



VESL Plus

Program Introduction & Overview

Goals & Approach

*The **VESL Plus program** was developed by the San Diego office of the International Rescue Committee to help prepare refugees with limited English proficiency for entry level employment. Fundamentally, it is characterized by four key features. **First**, it utilizes a unique bilingual approach—a half-day of vocational ESL is complemented by a half-day of classes in work readiness, financial literacy, computer literacy and a selection of special topics taught in the refugees’ native language. This bilingual approach has been critical to the effectiveness of the program as it allows for the rapid development of the basic English skills needed for work, while simultaneously covering critical employment-related topics in a robust, in-depth manner that can only be accomplished by teaching in the students’ native language. **Second**, it is delivered in an intensive, short-term format. While it is true that it can take years for an adult to become fluent in a second language, the reality of refugees and many other low-income immigrants is that there are economic pressures to find employment quickly. **VESL Plus** is designed to support opportunities for early employment. **Third**, **VESL Plus** offers an integrated curriculum that covers traditional topics such as resume writing and interview skills, but also includes additional subjects that are critical to successfully acquiring a first job and building solid financial footing. **Finally**, **VESL Plus** is most effective when it is not delivered as a stand-alone program but rather, paired with one-on-one employment counseling services.*

Five Curricular Components

1 **VESL** is at the core of the **VESL Plus** curriculum, as it lays the foundation for the English skills that help clients apply for, interview for, and keep entry-level jobs. From the very beginning, the class uses a job application as the “backbone” of the curriculum. Students begin by learning the basics of personal information and progress to learning to talk about themselves – their skills, education, work history, and personal attributes - in a way that supports a compelling job application, resume, and interview. The **VESL** class emphasizes interactive practice, repetition to build verbal muscle memory, and equips clients with strategies to use to communicate in an interview or on the job, even when they are still at relatively low levels of comprehension and speaking.

2 **Work Readiness Training (WRT)** is taught in-language and is designed with two fundamental goals in mind. First, it provides a space to conceptually understand working in America, the process of finding a job, and other key topics that while introduced in **VESL**, benefit from a more robust discussion in **WRT** as the in-language aspect of the class facilitates a significantly more in-depth discussion. Second, **WRT** aims to help students understand that being successful in getting and keeping a job is about much more than just having strong enough English skills or a specific set of technical skills – rather success in the American job market also depends on understanding the sometimes unspoken culture, expectations, and norms of the workplace.



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Five Curricular Components

3 Financial Literacy (FL) is also taught in-language to ensure maximum comprehension of the course material. Typically, FL covers the basics of budgeting, banking, and credit. The class ensures that students have the chance to learn concepts such as a “monthly budget” or “credit score” in the context of their own families. Yet FL is included in VESL Plus for reasons beyond just mastery of these critical skills. For many students – especially those that are on a form of public assistance– transitioning to employment often means confronting concerns about losing critical benefits or supports. FL provides a safe venue to discuss successfully navigating from a “safety net” system to financial self-sufficiency.

4 Computer Literacy (CL) classes are designed to build a basic familiarity with computers, Internet usage and email but quickly progresses to helping students sharpen the needed skills for conducting an online job search, submitting applications and resumes electronically, and using an email account to communicate with employers. This class is taught primarily in the students’ native language while still introducing key English vocabulary. Importantly, as the class is taught in a computer lab, it also offers an opportunity for students to gain valuable hands-on practice with computers.

5 Finally, the VESL Plus program is designed to incorporate weekly **Special Topics** classes that provide an opportunity to cover additional subjects such as transportation, using local community-specific resources, or providing additional information about vocational and career pathways. This curriculum guide does not include activity plans for these Special Topics classes as they work best when they are customized to the specific needs of the population and the community where the program is delivered. Descriptions of Special Topics classes and learning objectives are included as examples in this curriculum.

