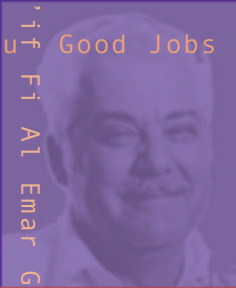


Getting to Work

Good Jobs in Construction Waza'if Fi Al Emar Good Jobs in Construction Buenos Empleos en la Construcción

Dobre Prace w Produkowaniu Good Jobs in Manufacturing Waza'if Fi Al Senaa



Dobre Prace w Ochronie Zdrowia Good Jobs in Healthcare Bons Employés au Service Médical Good Jobs in Healthcare

Good Jobs in Hospitality Việc làm tốt trong ngành khách sạn Good Jobs in Hospitality



建築業好工作 Good Jobs in Construction 建築業好工作 Good Jobs in Healthcare

A Report on How Workers with Limited English Skills Can Prepare for Good Jobs



Made possible with support of The Joyce Foundation

Getting to Work

A Report on
How Workers
with Limited
English Skills
Can Prepare
for Good Jobs



by the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute
through the help of the Joyce Foundation

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*Nancy Mills
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AFL-CIO Working for America Institute
May 2004*

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Executive Summary

Workers who live in the United States want to speak English. English language skills allow them to communicate with their neighbors and co-workers. But even more importantly, these workers and their families need family-sustaining incomes.

All too often, limited English skills, combined with low educational attainment in their native language, keep immigrant workers out of occupational training programs including those funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Most of the programs funded through WIA are geared towards workers with at least a 9th grade level of education. However, among low-wage immigrant workers, 28% have not completed the 9th grade.¹ Even those who attain higher levels of education may still have difficulty demonstrating educational achievement on tests given in written English.

If we, as a nation, choose not to support, or are unable to support, immigrants and refugees until they have become fluent in English, then we must help them get—and keep—the best possible jobs while they continue to gain greater English fluency.

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute, through its national work with unions and employers in manufacturing, health care, hospitality and construction, found a great deal of interest—both among these important economic actors as well as among community organizations and training providers—in meeting both the language and occupational skill needs of immigrant workers.

Scope and Approach of This Project

To assist these unions, their employers and their community organization and training provider partners, the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute undertook some initial research into the state of practice among programs that seek to help workers with limited English proficiency (LEP) get and keep good jobs.

We chose eight (8) programs to review. They were selected, in consultation with an Advisory Committee, as representing promising practices in the world of blended or integrated occupational and language skill instruction. This study is not a comprehensive examination of practices in the field nor does it claim to demonstrate best practices. Much more quantitative data, over longer time horizons, would be necessary before making that claim. Nevertheless, the reported outcomes and observed pedagogical and programmatic innovations demonstrate considerable success in training, placing, retaining and upgrading LEP workers in good, family-sustaining jobs.

We believe that these programs—either products of union and employer partnerships or programs that consciously work with unions and their signatory employers in order to access the better jobs in their communities—demonstrate a variety of promising practices for the field. In addition, our review of these programs suggest that there are some common workforce development policy hypotheses that advocates for LEP workers, employers, unions and workplace education and training providers should consider.

We found that labor market conditions in different industrial sectors—as well as different stakeholder interests—led to a variety of program objectives:

Hospitality—programs preparing new entrants and entry level workers to get into the better hospitality jobs with fair wages, benefits and opportunities for advancement

- Nevada Partners/Culinary Training Academy (CTA)—*Las Vegas, Nevada*
- Atlantic Cape Community College—*Atlantic City, New Jersey*
- Support Training Employment Program (STEP)—*San Francisco, California*

Manufacturing—programs preparing experienced workers to get advanced manufacturing skills for well-paid jobs in a changing industry

- Instituto del Progreso Latino—*Chicago, Illinois*
- Milwaukee HIRE Center—*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*
- The Candy Institute/Food Chicago—*Chicago, Illinois*

Construction—programs integrating immigrant workers into well-established joint union/employer apprenticeship programs

- Laborers-AGC Education and Training Fund and the Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California

Health care—a program addressing skilled worker shortages by aiding incumbent workers advance to higher-skilled, higher-paid jobs

- Bill Michelson Home Care Industry Education Fund—*New York, New York*

Common Program Development Stages and Challenges

Despite the differences in sectoral concentration and program objectives, we discovered some common program conceptualization and design steps. We hope that these, together with particularly encouraging practices within each of these stages, will be helpful to both start-up and existing programs. Our identified stages are as follows:

Stage 1 GETTING STARTED

- Identifying and analyzing stakeholder needs
- Defining program objectives
- Conducting outreach and recruitment/increasing the odds of success: the good jobs factor
- Deciding on and working with providers
- Developing and leveraging resources

Stage 2 DESIGNING THE PROGRAM

- Conducting appropriate individual learner assessments
- Scheduling
- Determining the need for remediation and preparatory training
- Determining the appropriate relationship of language education to job-related training
- Determining instructional methodology

Stage 3 SUPPORTING PARTICIPANTS AND CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNER SUCCESS

- Incorporating supportive services
- Supporting workers on the job
- Teaching citizenship and worker/immigrant rights

Stage 4 BUILDING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Learning from programmatic experience
- Incorporating staff development

In our study of these eight programs, we also identified six areas that appear to present the greatest challenge to training programs that serve LEP workers: **learner assessment tools and utilization of assessment results; participant data tracking and evaluation; curriculum development; staff development; funding; and issues of equity and equality on the job.** The paper suggests some approaches to resolve each of these challenges.

Some Policy Hypotheses

Taken together, the experiences of the programs we looked at suggest some hypotheses about how best to serve employers seeking skilled workers and LEP workers seeking family-sustaining jobs.

Fluency and/or literacy in English is not a pre-requisite for securing a family-sustaining job.

We found a number of good programs that are successfully preparing workers to get relatively well-paid jobs even before achieving full English fluency. Through good instructional methodology, worker support systems and contextualized curriculum, LEP workers can get good jobs.

Tailoring the content of English language instruction and occupational training to the requirements of specific jobs permits faster, yet successful job placement, retention and advancement.

Workers seeking good jobs in the hospitality industry learned enough survival English in a few weeks to fill out an English language job application, pass an English language interview and get and retain a relatively good job. Foreign-trained nurses working as low-paid homecare workers saw the possibility of U.S. certification and quickly learned enough English to pass the English language nursing certification exam. Some of these workers had spent years in the U.S. in low-paying jobs without becoming fluent in English. Our observations of apprenticeship training in construction also confirmed that good instructional methodology helps LEP workers get well-paid, skilled employment before they are fluent in the English language.

Continuing English instruction is in the long-term interest of LEP workers, employers and communities.

Even with a relatively good entry-level job, job mobility is limited for LEP workers. Employers also benefit from improved English language competency among their employees.

Accomplishing the appropriate matching of Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) education to occupational training, placement, retention and upgrading will require changes in policy and practice on the part of a number of public and private stakeholders.

Many institutions can make a difference in how successfully the nation matches LEP workers to family-sustaining jobs. Although this paper primarily analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the actual training providers and identifies in more detail the particular challenges that these programs must overcome to strengthen their outcomes, these programs are influenced by the policies and programs of many other players. Unions, employers, community-based organizations, government, community colleges and other educational providers are just a few. In the recommendations section of the paper, we outline some of the practice and policy changes that each of these stakeholders could and should consider.

Worthy of special mention is the role of the public workforce development system. The public workforce development system has been relatively unresponsive to the language and employment needs of LEP workers. LEP workers face numerous barriers to access the public workforce development system. These barriers include low levels of English proficiency, low literacy in their native language, unfamiliarity with the U.S. employment system and lack of translators at service centers. Furthermore, the accountability measures that have been put in place to ensure that public workforce dollars are spent effectively sometimes have the unintended consequence of excluding the workers who could most benefit from the system.

We hope that this paper will contribute to an understanding of promising practices that are currently working to assist LEP workers get and keep good jobs. We hope that this understanding will result in greater collaboration between public and private providers of services to LEP workers—to the benefit of working families and communities across the country.

