. If you are a board, please publicize. Even if your website is awesome, people may not be spending a lot of time on your website.
- Train staff – better yet, hire diverse staff
  - It is not uncommon for an AJCC employee to look at an I-94 and not know what the document is, or if someone graduated from HS in another country – they may ask for the original document (this is not required)
  - Hiring diverse staff is great (reduces linguistic and cultural barriers), but still need to train your staff
- Businesses on WDB that employ many ELLs
  - This is an important voice to have at the table
  - Businesses on the board (“sexy businesses”) are important, but thinking about whether you have someone who is from a company that is in the hospitality sector of poultry processing, it is important to get that perspective
- Convene cross-system partners to talk about messaging
  - English teacher is telling the individual no, do not go to work yet
  - CalWORKS is telling the individual, you need to work now
  - Community is saying wait a year and then you can get a Pell Grant
  - As a system level entity (workforce board) bring people together and talk about messaging. Make messaging as aligned as possible
- Fund models that work and fund in proportion to need
  - Hospitality program in MN for example
  - Fund the ones that work and fund in proportion to need
  - It is not uncommon to fund one program that serves 40 people a year, if you have 4,000 ELLs in your community, think about scale

- Fund community and workplace-based models
  - Encourage workforce system partners to work with CBOs. Funding community and workplace-based models (most individuals are working – so funding workplace-based models works because that’s where the people are) works. California has funded AJCCs inside detention facilities. This is a similar model. Go to where the people are and fund the organizations and people who are skilled at working with those populations

#### What You Can Do: CBOs

- Collect data
  - You cannot tell your story with your story alone. You need data
  - Think about the data that workforce likes to know
  - Collect data even if your funders do not require it
- Go to WDB meetings, join committees, participate consistently
  - You do not need to be appointed to join a committee
  - Do not just go to one – one is not enough to make an impact or gain a full understanding
- Look at your programming through the lens of WIOA
  - At least be able to understand how what you’re doing may or may not fit into WIOA (and in particular Title I)
- Build partnerships with community colleges and industry
  - Maybe primary points of contact are in church – partner with these partners
- Be able to articulate your outcomes
  - Goes to data
  - Being able to say we worked with 150 people last year providing employment services, and 80% were placed into employment – this is more powerful than saying we helped people in community X who needed help
- Be able to articulate your resource needs
  - This is a key piece, being able to explain what resources you need in order to achieve a specific outcome
- Collaboration and advocacy can be balanced
  - If you are to talk to a lot of immigrant and refugee serving CBOs, these are communities that have not been well served by our public workforce system. Many of them have encountered very frustrating things. (e.g. Community members not being able to access training dollars – less than 4% being foreign-born). This is a population that has not been welcome and feels some level of frustration sometimes at the public workforce system. While advocacy is important and there are times when you need to go to the WDB and make public comment, you also need to recognize that the public workforce system can and often will collaborate with you. This does not mean that you are selling out or losing all ability to critique what’s happening there.

#### What Can You Do: Adult Education

- Collect data
- Go to WDB meetings, join committees, participate consistently
- Look at your programming through the lens of WIOA Title I, clients are learners and earners
  - Clients are both learners and earners. They tend to have both goals. Keep that in mind
- Be able to articulate your outcomes as relates to jobs and careers
- Leverage adult education expertise while supporting learning and skill development in diverse community and workplace settings
  - Think about what you would do if you only have 150 hours. Think about what you would do to help people learn in their workplaces and their communities
  - Increasingly we have CBOs that may be engaged in incumbent worker training
  - Companies who employ 50-60k LEPs across the country, thinking about how to upskill employees while they are at work