Curricular Components in a Week

VESL	VESL	VESL	VESL	VESL
Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
WRT	Special Topics	WRT	CL	FL



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Assessing Student Progress

VESL Plus uses a variety of methods to measure student progress throughout the program. IRC staff developed a pre-program ESL assessment and language levels (described in depth on the next page) to assess students before the program. Staff also use a VESL pre and post test, tailored to the curriculum and aligned with employer-identified competencies, to measure progress in vocational English skills, both verbal and written. Depending upon the needs of the program and implementing agency, it would also be possible to use standardized tests to gather additional information on student progress (e.g. the CASAs or TABE test). In addition, a scored Mock Interview during the final week of the class measures client competency in interview skills and offers an important “real world” assessment of skills. Ideally, these Mock Interviews should be conducted and evaluated by individuals external to program staff. Finally, it would be remiss to neglect the most important assessment tool in the program: student placement in employment. Fundamentally, the goal of VESL Plus is to help students gain entry-level jobs, and tracking this outcome is the strongest measure of success for the VESL Plus program.

How to Use this Curriculum

This curriculum was put together with a goal of providing a comprehensive overview of week-by-week learning objectives, examples of activities and materials to accomplish these weekly learning goals, and assessment tools to measure student progress. It is presented in a weekly format, with each week containing objectives, activities, presentations and materials for VESL, WRT, FL and CL. In addition, information is provided about a set of Special Topics that can also be incorporated to enhance the learning experience.

IRC delivers the VESL Plus curriculum with a team of teachers, including dedicated VESL, WRT, FL, and CL instructors. It is recommended that the instructional team review the entire program’s weekly objectives to see the integrated learning goals that are interwoven throughout all the classes. It is particularly critical for WRT and VESL instructors to communicate throughout the program to ensure that each class supports the other’s, while offering students a consistent learning experience. While each week’s goals build off of the previous week, the curriculum is flexible enough so that an experienced instructor may adapt the structure to best suit his or her students’ needs. Finally, the curriculum was developed for the office’s Arabic speaking population with low-intermediate English, but even within this group there are variations in skill and ability. Many of the activities can be modified to be responsive to the specific levels of students. IRC has taught this curriculum to multilevel classes of English language learners and has found success in doing so.

In the VESL and WRT sections, you will see references to a resource, the Oxford Picture Dictionary (English/Arabic OPD, Second Edition by Jayme Adelson-Goldstein and Norma Shapiro). As this curriculum uses a blended, bilingual format, IRC instructors have found that using the OPD greatly enhances instruction. The resource is available in several languages, including an English only version.

The primary assessment tools for the program (Pre-Program ESL Assessment; VESL Pre and Post-Tests; and Mock Interview) were tailored to specifically measure student progress in the weekly learning objectives. For convenience, all of the assessments are listed in the Table of Contents.

VESL Plus

Assessments

Pre-Program ESL Assessment



Materials:
English Assessment Ranking Descriptions
IRC ESL Assessment
Assessment Picture
Assessment Answer Key

The VESL Plus Program is designed to focus on adults who have a low-intermediate beginner level of English. This assessment is intended to gauge students' language levels prior to starting the program. IRC developed a scale to categorize participants' English levels. The levels are described in the English Assessment Ranking Description document.

Two points of particular note: First, the VESL Plus Program has not historically utilized a standardized test, such as CASAS or TABE, for a variety of reasons specific to how the program is implemented at IRC. Such a tool could certainly be used and as a point of reference. The VESL Plus Program has sampled students using the CASAS Life and Work Listening test series, with students generally falling in the 185-205 scaled score range. Second, the VESL Plus Program has been designed to accommodate a multi-level student population. While the program is best suited to low-intermediate beginner students, IRC staff have regularly incorporated a wider range of students in the classroom with success.

Utilizing the assessment

Students should be assessed one-on-one with program staff, using the IRC ESL Assessment and Assessment Picture. Staff will ask a series of questions that will require the students to respond using progressively more complex language. Please begin by explaining to the student the nature of the assessment and that he or she should attempt to respond in English and in complete sentences, if possible. The assessment also includes an Assessment Answer Key that provides example responses and characteristics to assist staff who conduct the assessment rank students' answers.