Further research, identification of best practices and technical assistance in replicating those best practices are important next steps to serving the needs of workers with limited English proficiency and their current and future employers. Our hope is that this paper will help to stimulate those developments.

Introduction

With documented and undocumented immigrants now making up approximately 12 percent of the U.S. population—the highest percentage since 1930²—unions, community based organizations and employers are seeking ways to accelerate the process by which immigrant workers obtain higher skilled, better paying jobs.

Most skills training programs for these better jobs currently require participants to have a high level of proficiency in English. However, according to a publication of the National Center for ESL Literacy Education, it is likely to take adults many years to become skilled in English.

Studies suggest that it takes school-aged children 2 to 3 years to develop social language (conversational skills) and 5 to 7 years to acquire academic proficiency in a second language to reach parity with native English speakers (Cummins, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Moreover, school-aged children usually attend school 5 days a week for approximately 6 hours a day, which is considerably more than adults in adult education programs do.³

Workers who live in the United States want to speak English. English language skills allow them to communicate with their neighbors and co-workers. But even more importantly, these workers and their families need family-sustaining incomes. If we, as a nation, do not choose to—or are unable to—support immigrants and refugees until they have become fluent in English, then we must help them get—and keep—the best possible jobs they can while they continue to gain greater fluency in English.

Unfortunately, when the requirement for entry into occupational training is English proficiency, millions of immigrant workers are routinely excluded from these training programs. Without this training they are stuck in low

paying jobs and often must work multiple shifts and part time jobs in order to support their families and sustain their communities. These conditions virtually preclude further occupational or language training and education and condemn many workers with limited English proficiency (LEP), to low paying, dead-end jobs.

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) in a Policy Brief titled *The Language of Opportunity* points out that:

Virtually all of our nation's new workforce growth for the foreseeable future will come from immigration, so failure to assist immigrants in improving their language and job skills is likely to hurt workforce productivity over the long term.⁴

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute, through its national work with unions and their employer partners in four major industrial sectors—hospitality, manufacturing, health care and construction—has found that there is indeed a great deal of interest in meeting both the language and occupational skill needs of immigrant workers. (Each of these industrial sectors has significant concentrations of immigrant workers.) Many unions (e.g., Service Employees International Union [SEIU], Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees [HERE], Laborers International Association of North America [LIUNA] and the Union of Needle, Industrial and Textile Employees [UNITE]) already represent many immigrant workers. These unions want to make available to their LEP members the same kinds of upgrading opportunities that their English-proficient members enjoy. These and other unions—especially those in construction (e.g., Carpenters and the Operating Engineers)—are also pro-actively seeking to recruit non-union immigrant workers. These unions, their employers and the labor-sponsored training programs that prepare workers for

unionized jobs are looking for information about the kinds of programs that will serve this population and their employers most effectively. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of opportunities for networking and dissemination of good and promising practices in the field, causing the established training providers and their sponsors to develop teaching approaches without benefit of established models and benchmarks.

To assist unions, their employers and their community and training partners in starting and/or improving their services to LEP workers and their employers, the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute undertook some initial research into the current state of practice among programs seeking to help LEP workers get and keep good jobs.

In this project, we aimed to identify:

- the common elements of programs that successfully connect and support the retention and advancement of LEP workers in good jobs;
- the specific language and occupational training and education practices that meet the needs of stakeholders in particular industries;
- the major challenges to programs that seek to serve LEP workers and their employers; and
- the elements of a potential common policy agenda for advocates for immigrant workers, unions, employers and workforce development practitioners.

This study is not a comprehensive examination of practices in the field. To our knowledge, there is no comprehensive inventory of programs that serve both occupational and language needs of the LEP population. We do not claim to demonstrate best practices. Much more quantitative data, over longer time horizons, would be necessary before making that assertion. Nevertheless, the reported outcomes and observed pedagogical and programmatic innovations demonstrate considerable success in training, placing, retaining and upgrading LEP workers in good, family-sustaining jobs.

We believe that these programs—either products of union and employer partnerships or programs that consciously work with unions and their signatory employers—demonstrate a variety of promising practices for the field. We highlight some of those most promising practices in this paper. In addition, our review of these programs suggests that there are some common workforce development policy hypotheses that advocates for LEP workers, employers, unions and workplace education and training providers should consider. We hope that the report's findings will contribute to resolving some of the current programmatic and policy debate about how best to integrate immigrant workers into America's economy.

Scope and Approach of This Project

The Institute studied eight (8) workplace education and training programs that are serving adults with limited English proficiency in four targeted industries—manufacturing, health care, hospitality and construction. The programs were chosen with the help of an Advisory Committee of fourteen members⁵ with expertise in the fields of workplace education and training for adults with limited English proficiency. The Advisory Committee members are program leaders, program developers, researchers and academics, funders concerned with LEP workers and advocates for immigrant workers.

The programs we studied are:

Hospitality:

Nevada Partners/Culinary Training Academy (CTA)—

Las Vegas, Nevada

Atlantic Cape Community College—

Atlantic City, New Jersey

Support Training Employment Program (STEP)—

San Francisco, California

Manufacturing:

Instituto del Progreso Latino—*Chicago, Illinois*

Milwaukee HIRE Center—*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

The Candy Institute/Food Chicago—*Chicago, Illinois*

Construction:

Laborers-AGC Education and Training Fund and the Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California

Health care:

Bill Michelson Home Care Industry Education Fund—

New York, New York

Each program we studied was developed in response to the particular circumstances of the sector, the needs of the participants and stakeholders, as well as the social, historical and cultural conditions in their regions. Each prepared workers for jobs with a future—jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits and/or with well-defined and achievable career paths. Their accomplishments demonstrate the ingenuity of employers, unions, educational providers and community organizations that are committed to finding, placing and retaining good workers, including those with limited English language skills.

While each program we examined produced good results for workers and other stakeholders, limited resources and in some cases lack of experience, kept them from fulfilling their full potential. In many cases, programs were unable to do the kinds of data tracking that would allow a more objective evaluation of their outcomes. No single program was able to develop best practice models in all aspects of its practice. The good news is, however, that despite all the structural and financial challenges they face, these programs are, in their laboratory of invention, helping LEP workers get and keep good jobs.

Of the eight programs we examined, five filled out an extensive questionnaire. We observed five of them and interviewed staff from all but one. (See Appendix 2). Unfortunately, we were not able to interview workers for this effort. Future research should include this step.

In this study, we were not able to obtain all the outcome information we would have liked. Unfortunately, not every program has the capacity to aggregate individual data and track outcomes—a barrier for their own program design as well as a challenge for policy makers in this field. Consequently, our findings are based on both statistical and anecdotal information.

We organized our findings by stages of program development and implementation:

The first stage, **Getting Started**, involves the identification and analysis of stakeholder needs, clarification of objectives, outreach to potential learners, the selection of appropriate providers and the acquisition of the requisite resources.

Stage 2, **Designing the Program**, involves individual learner assessment, creation of contextualized programs and making sure that the objectives are served by program design. At this stage, curriculum design and teaching methodologies need to be formulated so they are consistent with objectives and projected outcomes.

Stage 3, **Supporting Participants And Creating The Conditions For Learner Success**, is a critical part of program development that warrants a category of its own. The development of support systems for LEP workers that encompass social, instructional and on the job support often means the difference between success and failure for individual learners.

And finally, in Stage 4, **Building for Continuous Improvement**, programs confront the issues of building ongoing capacity and continuous improvement by addressing systems for data tracking, evaluation and staff development.

The Public Workforce Investment System

Because several of the programs interact with the public workforce development system, this paper makes a number of references to elements of that system. A short definition

of each of these major elements should help those readers who are unfamiliar with the programs.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA), created by Congress in 1998, replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and provides federal funding for workforce development nationwide.

One-Stop Career Centers are local, publicly-funded facilities that provide individuals with employment-related services, including helping establish eligibility for training.

Satellite One-Stops are Career Centers in partnership with one or more other organizations that offer some of the components of a One-Stop Career Center.