#### Deepen Relationships

- Participate consistently in “their” system and “their” conversations
  - Conversations in the CBO space and vice versa (workforce spaces)
  - This is hard to do. Why do I need to go to meetings in this other space?
    - Have never seen anything pay off as consistency as someone going and sitting at the table of WDB meetings when they should really be partners with those people. Sometimes this means sitting through things that are boring and not super relevant – however, it pays off. Do not know of any substitute to this. This is the best way to deepen some of these relationships.
- Cross-system expertise through hiring
  - It can be a cool opportunity to hire someone who has expertise in another system. E.g. sometimes you are putting someone into a Title II role and you want someone who is a Title II expert... what if you hired someone who was a vessel instructor from a CBO or knew Title I really well? These kinds of things can help. Cross-system knowledge can be helpful.
- Trust takes time and is best built when programs work and respect is given
- Resourcing CBOs
  - This is a key thing and is really important
  - The public workforce system has formula funds to provide services. Adult ed has consistent multiple funding sources. None of these systems are necessarily sourced to the level that they should be. CBOs do not have that (no funds to leverage, no consistent source of “this is what the money is.”) Adult Ed and public workforce are not flush with dollars, however that consistent funding can be critical. Doing outreach is not resource neutral. If you want CBO support – they need additional resources and need to be funded. In some circumstances they may have resources to leverage, but recognize that this is often not the case.

Sasha (CIPC)

Which stakeholders do you currently work with?

- CalWORKs
- Worker centers
- Libraries
- First five
- Unions
- Faith-based organizations
- K-12
- CDCR
- Government institutions

Why do we need to build relationships with new community stakeholders?/Who might be missing from this conversation?/Is there something you are even interested in doing?/Why?

- New people are coming in the door that we haven't worked with before
- To provide better services to the community
- Recruitment tool, increase visibility
- Refer out to services
- The fact that such a small percentage of WIOA Title I exiters are LEP, compared to the demographics that we know about our state, clearly that is a sign that we are missing a huge bucket of populations that are currently not being served for a variety of reasons

Groups to consider

- Ethnic CBOs
  - Sasha has spoken to several CBOs that do not know what "workforce development" is – for example maybe they do not know that term, however they are doing the work
- Worker centers (organize worker communities, e.g. day laborers. They provide a space for worker communities to learn about their rights, do job training, and build community)
- Immigrants' rights groups
- Workers' rights groups
- Industry specific groups that do not have a union
- Other organizing groups
- Student groups
- Parent groups

What are some of the questions you would expect CBOs to ask?

- How does it benefit me?
- What does it cost?
- What are those costs and benefits?

- What is in it for you? What is the catch?

#### Building Authentic Relationships with New Partners

- Building trust is key
- Meet them where they're at
- Listen, listen, listen
- Recognize and address constraints
- Resource groups to be able to partner with you
- Individuals and communities know what's best for them

Many times when people do not engage in the ways that you want them to, recognize that this is difficult. ELL workers are usually low-wage workers and face many barriers.

#### Questions

Antonio: I see listen, listen, listen. CBOs have a more well-connected relationship with the community that could kind of build up more knowledge of what immigrants need. You need to have that understanding/knowledge to create the "product" (workforce program). Have you gotten to the level of thinking about asking the people what their needs are when creating the product that they are doing to use?

Sasha: Engage student groups, think about new partnerships, focus groups, surveys, inviting people when you are working on your strategic plan.

Antonio: It is easy to just ask CBOs what they need. But this could be short-sighted because you are not getting what the basic needs are to make it successful.

Erica: I agree with you. A good CBO is getting that information but maybe they do not have the resources to do some. One thing is to resource the CBOs. The second thing is that just be prepared that sometimes the answers will not fit into the boxes that you want. People are coming from different contexts. For example, one man was saying it does not make any sense. How could anyone expect me to work and do training. The government should pay me while I'm in the training. – Keep in mind that information you get might not fit neatly into the way WIOA allows you to serve people. Be open to that. Immediately cutting someone off saying like WIOA does not allow you to do that – the man is not coming from the perspective of WIOA Title I, they are telling you what they think will work from their perspective.

Question: How do you get people to go to them and them to come to you? How it is mutual?

Erica: Usually the individual will go to the CBO. However, workforce partners will come to CBO events and participate in conversation. Usually the first move is the CBO starts showing up, however I've seen progressive WDB come to CBO things, start showing up, and create value. It also allows that person to directly observe things from the community (versus one person from a CBO at a WDB).

Question: Is this a best practice?

Erica: Yes

#### Action Planning Activity

Please write down:

- One thing you will do to make sure WDBs are meeting the needs of your ELL communities
  - Could be you a piece of data you are looking to collect
  - Or looking at some of the questions from earlier in the presentation
- One way to deepen relationships with current community stakeholders
  - Participate consistently in “their” system and “their” conversations
- One thing you will do to build relationships with new community stakeholders