English Language Assessment: *Description of Levels*

Pre-Literate

- Understands almost nothing
- Often doesn't know how to respond to basic greetings and phrases.
- Can't identify letters of the alphabet and can't write letters

Level 1 (low beginner)

- Can say/write some of the letters of the alphabet but may have them out of order or incorrectly say/write some
- Knows cardinal numbers up to 10, may say them haltingly
- Can respond to simple greetings and questions
- Very limited understanding of spoken English
- Very limited spoken vocabulary

Level 2 (intermediate beginner)

- Knows alphabet, numbers, dates (makes errors)
- Has English language learning exposure, has limited amount of vocabulary can access but can't (easily) retrieve for use in a conversation
- Can form some (simple, not well constructed) sentences and can generally be understood
- Limited understanding of spoken English

Level 3 (high beginner, low intermediate)

- Knows alphabet, numbers, dates
- Can write English, sometimes with hesitation
- Has a background in English language learning, has access to a wider range of vocabulary and can converse
- Can form simple sentences and can communicate with decent vocabulary
- Understands and uses various verbs (mixes tenses)
- Understands much (not all) of what is said to him/her
- Can ask and respond to some questions (limited)

Level 4 (intermediate)

- Has studied English in the past
- Can write English with ease
- Can form simple and complex sentences, a greater range of vocabulary
- Understands the verb tenses (doesn't always use them)
- Understands most of what is said to him/her
- Can respond to questions (may be limited)
- Can ask own questions (may be limited)

Level 5 (high intermediate and up)

- Easily understands spoken and written English
- Readily interacts with others in English

PLEASE NOTE:

Clients will initially be assessed by VESL Instructor, VESL Program Coordinator, and volunteers if necessary, depending on the number of clients being assessed.

English Language Assessment Scoring Sheet

Client Name: _____

Assessment Date: _____

English Language Score: _____

Question 1 A) *What is your name?*

Can you write your name here? _____

B) *Can you complete the following letters in the alphabet?*

A B C _____ H

- Pre-Literate – unable to write name, alphabet or identify letters
- L1/L2
- L3/L4/L5

Question 2 *Where are you from?*

If they say the country, ask: *Where in _____?*

- L1
- L2
- L3
- L4
- L5

Question 3 *Where do you live?*

If they answer with ease, ask:

*How long have you been in
the United States?*

- L1
- L2
- L3
- L4
- L5

Question 4 ***Are you married?***

Do you have children?

If they answer yes, ask:

How many children do you have?

L1

L3

L5

L2

L4

Question 5 ***Who are they?*** (show picture)

L1

L3

L5

L2

L4

Question 6 ***What are they doing?*** (show same picture)

L1

L3

L5

L2

L4

Question 7 ***What do you do everyday?***

L1

L3

L5

L2

L4

Question 8 ***What did you do before? What was your job?***

L1

L3

L5

L2

L4

Question 9 ***What are your goals for the future?***

L1

L3

L5

L2

L4

Assessment Picture



English Language Assessment – Answer Key

<p>Question 1: What is your name?/ Can you write the alphabet?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Lit Unable to write name, alphabet or identify letters • L1 No answer initially, answer after prompts or examples • L2 Says, “Ahmed.” *gives name but <i>no verb</i> • L3-L5 Says, “My name is Ahmed Kareem.” *complete sentence w/ <i>subject and verb</i>
<p>Question 2: Where are you from?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1 Does not answer, may attempt • L2 Answers after prompting or examples “Iraq” *answers short, w/errors and no verbs • L3 Answers “Iraq” without prompting *answers short, w/errors and no verbs • L4/5 Says “I am from Somalia” *answers with subject and verbs
<p>Question 3: Are you married?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1 Does not answer or try • L2 Answers “Yes” or “No” *after prompting like pointing at ring finger • L3 Answers “Yes” or “No” and adds maybe “I married” *answers with errors • L4/L5 Answers “No, I’m not married” or “Yes, I’m married” *answers complete with subject and verb
<p>Question 4: Where do you live?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1 Still does not answer; doesn’t try • L2 Tries to answer but is unable • L3 Answers “Mollison” or “El Cajon” or “U.S.A” *answers short; with errors and no verbs • L4 Answers “Live in El Cajon” or “I living El Cajon.” *answers with verb or subjects and verb with errors • L5 Answers “I live in El Cajon” or “I am living in El Cajon” *answers complete; subjects and verbs
<p>Question 5: Who are they? (Show picture of family having a meal)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1 Still does not answer or try • L2 Says, “Family” or “Mother” *no verbs, answers with just noun • L3 Answers “They family” or “She mother” “he boy” ... etc *answers short, subjects and nouns but no verbs, can use variation of nouns • L4 Answers “They are family,” or “She is mother”...etc *answers with subjects, some verbs and nouns • L5 Answers “They are a family,” or “She is the mother” ...etc *answers complete, uses subjects, verbs