Basic Services Under WIA:

Core Services refer to a universally available set of services for job seekers—regardless of their earnings history—that must be provided at all One-Stop Career Centers. Examples of these services include helping workers prepare resumes and review local job announcements.

Intensive Services are available to adults and dislocated workers who need additional assistance to gain employment. Examples include personalized skills analysis, career counseling and in some cases, job readiness training, basic skills education and/or ESL.

Training Services can be made available to unemployed adults and employed adults whose income falls below the self-sufficiency levels and/or those who require more training to qualify for a job.

Industry Trends and Program Snapshots

LEP workers and their employers in each of the four targeted industrial sectors— hospitality, manufacturing, construction and health care—face a wide array of occupational training and language education challenges. We found that the particular dynamics in each of the targeted sectors influenced the focus of the training programs.

Training LEP Workers for Good Hospitality Jobs

Hospitality: No longer a “haven” for LEP workers

The hospitality industry has changed significantly since the turn of this century. These changes have had an impact on workers and on the programs that prepare them for employment and upgrading. All three of the program operators in this sector with whom we met⁶ noted the same trend in the labor market. They reported that in the 1990s, employers faced labor shortages and were willing to hire many immigrant workers with or without English language skills. Applications were translated into Spanish and other languages. Job interviews were conducted in a variety of languages. Workers who had limited English language skills were usually hired for “back of the house” jobs such as room attendants and bussers.

The increasing competition in the hotel industry, the economic downturn of the new millennium and the recession in the hospitality industry after 9/11 changed that situation. Now, in a time of high unemployment, when job openings occur, employers can be more selective and are demanding higher-level English skills. In addition, increased competition among higher-price hotels has resulted in efforts to improve customer service. Many have reclassified room attendants and bussers as “front of the house” jobs, thus requiring that workers interact with customers in English. In response to these changes, programs are preparing workers for jobs in the industry by offering vocational English skill instruction as part of a job preparation program—even for entry-level jobs that in the past did not require it.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Nevada Partners/Culinary Training Academy (CTA) Las Vegas, Nevada

Nevada Partners is a comprehensive, not-for-profit organization that operates a satellite One-Stop. It runs training programs in partnership with the Culinary Training Academy, a program of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE) Local 226 and most of the major hotels in Las Vegas. Base funding for the CTA program for incumbent union members comes from negotiated contributions per HERE member to a jointly-administered training trust fund. It is supplemented by public workforce development dollars going to Nevada Partners to support the services associated with new employee recruitment and training.

This partnership offers a Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) job readiness program. Workers with limited English skills attend a three-week, 30-hour program that prepares them to apply for a job (primarily in the hospitality industry) requiring an English language job application and an English language interview. Participants are predominantly Spanish speaking, although there are significant numbers of workers from Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa. The first VESL job preparation program served 124 workers, 60% of whom were placed quickly in the hospitality industry. The program has not yet collected information about workers who were not immediately placed.

New placements received an average of \$9 to \$10 per hour in union jobs with benefits (including health insurance and pensions) and negotiated step raises based on length of employment. Because the program is relatively new, retention data is not yet available.

**PROGRAM
SNAPSHOT****Atlantic Cape Community
College****Atlantic City, New Jersey**

The Atlantic Cape Community College, in partnership with the public workforce development One-Stop system in Atlantic County, New Jersey, provides a VESL job preparation program for immigrant and non-immigrant LEP workers. Funding for the program comes from public workforce development sources.

Primary partners, in addition to the One Stop, include the casino industry and the hospitality union, HERE Local 54. This VESL program includes 175 hours of training, generally running for five weeks, five days a week. It provides instruction in what the program terms "survival English" and helps prepare participants to complete English language job applications and pass English language job interviews. The instruction is primarily, but not exclusively, tailored to the casino industry. The greatest number of participants are Spanish speakers (with a significant number of non-immigrants from Puerto Rico) and Asian immigrants from China, Vietnam, India and Bangladesh. In the period from November 2001 through July 2003, 241 participants enrolled in the course; 63% completed it. Of those who completed, 80% were placed in jobs. The majority of the jobs were in the hotel and casino industry.

The average wage for those placed was over \$8 per hour. Those placed in union hotel jobs are entitled to longevity, step raises and a benefit package that includes health, vacation and pension. Retention rates are tracked through 120 days. 97% of the VESL program placements retained their jobs during that period.

**PROGRAM
SNAPSHOT****Support Training Employment
Program (STEP)****San Francisco, California**

Under the auspices of a Joint Training Oversight Committee (with representatives from the San Francisco Hotels Multi-Employer Group, HERE Local 2, the Labor/Management Education Fund, the San Francisco Labor Council and the City College of San Francisco), STEP helps underemployed (those on temporary layoff or reduced hours) unionized hotel workers train for food and beverage jobs such as banquet busser, restaurant busser, or barback. These are the jobs with well-defined career ladders identified by class A hotels in the region as having both current and future openings.

Project staff from HERE Local 2 run the program with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor and the San Francisco United Way through the local United Labor Agency. The program provides two levels of language instruction to workers with limited English proficiency to prepare them for training for hotel service jobs that require English language skills. One is a general ESL class, the other a Food and Beverage VESL class.

Workers in the program are immigrants from primarily Latin American and Asian countries. In the pilot program that began in May 2003, 20 workers completed the General ESL class and 18 completed the Food and Beverage VESL class. The 18 VESL completers progressed to an 8 week, 48 hour food and beverage skills training class in order to qualify for the targeted positions. The classes ended in early November. In January 2004, reviews were being conducted by the Department of Labor and the United Labor Agency to evaluate outcomes. (The results are not yet available.)

Training LEP Workers for Good Manufacturing Jobs

Manufacturing: National trends obscure significant local VESL training needs

Workplace education programs targeting the manufacturing sector face many challenges. Although the sector is shrinking, there are still job openings—and even shortages—in many parts of the country for skilled workers, particularly in small and mid-sized companies. The programs we studied in Milwaukee and Chicago proactively contribute to manufacturing industrial retention strategies. By helping companies train their LEP workers for re-engineered production, increases in productivity and changing technology, these and other workforce development programs have been able to slow and in some cases prevent (at least temporarily), the movement of manufacturing out of the Midwest and the country.

Programs that train workers for shortages in skilled manufacturing are facing restrictions on the use of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars for dislocated workers because general labor market information shows a decline in manufacturing. A mandate of the WIA system is job placement. Consequently, labor market information is a significant factor in determining what jobs to train for. But the “big picture” analysis in manufacturing also obscures a more detailed view that shows continued labor shortages in skilled manufacturing in small and medium-sized companies in some regions of the country.

Successful programs have had to fight to maintain financial support for their manufacturing-related offerings despite continued support from employers and successful training and placement outcomes. The immigrant population makes up a larger proportion of the manufacturing workforce than their proportion of the population as a whole. This difficulty with obtaining funding for manufacturing programs is, therefore, particularly disturbing because manufacturing wages are generally higher than those paid in the other industries into which LEP workers are often “tracked.”

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Instituto del Progreso Latino Chicago, Illinois

Instituto has been providing social, educational and cultural services to the Latino community in Chicago for almost 30 years.

It runs a bilingual manufacturing bridge program for LEP workers. (A bridge program is one that helps participants gain either the language and/or other prerequisites for a higher level occupational training program.) This program, of approximately 440 hours, provides both a beginning ESL and an intermediate VESL class to prepare workers to take a bilingual course in advanced manufacturing offered in partnership with the Westside Technical Institute, part of the Richard J. Daley Community College.

The goals of the program are job advancement for incumbent LEP manufacturing workers and placement of dislocated workers (most of whom have manufacturing experience) in advanced manufacturing. These goals remain viable even with the downturn in the manufacturing sector because of continuing shortages in critical manufacturing skill areas. At least 90% of the LEP participants are Spanish speaking.

Funding for the program has come from a variety of sources including employer fees, public workforce dollars and foundation grants. In fiscal 2001-2002, 77 workers completed the VESL program. Of these, 53 completed the bilingual manufacturing course with 73% placed in manufacturing jobs with an average wage of \$10.15 per hour. Instituto tracks employment retention at 30, 90 and 180 days. At the 180-day reckoning, approximately 80% retain their jobs. According to Tom Dubois, Workforce Programs Director of Instituto, those who leave their jobs after placement usually do so because they have found better, higher-paying jobs.

**PROGRAM
SNAPSHOT****The Candy Institute/
Food Chicago
Chicago, Illinois**

The Candy Institute/Food Chicago is a coalition of food processing companies,

workers, government and community organizations that are committed to strengthening and retaining the food processing industry in the Chicago metropolitan region. A major local industry, it includes approximately 900 food manufacturing companies employing 57,000 workers and contributing \$17 billion to the local economy. The Candy Institute takes a broad approach to its work by linking education and workforce development to economic development and industrial retention for the industry. It has partnered with training providers to offer the industry customized VESL classes with the goals of improving communication on the job, reducing manufacturing errors and improving productivity.

The majority of the workers who participated in the VESL programs are Latino, primarily Mexican. Of the 200 Latinos who participated in a job-related language skills program at one candy manufacturing company, 140 had limited English proficiency. Most had been in the United States more than sixteen years but had previously had few opportunities to study English. Approximately half had at least a high school diploma. The majority of the participants' literacy levels, nevertheless, were below eighth grade. 99% of those in the program completed it and, as a result, were organized into redesigned production teams. The majority of the participants achieved gains on the NYSE test and the BEST test (two commonly used tests of English language proficiency). 99% of the workers were successful in passing an occupational language achievement test, consisting of correct identification of words from a company list.

Workers did not get raises directly on completion but benefited from a new incentive system that was implemented along with the new work teams. The major outcomes of this program were measured in terms of productivity increases for the employer. Most departments in this plant experienced a 30% increase in productivity after the training and restructuring.

**PROGRAM
SNAPSHOT****Milwaukee HIRE Center
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

The HIRE Center is a consortium of the Private Industry Council/ Workforce Development Board, the Milwaukee Area Technical College, the AFL-CIO Labor Education and Training Center, the Milwaukee County Labor Council, United Way and the Wisconsin Job Service. It functions as a satellite One Stop for dislocated workers in Milwaukee.

The program has provided a 16 to 19 week, 600 hour bilingual training with supplemental VESL instruction in Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machining for laid-off workers. A part-time, 212-hour program for incumbent workers in Industrial Maintenance Mechanics (IMM) was also offered after work hours.

The first iteration of the project, which ended in 2001, provided 28 dislocated Latino workers (with or without previous manufacturing experience) with CNC training. They achieved a training-related placement rate of 79% with an average wage of \$10.40 per hour. (That wage rate was 105% of these workers' previous average wage—an unusually high outcome for dislocated worker programs.)

The first iteration of the project, which ended in 2001, provided 28 dislocated Latino workers (with or without previous manufacturing experience) with CNC training. They achieved a training-related placement rate of 79% with an average wage of \$10.40 per hour. (That wage rate was 105% of these workers' previous average wage—an unusually high outcome for dislocated worker programs.)

An extension of this program provided CNC and IMM training for both dislocated and incumbent manufacturing workers. For dislocated workers in the second program (21 completers), the training-related placement rate was 86%, with an average wage of \$11.01 per hour (approximately a 90% wage replacement rate). For incumbent workers (48 completers), 96% retained employment in manufacturing at a time when Milwaukee was facing major layoffs in the sector and 67% raised their previous pay rates to wages ranging from \$12.54 to \$13.57 per hour.

Training LEP Workers for Good Construction Jobs

Construction: Bilingual training and VESL needed for the better jobs and for greater economic security

The building and construction trades are facing a skills shortage as a retirement bubble looms and as U.S. high school students, who meet apprenticeship requirements, increasingly choose post-secondary education or other careers over skilled trades. Although many immigrant workers are employed at entry-level positions in the construction industry, most do not have the skills and technical knowledge they need to become journey level workers. To get those skills and required certification and licensing for the better and more secure jobs in the field, they must get training through apprenticeships and other programs. Joint labor/management apprenticeships are an excellent option because training is free and workers earn while they learn. Moreover, step raises are tied to skills and experience, and the journeymen status conferred upon completion is recognized around the country. (See general description of union apprenticeship programs on page 19.)

Labor/management apprenticeship programs are increasingly opening their doors to immigrant workers, including those with limited English. Unions and their signatory employers are experimenting with ways to integrate these workers into programs that have traditionally been offered only in English.

Construction workers need sufficient English language competency for health and safety reasons, to understand the nomenclature of tools and equipment and for job mobility and access to career ladders. In construction, many workers move from employer to employer and even across states and regions. Without English, employment options are limited to the parts of the United States where their native language is commonly spoken.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Laborers-AGC Education and Training Fund and the Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California

The Laborers-AGC Education and Training Fund (Laborers-AGC) is a national joint program of the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) and the Associated General Contractors (AGC). The Fund supports comprehensive education and training programs and services to LIUNA members. One of its responsibilities is to train instructors for the 75 participating local funds that support apprenticeship and training for Construction Craft Laborers in the United States and Canada.

We observed one of these funds—the Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California. This Trust offers courses for skill certifications for both highly-skilled journey workers and entry-level apprentices in the union. According to Fred Duarte, the Apprenticeship Coordinator of the Long Beach, Wilmington and Orange County sub-region, of the almost 160 apprentices in the program, 50-75% are immigrants and approximately 35-40% are Spanish speakers with limited English proficiency. We observed some of the training classes and can both confirm the general accuracy of these numbers and the novel approach to bilingual occupational instruction utilized by this program. The Laborers-AGC is providing staff development to instructors in principles of adult learning, multi-sensory instructional methodology and language and literacy instruction. They are also providing intensive language instruction for teachers to encourage more bilingual instruction.

Currently, the program does not specifically track the numbers of immigrant workers or those with limited English proficiency. According to the instructors, the majority of apprentices with limited English proficiency are passing the program's required courses. Wages range from \$11.55 per hour for a beginning apprentice to \$23.10 per hour for a journeyman. Benefits include health insurance and pension.

Apprenticeship Training Programs in the Unionized Construction Industry

Through joint union and employer run apprenticeship programs, new entrants to the building and construction trades industry are employed and receive wages while

training on the job under the tutelage of master craftworkers. The costs of such a program are raised through a negotiated, per union member hourly wage assessment.

These apprenticeship programs operate under standards registered and certified by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training of the U.S. Department of Labor or by a state apprenticeship agency. In practice, many local unions and their signatory employers set training standards that exceed the minimum required for selection procedures, training content, wage progressions and completion requirements. All union-supported programs encourage women and minorities to apply. The number of apprentices accepted for training vary according to the trade or craft and local market conditions.

Benefits of the Apprenticeship Model

For workers:

- Opportunity to “earn while you learn”
- Progressive wages over the term of training
- Nationally (and often internationally) recognized credentials upon completion
- Documented skills that are transferable
- Higher earning potential and greater financial security
- More opportunities for future training and advancement
- Many programs offer college credit

For employers:

- Skilled workers trained to industry specifications and needs
- Reduced turnover
- Pipeline for new skilled workers
- Reduced costs due to higher than industry average worker productivity and safety

College Credit

An innovation in the apprenticeship programs of the unionized building trades combines apprenticeship with college study. In some programs, apprentices are “dually enrolled” in the apprenticeship program and in a college degree program. These programs recognize the academic achievement of those who successfully complete their apprenticeship and offer participating apprentices expanded career options.

Training LEP Workers for Good Health Care Jobs

Health care: Solving a worker shortage by aiding incumbent workers advance to higher skilled, higher paid jobs

Labor and skill shortages are endemic to the health care industry. The current nursing crisis in particular has been well documented. Not only are nurses aging out of the workforce, but also Registered Nurses (RNs) are leaving the bedside faster than new nurses are graduating—in part because of reported job dissatisfaction. One of the ways joint labor/management programs are addressing the crisis is by developing programs that help incumbent, lower-classified health care workers move into the nursing field. The rationale for this approach is that incumbent health care workers are familiar with working conditions and industry culture and are less likely to leave the nursing profession—once qualified and upgraded.