*Levels are divided by these five indicators: L1, L2, L3, L4, L5 (pre-literate for written)

<p>Question 6:</p> <p>What are they doing? (Show picture of family having a meal)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1 Still does not answer and doesn't try (can stop test here) • L2 Tries to figure out what is being asked and tries to answer, may repeat "Mother", "Man"...etc *doesn't know common verbs, knows some nouns • L3 Answers "She dinner," "He dinner," "kitchen"... etc *answers short, some/no verbs, pronouns, nouns • L4 Answers "They are eating," they kitchen eat dinner,"... etc *answers with pronouns, verbs and nouns, w/errors • L5 Answers "They are a family," or "They are eating dinner," or "They are smiling and are very happy" ...etc *answers complete with pronouns, verbs and nouns; Uses indefinite and definite articles (w/errors)
<p>Question 7:</p> <p>What did you do before? What was your job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L2 Tries to figure out what is being asked and tries to answer, May repeat words • L3 Answers "Driver", "Cashier. Lebanon," "No work"...etc *answers short, some/no verbs, nouns • L4 Answers "I am driver Iraq," "I am school, no work" or "I working cashier"...etc *answers w/pronouns, verbs and nouns (w/error) • L5 Answers "I was a coast engineer in Iraq for 16 years"...etc *answers complete; appropriately uses pronouns, verbs and nouns
<p>Question 8:</p> <p>What do you do every day? (Tell me three things)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L2 Does not answer and doesn't try (can stop test here) • L3 Answers "I TV, computer, Facebook"...etc *answers short, some/no verbs, pronouns • L4 Answers "I am tea," "I drive," "I shopping"...etc *answers w/pronouns, verbs and nouns (improper use of present progressive or to be verbs) • L5 Answers "I drink coffee, watch TV and use the computer"...etc *answer is complete; appropriately uses pronouns, verbs and nouns
<p>Question 9:</p> <p>What are your goals for the future?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L3 Answers "work" *answers short, some/no verbs • L4 Answers "I want work" *answers w/pronouns, verbs • L5 Answers "I would like to improve my English and get a good job." * answer is complete; appropriately uses pronouns, verbs and nouns

VESL Plus

Assessments

VESL Pre & Post Test & Mock Interview



Documents:

VESL Pre/Post Test

VESL Pre/Post Grading Rubric

Tips for Interviewing VESL Clients

Interview Questions

Employment Interview Feedback Form

VESL Pre and Post Test

The VESL Pre-Test measures what students understand and know at the start of the program. They will take the same test again at the end of the program to measure and demonstrate their progress after completing the program. The test is divided into two sections. The first is an application-- students should try their best to fill it out much as possible. The second section is an interview. During the pre-test you will conduct the interview with students one-on-one. Have students respond to the questions while you record the responses and gauge performance. At the end of the program, the process is similar with students completing the first application section to the best of their ability and going through a one-on-one interview with you. Retain students tests results to compare scores and note individual improvement.