Joint labor/management partnerships in New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Los Angeles are upgrading incumbent workers with much success. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and its partnering employers have also created a Health Careers Advancement Program that provides opportunities for employed health care workers to become RNs through a combination of online learning and clinical instruction.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Bill Michelson Home Care Industry Education Fund New York, New York

This Education Fund is part of the New York Hospital League/SEIU 1199 Education Training and Job Security Fund and serves unionized home care workers in the New York Metropolitan Region. In addition to providing ESL classes and other educational services, the Fund is addressing the nursing shortage crisis.

Through the Foreign Born Registered Nurse Program, it provides assistance to foreign-educated and certified nurses, currently working as home care workers, to get certification as nurses in the United States. The instructional part of the program consists of intensive language instruction and preparation to take the N-CLEX, the National Council Licensure Examination, for nursing certification. The duration of the project is two years.

Forty workers are participating in the program, twenty-seven of whom are Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-eligible home care workers. Workers are provided with replacement wages and benefits during the training period. Russian speakers comprise the largest group with others speaking primarily Spanish, Creole and French. While the first cohort has not yet completed the program, only three workers have dropped out: one due to a death in the family, one as a result of pregnancy and one due to voluntary withdrawal.

Common Stages of Program Conception and Design

Each of these sector-based programs face slightly different conditions for LEP workers, and each has slightly different objectives. Nevertheless, the programs face similar processes in the conceptualization and realization of those objectives. What follows is our typology of the stages of program conception and design, including some particularly promising practices among the programs we studied.

Stage 1 **GETTING STARTED**

- Identifying and analyzing stakeholder needs
- Defining program objectives
- Conducting outreach and recruitment/ increasing the odds of success: the good jobs factor
- Deciding on and working with providers
- Developing and leveraging resources

Stage 2 **DESIGNING THE PROGRAM**

- Conducting appropriate individual learner assessments
- Scheduling
- Determining the need for remediation and preparatory training
- Determining the appropriate relationship of language education to job-related training
- Determining instructional methodology

Stage 3 **SUPPORTING PARTICIPANTS AND CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNER SUCCESS**

- Incorporating supportive services
- Supporting workers on the job
- Teaching citizenship and worker/immigrant rights

Stage 4 **BUILDING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

- Learning from programmatic experience
- Incorporating staff development

Stage I GETTING STARTED

Identifying and analyzing stakeholder needs

LEP workers need both occupational and English skills to get and keep good jobs. Engaging these workers in training involves a number of partners and stakeholders including:

- Workers
- Employers
- Unions
- Families
- The public workforce system
- The community
- Community based organizations
- Educational providers.

Each stakeholder has, to a certain extent, a different interest in occupational and English language instruction. The kinds of outcomes that address the needs of multiple stakeholders include:

- Economic self-sufficiency
- Stable communities
- Equality and equity in the community and the workplace
- Ongoing, life-long learning
- Citizenship and workers' rights
- Productivity and quality on the job
- Job retention and advancement
- Improvement of English language competency

Milwaukee HIRE and the 1199 Homecare Fund are examples of programs that strive for, and achieve, most or all of these outcomes. This kind of success is possible because they do a careful analysis of stakeholders needs. **Each program looked at the specific conditions of the industrial sector in which they are engaged, the needs and requirements of specific employers, the regional labor market and the needs of workers in their target industries.**

A labor market analysis conducted in the late 1990s suggested to HIRE that, despite a slowdown in the manufacturing sector in the Milwaukee area, the sector still made up 20% of the local job market. Additionally, “skills shortages in a variety of manufacturing occupations were widely seen as being a contributing factor in hindering economic development, particularly since the volume of retirements in skilled manufacturing occupations was outstripping new skilled workforce entrants.”⁷ Furthermore, their research informed them that two areas of skill shortages were CNC Machining

and Industrial Maintenance Mechanics. In Milwaukee, unlike other regions where there is a substantial population of Spanish-speaking workers (and in many cases, employers), the lack of English proficiency is a relatively large barrier to employment. The public workforce system was concerned about its ability to train and place Spanish-speaking workers with LEP in an environment in which those workers were a small minority in the workforce. The Latino community was not getting equal access to the workforce system and needed attention and support.

Wisconsin also has a history of proactive unions, community organizations and educational institutions that support a high road approach to workforce and economic development.⁸ These include the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership and the Milwaukee Area Technical College. Their connection to the program facilitated HIRE’s ability to provide services to the Latino community through improved access to unionized employers and the region’s most experienced training provider.

SEIU 1199 Bill Michelson Home Care Industry Education Fund’s Foreign Born Registered Nurse Program provides another good example of analyzing stakeholder needs for program development. Not only is there a short supply of nurses willing to work in hospitals and nursing homes, but the homecare industry also needs nurses to supervise and support homecare aides. The Fund knew there were health care professionals who had been trained in other countries but were working as homecare assistants because they lacked U.S. credentials. Some of these workers were so poorly paid that they qualified for TANF assistance. Retention is also a problem for the industry. The Fund, a labor-management trust, wanted to address the needs of workers for training and upgrading and the industry needs for retention and more nursing staff.

The Fund conducted research to determine how many foreign trained nurses were working as home health aides and the barriers these workers faced in obtaining U.S. certification. The research indicated that there were a significant number of foreign certified nurses who faced structural problems with the process of certification, a lack of opportunity and funding to pursue that certification and poor English skills that kept them from studying for the NCLEX. Using the information gathered from the research, the Fund designed a program that addressed three sets of issues: English language instruction, structural barriers to accepting foreign credentials and the need for a combination of test preparation and nursing skills refreshers. Consequently, the program is meeting three significant stake-

holders' needs: employers want critical labor shortages filled; the public system wants to lower the number of workers dependent on public subsidy; and, low-wage workers want pathways to improving their wages and meeting the goal of economic self-sufficiency.

Defining program objectives

Program objectives direct program design. Programs we observed had different objectives based on local labor market conditions, organizational missions, their client base, whether they served incumbent, dislocated, or new workers, sources of funding and other factors. Taking into account that the newer programs were still refining their needs analysis, in each case the objectives grew from an understanding of stakeholder interests. The chart below lists self-reported objectives.

While not every program met all its objectives, all met some or most of them. All were struggling to build on what they already had and to continue to help LEP workers get, keep and improve good jobs. Where objectives were not met, program operators reported that insufficient resources were key barriers. Some programs were too new to be able to evaluate the outcomes and whether or not their objectives were met.

While many generic ESL programs have difficulty demonstrating significant outcomes in part because of

retention problems, the programs we studied that connect workers with good jobs were able to demonstrate significant outcomes in short time frames. This success is largely due to their focus on occupational language proficiency for specific jobs, the worker's immediate job goal. (All of the programs we studied listed occupational language proficiency as an objective; only half included general language proficiency as a program objective.) In the two job preparation VESL programs we examined, the overwhelming majority of workers who completed were able to pass an English language interview, conduct a job search in English and fill out an English language job application. In most cases, these outcomes were accomplished in only three to five weeks due to the very specific focus of the program.

Conducting outreach and recruitment/increasing the odds of success: the good jobs factor

Programs that we studied had little trouble recruiting participants. More often than not, they have waiting lists. The challenge to programs such as these is not attracting sufficient participants, it is securing sufficient funding to expand the pool of participants.

The partnerships with unions and unionized employers have made these training programs of choice for LEP

Program objectives	Manufacturing			Hospitality			Construction	Health Care
	<i>Instituto del Progreso Latino</i>	<i>Milwaukee HIRE</i>	<i>The Candy Institute</i>	<i>Culinary Training Academy/ Nevada Partners</i>	<i>Atlantic Cape Comm. College</i>	<i>STEP</i>	<i>Laborers/ AGC S. California</i>	<i>1199 Homecare Nursing Prep</i>
Entry level job readiness	■	■		■	■			
Occupational training	■	■			■		■	■
Apprenticeship							■	
Career advancement	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Job placement	■	■		■	■	■	■	
General language proficiency	■			■	■	■		■
Occupational language proficiency	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Increased productivity	■	■	■					
Work process re-engineering			■					

workers. The opportunity to get a good job is a strong motivational factor when workers sign up for a training and education program. For the most, the jobs that workers prepared for in our study paid over \$9 per hour, along with benefits including health insurance, vacation and retirement. Many jobs were unionized with regulated step raises, opportunities for advancement and good benefits that support not only workers but also their families and broader communities. Because of the special relationship between unions and their signatory employers, programs can find out efficiently what the real—not theoretical—occupational and language requirements are for workers in specific unionized jobs.

The close collaboration between Atlantic Cape Community College and HERE Local 54 works to attract unemployed and dislocated workers to the program. The stability and benefits of unionized work in Atlantic City make union jobs in casinos attractive to immigrants and other workers. It brings them to the One-Stop where the College provides WIA Intensive Services to LEP workers. The union also refers workers to the College for additional occupational training and English language instruction.

Atlantic Cape Community College, the HIRE Center and Instituto could—and would—provide services for more LEP workers if the funding allowed for it. Each of these programs expressed disappointment that they had to turn away LEP workers with needs that are not being met elsewhere and who were no longer eligible for services because of changes in funding streams. (Many streams of public funding are attached to particular classifications of clients, e.g., dislocated, TANF, incumbent, etc. When funding priorities change, workers who previously qualified for services may no longer meet those qualifications.)

The Laborers and many other construction unions are in an active expansion mode as they seek to replace retiring members. The Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California and other apprenticeship programs around the country that are open to LEP workers have waiting lists for entry. Apprenticeship programs are expensive to run and involve huge financial commitments from employers and union members, so screening must be selective. To ensure that they get apprentices who are likely to be successful, the Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California screens applicants through an interview (in either English or Spanish), an orientation, a test of their physical abilities and drug testing. **In this program, like many others where training is bilingual, language is not a major factor in screening because it is not a barrier to instruction.**

In communities with smaller immigrant populations, recruitment is more difficult. Milwaukee HIRE was challenged to recruit Latino workers for their Spanish Tech Track Project in a labor market with a limited Latino population. In addition, they had to convince employers to take on new LEP workers and support training for LEP incumbent workers in an environment where Spanish-speaking workers are a small minority of the workforce. HIRE's outreach to Latino workers include, mailings to selected Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipient lists, newspaper articles in the Latino press, personal presentations at UI profiling sessions, announcements at church gatherings and other community events, referrals from Trade Adjustment staff and mailings by unions and other worker advocacy organizations.⁹

To engage employers in their incumbent worker program, HIRE used both the traditional direct approach to employers and an unusual employee to employer strategy. The project's final report states:

We decided that we wanted to test the idea that if we recruited incumbent workers for IMM (Industrial Maintenance Mechanic) training through our community ties rather than primarily relying on persuading employers to do the recruiting among their employees, we would then be able to make connections to new ... employers and persuade them to okay training participation of one or more of their workers. This worker-to-employer recruitment model worked extremely well. Our primary vehicle for recruitment was the large Hispanic congregation at San Antonio Church in the heart of the South Side Hispanic community. The project coordinator was permitted to make presentations at masses, and recruitment was extremely successful.¹⁰

By encouraging small groups of employees to recruit the participation of their common employers, HIRE was able to connect with new employers who later became staunch supporters and sources for job referrals.

Deciding on and working with providers

Getting an educational provider to deliver the right mix of language instruction is not a simple matter, especially when stakeholders require a customized course. While many community and technical colleges provide excellent services, we heard complaints that it was difficult in some regions to get the colleges or other providers to deliver

appropriate customized instruction. The difficulty was primarily in three areas: designing customized VESL curriculum that supported or enhanced particular job-related training; scheduling classes at times that were convenient for workers and employers; and, the retention of instructors who had experience, skill and commitment to the target population. Good practice in this area required time, work on interagency relationships and the resources to follow through with changes and adjustments.

Developing and leveraging resources

Programs with a stable source of funding are better able to plan effectively and prepare long-term to respond to stakeholders' needs. But even these programs need multiple funding sources to meet the resource-intensive nature of services to LEP workers. For those programs without a steady stream of funding, leveraging multiple funding streams becomes even more important. Programs that depend at least in part on labor-management negotiated dollars or joint training trusts, even when they receive some public and grant dollars, can sustain themselves through shifts in public funding objectives. Even more importantly, they can do effective planning and program development based on their stakeholders' needs.

The Laborers-AGC Education and Training Trust Fund supports education and training services to LIUNA locals and their signatory employers around the country. They

derive their funds from labor and management negotiated agreements. Nationally, the organization supports instructor training, translations of some standard texts, videos geared to the LEP worker that support classroom instruction, ESL instructional videos and Spanish immersion for instructors. Looking towards the future, this national organization is exploring the option of training more instructors in the theory and practice of language instruction. Their goal is to improve the blending of language and occupational training for the LEP apprentices who are trained through local training trusts. To build their capacity to accomplish this goal, the national fund is seeking additional sources of support.

The Culinary Training Academy is a labor-management partnership. Their VESL job preparation program for new and dislocated workers seeking work in the hospitality industry leverages labor-management funds with WIA funding. Most of the overhead costs, as well as their VESL classes for incumbent workers, are paid with monies negotiated from unionized employers. New entrants to the industry (including those dislocated workers from other industries) are trained with the public monies.

Milwaukee HIRE's Spanish Tech Track project got its start with the support of a demonstration grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. The program has been widely praised for its accomplishments. But after the grant was over, the local Workforce Board decided to fund other workforce development programs. According to program

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Another Promising Program Snapshot

Although we did not collect the same level of information about the **International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 99 Adult Education Program** in Washington D.C., we did some preliminary observations of their program and cite them here as a useful example of a program that uses a variety of funding streams. The stable source of negotiated funding from their employers, in combination with various grants, allows the union-based program to support its bilingual capacity.

The core of the program is a four-year apprenticeship program that is funded by a labor-management training

trust. The program also operates an adult education program in basic and advanced boiler and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), along with other courses that train workers as building maintenance mechanics. The adult education program is available on a tuition basis to union members at a discounted cost and to non-members for a higher fee. The Local obtained several small public grants from the Mayor's Office (administered through the Office of Latino Affairs) to develop and deliver bilingual boiler, HVAC and basic electricity classes to LEP workers seeking certifications. The materials, skills and understanding that emerged from the pilot program have been sustained in practice in their adult education program. They offer these classes periodically using English/Spanish bilingual teachers and can simultaneously accommodate both English speakers and those who are not fluent.

staff, if the Board had made the program a priority, it could have funded a continuation for dislocated workers. However, continuation of the incumbent worker training was complicated by the WIA adult performance measures that require a substantial increase in earnings. Although the program saw workers gain increases and improvement in long term employability, the strict increase in salary required by WIA was too difficult to sustain in a weakened manufacturing economy.

Instituto del Progreso Latino's program, which has also received national recognition, cobbles together many different funding sources while coping with the local WIB's contention that WIA dollars should not be used to train dislocated workers in manufacturing. Instituto del Progreso Latino has leveraged funds from sources including WIA, NAFTA/TAA and Empowerment Zone. Each of these services has a different eligibility requirement (an administrative nightmare). Empowerment Zone funding is ending and is being replaced by Chicago Tax Increment Financing (TIF). This program helps businesses by turning their property tax back into infrastructure development including workforce development. One of the difficulties with TIF funding is that payout occurs only when job placement has been achieved. For programs like Instituto, this regulation is a hardship. All the money for the program has to be invested up front by the organization. If workers drop out for any reason or do not find a job, Instituto has to absorb the cost of their training. NAFTA/TAA provides the most options for training and permits a longer and more comprehensive ESL component. Instituto also provides customized training for employers for a fee. As with many community-based organizations, it seeks support from foundations.

Stage 2 DESIGNING THE PROGRAM

Conducting appropriate individual learner assessments

Individual learner assessments give the instructor and the learner a place to start. They help program and curriculum designers, counselors and other program personnel provide appropriate services.