Mock Interview

For the post-test interview, students will again complete a Mock Interview. However, these interviews should be conducted by individuals outside of program staff, so that it simulates an actual job interview. Let the class know about the event in advance and encourage students to dress up and treat it as an actual professional interview. Weeks before the activity, recruit volunteers, community partners or employers to come to class as volunteer interviewers so that students can interact with other English speakers outside of program staff.

Before the mock interview, give the volunteer interviewers an orientation on working with English language learners, using the Tips For Interviewing VESL Clients document. Interviewers should also receive the Interview Questions and the Employment Interview Feedback form to look over beforehand. Explain that they can take notes on the Interview Questions, but should also fill out the Feedback Form so that you can review each student's performance and give proper feedback and guidance.

Try to create an environment conducive for interviews, using separate rooms and desks for each volunteer interviewer. Have students come in on-by-one and do an interview with a volunteer. Explain again to the students that this is a learning experience, and while they should treat it like a real interview and try their best, it is a practice run. You may need to stagger the interviews, so that the volunteer interviewers have adequate time to take notes and assess the students' performance. After each student has had a turn and the interviewers have filled out their forms, check in with the interviewers to hear their feedback and initial thoughts. Collect the paperwork and review the feedback with each student one-on-one.

VESL Pre-test

Written Test Total (30)

Please fill out the employment application below to the best of your ability:

APPLICANT INFORMATION					
Last Name		First		M.I.	Date
Street				Apartment/Un	
City		State		ZIP	
Phone		E-mail			
Date Available		Social Security		Pay Desired	
Position Applied for					
Are you a citizen of the United States?		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	If no, are you authorized to work in the U.S.?	
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Have you ever been convicted of a felony?		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes, explain	
EDUCATION					
High School			Address		
From	To	Did you graduate?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	Degree
PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT					
Company			Phone ()		
Address			Supervisor		
Job Title		Starting Salary	\$	Ending Salary	\$
Responsibilities					
From	To	Reason for Leaving			
REFERENCES					
<i>Please list your professional reference.</i>					
Full Name			Relationship		
Company			Phone ()		

Verbal Test Total (8)

Tell me about yourself. / Tell me about your past work experience.

Tell me 2 strengths and 2 weaknesses.

What is your availability?

What are your goals?

Written Score: ____/30

Verbal Score: ____/8

Total test score ____/38

Written Test Total (30)

Please fill out the employment application below to the best of your ability:

APPLICANT INFORMATION 0-2 FOR BASIC INFO					
Last Name		First		M.I.	Date
Street				Apartment/Un	
City		State		ZIP	
Phone		E-mail			
Date Available 0-2		Social Security 0-1		Pay Desired 0-2	
Position Applied 0-2 for					
Are you a citizen of the United States? 0-1		YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		If no, are you authorized to work in the U.S.? 0-1	
YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>			
Have you ever been convicted of a felony? 0-1		YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		If yes, explain	
YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>					
EDUCATION 0-2 FOR NAME OF HS, ADDRESS, FROM AND TO					
High School			Address		
From	To	Did you graduate? 0-1	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	Degree 0-2	
PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT 0-2 COMPANY NAME PHONE ADDRESS SUPERVISOR					
Company			Phone ()		
Address			Supervisor		
Job Title 0-2		Starting Salary \$ 0-1		Ending Salary \$ 0-1	
Responsibilities 0-2					
From 0-1 To		Reason for Leaving 0-2			
REFERENCES 0-2 FOR SECTION					
<i>Please list your professional reference.</i>					
Full Name			Relationship		
Company			Phone ()		

Verbal Test (all scored 0-2) total (8)

Tell me about yourself. / Tell me about your past work experience.

Tell me 2 strengths and 2 weaknesses.

What is your availability?

What are your goals?

Written Score: ____/30

Verbal Score: ____/8

Total test score _____/38

VESL Post-test

Written Test Total (30)

Please fill out the employment application below to the best of your ability:

APPLICANT INFORMATION					
Last Name		First		M.I.	Date
Street				Apartment/Un	
City		State		ZIP	
Phone		E-mail			
Date Available		Social Security		Pay Desired	
Position Applied for					
Are you a citizen of the United States?		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	If no, are you authorized to work in the U.S.?	
		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Have you ever been convicted of a felony?		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes, explain	
EDUCATION					
High School			Address		
From	To	Did you graduate?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	Degree
PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT					
Company			Phone ()		
Address			Supervisor		
Job Title		Starting Salary	\$	Ending Salary	\$
Responsibilities					
From		To	Reason for Leaving		
REFERENCES					
<i>Please list your professional reference.</i>					
Full Name			Relationship		
Company			Phone ()		

IRC VESL Plus and PCG VESL Tips for interviewing VESL clients

1. Because our clients have varying levels of language abilities:
 - please slow down your speech a bit until you get a sense of the client's level of comprehension. If you have a client who is quite fluent, try to speak at a normal rate
 - choose simple phrases when/if you ask for more information
 - please do not correct grammar; as you ask questions and interact with the clients, you will automatically model grammar as used by a native speaker
 - please do not prompt the client or give partial answers; this really is a test of their knowledge at this point in time
2. Due to time constraints, please plan to ask only 3 – 4 of the questions during the interview
 - if the client is able to quickly and correctly answer the questions, then feel free to ask for more information and/or more questions
3. When you ask the questions, please start by phrasing them as written
 - if the client does not respond or responds incorrectly (thinking it is a different question), please rephrase the question (using one of those listed, if possible)
 - if the client still does not respond or continues to respond incorrectly, go on to a different question (but please note the one you had to skip)
 - at the end, please ask them if they have any questions for you. If they say no, please tell them that employers really EXPECT applicants to have at least a question or two
4. Please enjoy your time with our clients
 - Many of our clients will be nervous. However, through your kind and friendly interactions with them, they will gain additional confidence and valuable knowledge about interviewing for a job in the U.S.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS AND PATIENCE!

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Questions 1, 2, 3 are all very similar. If you ask one, decide whether you need to ask the others.

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. What is your previous work experience?
What was your last job?
What work did you do on your last job?
What work did you do before?

3. Why should we hire you?

4. What are your strengths and weaknesses? (if they already talked about strengths, just ask about weaknesses)
Tell me 3 strengths and 3 weaknesses.

5. What is your availability? (it can mean either start date or days can work; try to get both if you want)
When can you start? When can you work? What days can you work?
(other related questions: Can you work on the weekends? At night? Are you flexible?)

6. Do you have reliable transportation?
How will you get to work? Do you have a car?

7. Who referred you?

9. What are your goals?
What do you want to do in the future?

10. Do you have any questions? (They should have at least 1 – 2 questions.)

For students who answer the above questions with relative ease

11. What does customer service mean to you?
What is good customer service?

Employment Interview Feedback Form

International Rescue Committee
Employment Interview Feedback Form

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

Employer: _____ Position: Stocker

APPEARANCE

Did applicant look professional?	Yes:	No:
Cleanliness (hair combed, clean shaven)	Yes:	No:
Neat clothing (shirt tucked in, modest jewelry)	Yes:	No:

INTRODUCTION

Did applicant have good eye contact?	Yes:	No:
Did applicant have a pleasant expression (smiling)?	Yes:	No:
Did applicant have a firm handshake (strong or dead fish)?	Yes:	No:

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEWER QUESTIONS

Did applicant sit comfortably with good posture?	Yes:	No:
Did applicant speak clearly and loudly?	Yes:	No:
Did applicants' answers fit the questions?	Yes:	No:
Did applicants' answers match job description?	Yes:	No:
Were answers too brief?	Yes:	No:
Were answers too lengthy?	Yes:	No:
Did applicant ask to clarify questions if needed?	Yes:	No:

PRESENTATION

Did applicant show a positive attitude/ eagerness to work?	Yes:	No:
Did applicant share good work habits: Reliable, punctual, hard working?	Yes:	No:

APPLICANTS' QUESTIONS

Did applicant ask relevant questions, for instance:	Yes:	No:
• What are the job duties? When job would start?		
• What would be the hours of work?		
• Were there any special requirements /clothing etc.?		
• When the decision would be made for the job?		