Assessment tests used for screening purposes can help people get into programs or keep them out. All too often, limited English skills combined with low educational attainment in their native language keep immigrant workers out of programs, including those funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Most of the programs funded through WIA are geared towards workers with at least a 9th grade level of education. Among low-wage immigrant workers, 28% have not completed the 9th grade.¹¹ Even those who have higher levels of education may have difficulty passing tests if they are given in written English.

Assessing LEP workers in both literacy and language proficiency is time consuming and sometimes confusing. The difficulty is compounded by accountability measures in public funding that do not necessarily differentiate between these two different skills. For some jobs and for some job training, spoken English is required but English reading and writing requirements are minimal. For bilingual training, reading competence in a person's native language may be sufficient for instructional purposes. Tests that measure English language literacy (reading, writing and math) eliminate some LEP workers who could otherwise be highly successful at a job or in bilingual training. In addition, literacy tests fail to pinpoint the level of language instruction workers need to meet training and job requirements.

Standardized tests often do not measure achievement in contextualized (eg., job-related) literacy or language acquisition. Accountability measures that do not take into consideration the type of learning that meets a particular program's workforce development objectives, do a disservice to LEP workers and some of the good programs that serve them. These problems affect not only LEP persons, but also native English speakers who do poorly on literacy tests. In the end, both the workers and the community lose.¹²

Using English language literacy assessments also skews instruction towards the skills being assessed. In other

words, teachers will teach to the test that they use to measure progress. Their own performance will be measured, in many cases, by student achievement demonstrated in a standardized post-course test and not necessarily on the workforce-related achievements of the students.

In a policy brief on WIA reauthorization (2003), the National Council of La Raza explains another of the assessment-related reasons for the exclusion of many LEP workers from the public workforce development system.

WIA's performance measures create a disincentive to serve persons who face obstacles to employment. The current performance indicators for employment and training activities are rigid and focused on getting participants through the system as quickly as possible. To meet WIA's performance measures, many providers "cream" the best individuals (i.e., the individuals most likely to get and retain a job) for training services. As a consequence, limited-English-proficient persons and others deemed as having greater barriers to employment are offered the more limited core services and shut out of the training system.¹³

None of the programs in this study used language and literacy assessments to exclude workers from their programs. Instead, these assessments were used to help workers get the kind of instruction they required to meet programmatic objectives.

Among the programs we examined, the following types of information were collected for the purpose of situating the background and skills of the individual learner, grounding instructional design in the needs of the individual, planning for effective support and educational interventions and setting a baseline against which participant progress can be measured. (Please note that not every program had the capacity to capture this information.)

- Work history
- Educational background
- Native language literacy
- English language proficiency
- English language literacy
- Occupational skill proficiency

The Candy Institute developed its incumbent worker VESL communications program as a proactive strategy for business retention in the Chicago metropolitan area. One of its major objectives was improving productivity for participating employers through improved communication and

reengineering. Their careful assessment of language proficiency using the NYSE test (a test of English language oral proficiency) along with other assessments of job history, educational history and English literacy helped them connect improvements in workers' language proficiency to improvements in productivity. It also allowed them to demonstrate a return on investment for participating and contributing employers tied to communicative gains of employees. In several cases, they reported a 30% increase in worker productivity as a result of training and restructuring. These types of statistics, so rarely collected, provide the kind of data needed to convince employers that their support of programs for LEP workers is worthwhile.

The Foreign Born Registered Nurse Program assesses nursing skill proficiency as well as work history and language proficiency. Nurse education varies in different parts of the world, and many of these nurses had been out of the field for some time. By assessing their current level of skill and testing them in their native language, the program found it was able to predict which workers were likely to be successful in passing the NCLEX – a requirement for nurse certification. Interestingly, the program found that occupational skill level was a better predictor of success than English language proficiency even though the test and occupational instruction are delivered in English.

The Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California assesses the skill proficiency of prospective apprentices regardless of their level of language proficiency. In this way, workers who are able to demonstrate their relevant occupational skills can move ahead and start the apprenticeship program at a higher level with a commensurately higher wage. Limited English language proficiency is not a major barrier to advancement within the apprenticeship program, although both the national and local training organizations recognize that workers are ultimately limited in their mobility and career advancement if they do not acquire good English skills.

Milwaukee HIRE used a complement of formal and informal assessments to place and instruct the workers they served.

For Spanish trainings, ... a non-verbal testing instrument, was used as the measurement of computation skills; CASAS¹⁴ ESL Appraisal was used for determining the level of English reading comprehension; and the CASAS Spanish Reading Comprehension Test was used to determine Spanish reading skills. These formal assessments were administered by a licensed bilingual educator

from MATC (the Milwaukee Area Technical College). An overall evaluation was made based on the objective assessment and on an interview protocol. The results of these measures were compared with more informal interview appraisals by the HIRE case manager and project coordinator.¹⁵

Using these assessments, the project was able to tease out the differences between English and Spanish literacy, as well as, develop an overall appraisal of workers' English educational history and English conversational proficiency.

Four of the programs we studied (Atlantic Cape Community College, Instituto del Progreso Latino, Milwaukee HIRE and Nevada Partners/Culinary Training Academy) solved some of their assessment problems by working closely with the One-Stop. All four of them provided services either inside the One-Stop or functioned as satellite One-Stops. Their organizational relationships with the One-Stop system, coupled with other sources of funding, made it possible to move dislocated and unemployed workers through Core and Intensive services that provided workers with blended language and occupational or bilingual instruction. These programs were able to use formal and informal assessments to place people in language and occupational training that met the individual's needs, rather than exclude them from the system altogether.

Scheduling

There are four major aspects of scheduling that have an impact on program success:

- Convenience of the time of classes for workers and employers
- Whether classes are held on or off work time
- Whether or not there is a wage subsidy for attendance
- Frequency of classes.

The Support Training Employment Program (STEP) scheduled classes in the evening and the morning. This pattern allowed workers, even those who were on layoff, to take temporary jobs or pick-up work when it was available and still attend classes when they were not working.

Language instruction requires intensity and practice to reinforce learning. The job preparation VESL offered by both Atlantic Cape Community College and the Culinary Training Academy were offered five days a week. In both of these programs, within a short period of time (three to five weeks), LEP workers met short-term language objectives successfully.

Construction apprenticeship programs sometimes pay

workers while they are in intensive classroom training. This practice allows workers to participate in 40-hour (and even longer) classes offered full time over a week or more, especially during seasons when there is less work available. Shorter classes are offered in the evenings so that apprentices can attend after their workday.

Unfortunately, because of uneven tracking of assessments and outcomes, we could not evaluate how program outcomes are connected to scheduling. However, the anecdotal information we received from program staff in the incumbent VESL programs indicated that attendance was higher in programs held during work time.

Determining the need for remediation and preparatory training

For some jobs, such as those in food service and hospitality, employers are demanding that applicants be able to communicate with customers in English as the first screen for employment. In manufacturing and construction, however, the initial screen is basic math. Since many of the workers served by the programs we observed in construction and manufacturing had less than 9 years of formal schooling, math remediation was important. Study skills classes and an orientation to the expectations of the training programs are also part of preparing workers for further training.

For Spanish speakers at the Milwaukee HIRE Center, pre-training activities focused on acquisition of basic math, with the aim of preparing candidates for technical training with instruction in decimals and fractions, so they would be ready for Industrial Mathematics needed to support other technical courses. HIRE also included an occupational English course in their pre-training, with an emphasis on developing study skills and group cohesion. HIRE stresses the importance of a strong "cohort effect." For workers struggling with basic skills, the creation of a warm ambience for admitting and struggling with academic deficiencies is critically important, and project staff paid great attention to building that atmosphere in the pre-training period. Other pre-training activities included plant tours and orientation sessions by project faculty to provide overviews of each content area.

Instituto del Progreso Latino offers two levels of preparatory ESL classes taken prior to formal entry into the bridge program. The first focuses on oral communication. The second level introduces a vocational component that prepares workers to enter the bilingual manufacturing

program. These program components were developed based on the staff's assessment that many workers needed additional specific oral language skills before they could be successful in the fast-paced bilingual manufacturing training.