Areas for Improvement:

Strengths:



Special Topics Learning Objectives

Students will attend a weekly seminar in the following topics:

**Weeks
1-8**

Health

Practice scheduling an appointment for a doctor's visit
Learn key terms for health and medical care
Identify the difference between emergencies and non-emergencies
Name several healthy practices they can incorporate into their daily routine

Food Security

Create a food budget and plan family meals
Understand the US food systems
Become aware that processed foods and beverages are not necessarily healthy options
Identify local grocery stores and farmers markets that offer healthy and affordable food
Discuss challenges in food planning and finding culturally appropriate resources

Career Development I & II

Explain why entry level or early employment is an important first step to achieve future career goals
Comprehend the differences between the US education system and the education system of their former country
Identify different community resources
Identify a future goal



Special Topics Learning Objectives Continued

Students will attend a weekly seminar in the following topics:

Weeks 1-8

Transportation I & II

- Explain the importance of understanding public transportation systems
- Identify where to purchase a compass card
- Use both Google Maps and the Regional Transit Map to route plan
- Know how to make correct transfers
- Apply learned skills by taking a field trip to a local attraction using public transportation
- Describe what services the DMV provides and how to make an appointment
- Explain the difference between a driver's permit and a driver's license
- Understand the process to obtain a driver's license
- Apply Financial Literacy skills to create an appropriate car buying budget
- Name three places to look for cars
- Identify a checklist of things to do and ask before buying a car
- Explain how to use Edmunds and Kelly Blue Book websites in the car search process
- Know who to contact at IRC for information on auto loans

Micro Enterprise

- Narrow down ideas for an industry/field of interest
- Name different types of self-employment
- Further comprehend the importance of credit history
- Identify key steps in creating a business plan

Presentation Descriptions | Special Topics

Health

- Practice scheduling an appointment for a doctor's visit
- Learn key terms for health and medical care
- Identify the difference between emergencies and non-emergencies
- Name several healthy practices they can incorporate into their daily routine

The goals of the Health Special Topics presentation are for students to become familiar with the health care system in the US and understand the different types of medical care.

The IRC Resettlement Department helps refugees navigate the healthcare system in the US. Students who have MediCAL must select healthcare providers and learn how to schedule doctors' appointments, resolve billing issues and access interpretation. Given these challenges VESL Plus students face, the Health Special Topics presentation is an opportunity for students to first learn a general overview of the US healthcare system and steps to take in accessing healthcare. During the presentation, students will discuss different types of medical care including: preventative, primary, urgent and emergency. Students also identify and discuss healthy practices to incorporate in preventative care. Like VESL Plus' focus on encouraging self-sufficiency, it is important that students are aware of how to maintain their health and become their own health advocates.

Food Security

- Create a food budget and plan family meals
- Understand the US food systems
- Become aware that processed foods and beverages are not necessarily healthy options
- Identify local grocery stores and farmers markets that offer healthy and affordable food
- Discuss challenges in food planning and finding culturally appropriate resources

The goals of the Food Security Special Topics presentation is for students to learn ways to meal plan for their families and become aware of appropriate community sources that promote a healthy and sustainable future.

Good nutrition and food budgeting go hand-in-hand with the goals of early employment by empowering students to become self-sufficient in their community. Newly arrived refugees need information and support in order to transition to the US marketplace and make good food choices in their new environment. The IRC Food Security and Community Health Department provides durable solutions to food security, health problems and economic hardship through community-based food and farming projects.

The Food Security unit consists of one two-hour class in the eight week VESL Plus program and is designed to educate students about their access to culturally appropriate and healthy foods in their local communities. The class focuses on the need for creating a family food budget, understanding of local fresh produce and the health consequences of fast/processed food. In San Diego, VESL Plus students are encouraged to visit local IRC supported farmers markets that provide various affordable produce from our New Roots urban farms.

Presentation Descriptions | Special Topics

Career Development Class 1 & 2

Explain why entry level or early employment is an important first step to achieve future career goals
Comprehend the differences between the education systems in the US and in their former country
Identify different community resources
Identify a future goal

The goal of the Career Development Special Topics presentations are for students to become familiar with the steps they can take after early employment to achieve their individual professional goals.

Students arrive in the US with various employment backgrounds from unskilled to skilled trades to professional careers. Many students would like to return to their original field, or use their developed skills. In IRC's Center for Financial Opportunity, the Career Development Department facilitates career advancement support and training programs to help progress students' professional objectives.

The Career Development unit consists of two two-hour classes and is designed to assist students, who are currently looking for employment, to increase their self-sufficiency by better understanding the first steps needed in order to reach their goals. The first class focuses on the US education system and why earning a higher degree can be beneficial for future goals. The second class focuses on interview etiquette and nuances for professional level job interviews.

Transportation 1 & II

Explain the importance of understanding public transportation systems
Identify where to purchase a compass card
Use both Google Maps and the Regional Transit Map to route plan
Know how to make correct transfers
Apply learned skills by taking a field trip to a local attraction using public transportation
Describe what services the DMV provides and how to make an appointment
Explain the difference between a driver's permit and a driver's license
Understand the process to obtain a driver's license
Apply Financial Literacy skills to create an appropriate car buying budget
Name three places to look for cars
Identify a checklist of things to do and ask before buying a car
Explain how to use Edmunds and Kelly Blue Book websites in the car search process
Know who to contact in IRC for information on auto loans

The goal of the first Transportation Special Topics class is for the students to gain the skills necessary to plan and feel comfortable using public transportation (bus and/or the trolley).

Many students do not use the bus because 1) they are afraid of getting lost, 2) they do not know which or how many buses to take 3) they, or a family member, have a car and do not think it is important. Increasing students' knowledge of the public transportation system and its uses will allow them to feel comfortable to plan for and use the local buses or trolleys as a primary or secondary means of transportation.

Presentation Descriptions | Special Topics

Transportation I & II Continued

This Transportation unit consists of two two-hour classes and is designed to enhance the VESL Plus curriculum by assisting clients, who are currently looking for employment, to increase their self-sufficiency, and better integrate into their surrounding community through transportation.

The second Transportation Special Topics class aims to give students the information and tools necessary to begin the process of obtaining their driver's permit and driver's license, and the steps to plan for and buy a car in the US.

Transportation is a major barrier to employment. VESL students are enrolled in the VESL Plus program with employment being the ultimate end goal. Many of the students who obtain employed work in locations that are not easily accessible by public transportation. Also many of their shifts are early in the morning or late at the night when the bus, trolley, and trains have limited routes. To address this, many students participate in carpool programs in order to get to work on time and retain employment. Increasing students' awareness of private transportation will help to further address the transportation gaps in students' employability.

Micro Enterprise

Narrow down ideas for an industry/field of interest
Name different types of self-employment
Further comprehend the importance of credit history
Identify key steps in creating a business plan

The goal of the Micro Enterprise Special Topics class is for students to become familiar with the services offered by IRC's Micro Enterprise Department and to gain insight into the process of starting a business in the US.

IRC's Asset Building and Loan Department offers support to refugees wanting to build their assets by applying for loans and/or starting a business. In this presentation, students will obtain an introductory understanding of the difference between starting a business here in the US versus in their previous country. Often students do not know that self-employment in the US is a viable way of obtaining self-sufficiency.

The presentation offers insight to the steps needed for students to use their skills and previous employment and transfer them to a privately owned business. Students will also discuss the foundation they must establish before embarking on starting a business, including the need to gain work experience and become qualified before applying for a small business loan. Students will receive recommendations that will help strengthen their loan application for future reference including: meeting one-on-one with a Micro Enterprise Business Counselor, working on a business plan, building/strengthening their credit history, identifying related work experience and saving money. Much of what is discussed in this presentation also supports what is taught in the VESL Plus Financial Literacy classes.