Determining the appropriate relationship of language education to job-related training

Each of these programs developed a somewhat different model of how best to connect English language instruction to occupational training—primarily because of the different needs of their stakeholders. It is useful to identify and define the most common models for connecting language education to job training and how each model was adapted for used by the programs we studied.

Program Models For Connecting Language To Job-Related Training¹⁶

- Pre Employment VESL
- Incumbent Worker VESL
- Bridge Programs
- Bilingual Instruction
- Supplemental VESL

In general, the first three listed above—pre-employment VESL, incumbent worker VESL and Bridge Programs—blend language instruction and occupational training.

The last two—Bilingual Instruction and Supplemental English—are focused on work-related learning but they may or may not blend both language and occupational instruction. In the case of bilingual instruction, it employs a worker's native language in addition to English to impart occupational knowledge - with language acquisition a secondary outcome. In the case of supplemental English, the instruction may focus on general English language competency and/or English literacy to enhance worker performance or mobility, or it may have a work-related technical focus.

Pre-Employment VESL

Both the Culinary Training Academy and Atlantic Cape Community College offer a VESL job preparation program. In these programs, workers are assessed through an interview, by filling out sample applications and by responding to a mock English language interview. Since the program timeline is short, pre- and post-tests of English language competency are not likely to demonstrate a gain in general

language competency. In addition, the testing itself would significantly lessen instructional time in a short-term program. However, the students demonstrate increased competency as measured by job application completion and success in an English language interview. In both programs, the instructional methods included group discussion, scenarios, language practice and technical vocabulary. Grammar, the usual backbone of language instruction, is subordinate to practical application of language. The significant outcome measure in both these programs is job placement. Nevertheless, both programs note learner improvement in specialized English language performance.

Incumbent Worker VESL

The Instituto del Progreso Latino, the Culinary Training Academy and the Atlantic Cape Community College conduct VESL classes for incumbent workers under contracts with employers. In each of these three programs, the curriculum developer is a full-time employee of the program.

Given its lack of stable core funding, Instituto's development of a fee-for-service program for employers has helped the program increase its overall capacity. This customized VESL program assists Instituto to maintain a corps of full time instructors, build additional relationships with employers who may later hire program graduates and increase the number of individuals it serves.

The curriculum developer from Instituto spends time at the workplace observing the jobs done by the workers, their interactions with each other and the written materials they encounter. Based on his observations and the materials he collects, he develops customized curricula for each participating employer. The curriculum includes job-related conversation, technical vocabulary, job-related reading, words and phrases that assist workers in resolving problems on the job and words and phrases that help to explain and clarify job processes.¹⁷ Each of these programs uses a variety of assessments that include both formal and informal measures. Because the programs are customized, teacher-made assessments are an essential part of measuring achievement in the contextualized learning environment.

Employer satisfaction is an important measure of success for incumbent VESL, especially when the employer contracts for the class. The Candy Institute studied the return on investment from customized English language classes delivered in a candy manufacturing company in Chicago. It reported error reduction and productivity increases of as much as 30% and uses this information to attract and retain employer contracts.¹⁸

Bridge Programs

Bridge programs help workers who would not otherwise meet entry qualifications for a training program. They assist LEP workers overcome barriers to participation while being introduced to occupational content. They usually prepare workers for well-paying jobs in industries that require technological skill.

Instituto del Progreso Latino offers a bilingual version of a manufacturing technology bridge. It begins with pre-bridge ESL and VESL classes and continues with a bilingual program for math, communication and an introduction to technology. These classes lead to a bilingual machine tooling class at the Westside Technical Institute and a path from low paying jobs to good manufacturing jobs. Instituto also helps workers, including those with limited English skills, gain experience in manufacturing and obtain new jobs in the industry after a lay-off. Depending on assessments and prior experience, there are different entry points. Instituto's counseling and placement services provide workers with multiple exit points including job placement and additional post-secondary education. The program measures success by training completion and job placement.

The STEP program also runs a type of bridge program for entry-level hotel workers (i.e., room attendants and dish washers) interested in learning new skills to prepare them for food and beverage jobs. Food and beverage jobs are tipped positions so workers can earn more and have greater opportunities for career advancement in the industry. Based on assessments developed by the City College of San Francisco, workers are placed in either a beginner or intermediate VESL class. This sequence of VESL classes helps them achieve a level of English competence sufficient for an occupational skills class as well as putting them in a position to bid directly for some of the available jobs. While the college's assessment of the learners qualifies them to move from class to class, the objective of the program is completion of occupational training, followed by opportunities to work in food and beverage jobs.

Bilingual Instruction

Bilingual training encompasses a number of practices ranging from instruction delivered primarily in a foreign language to instruction in English with occasional translation. Rather than catalogue all the various approaches, we will present two different approaches: bilingual teachers and language and technical teaching teams.

Bilingual Teachers

The Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern Cali-

fornia offers instruction primarily in English. The bilingual program uses accessible materials, hands-on activities and an interactive teaching style to assist workers who have limited English skills. The instructor uses his judgment to gauge when translation is needed and when to adjust his instructional style to meet the needs of the apprentices.

In one Air Tools class that we observed, at least one-half of the 25 workers were non-native speakers. Of those, at least half had very limited English skills. Good instructional methodology and attentiveness to the learners created a vibrant learning environment that appeared to transcend differences in language proficiency. The teacher introduced himself in both English and Spanish. He stopped instruction periodically to talk with workers in both languages to assess their understanding of the material and to solicit questions. He repeated and re-explained the lesson when asked. The workers were grouped so that each group had at least one bilingual person available to provide running commentary and supplemental translation. The instructor used pictures of tools and working environments along with hands-on training as additional instructional methodologies.

Assessments for entry into the apprenticeship program includes interviews, job histories, drug testing and strength testing. Language level is not assessed. Each course has a summative¹⁹ assessment resulting in certification. In the Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California, tests and test preparation have been adapted to maximize the opportunity for workers with limited English skills to demonstrate their competence. For example, the written part of the test in the Air Tools class is in English. It accounts for 80% of the test with the other 20% a hands-on performance test. The passing grade for the test is 80%. A worker could pass the English part of the test with a 60% and still get an 80% passing rate by achieving a perfect score on the hands-on portion of the test. This system of using both written and performance assessment has helped make it possible for the majority of workers to succeed.

The instructor prepared workers for the test by reviewing the test content. He wrote the major vocabulary that workers would encounter on a flip chart and translated some of the terms. He insisted that workers write down what they were seeing and saying, and actively enforced the directive. In some cases, learners received assistance from their co-workers. The flip charts with key words were posted on the walls of the training room and remained there through the testing so workers would be reminded of those words during the test.

We asked the Director of the Southern California Regional Laborers Training Fund how he knew that the workers had learned the material—considering how much help they had with the test. He said that the Fund had done spot checks and retested workers on occasion to see if they had retained the information. He informed us that everyone retested had passed the second time as well.

Language and Technical Teaching Teams

The Instituto and Milwaukee HIRE took a different approach to bilingual instruction, combining vocational and language instructors for technical training. This approach integrated LEP workers into a class that included workers who were English-language proficient. It also addressed the problem of finding instructors with expertise in both technical skills and language instruction. In these two programs, instructors from both the vocational and ESL fields worked as a team.

Supplementary VESL

In addition to bilingual classes offered through the Laborers Training and Retraining Trust of Southern California, one of the Locals in the Long Beach, Wilmington and Orange County sub-region offers an ESL class in the mornings at the union hall. Both apprentices and journeymen gather at the hall when they are between jobs so they can catch new job dispatches as they come in. These open entry, open exit classes give Laborers an opportunity to learn language skills while they are waiting for work.

The Laborers Trust also offers take-home instructional videos to union members. These include English language instruction as well as occupational instruction. The tapes provide visual reinforcement and are additional resources for LEP workers. Workers with low levels of literacy also use these materials. The program believes that the confidentiality of using materials at home contributes to their wide distribution.

The Milwaukee HIRE Center offers supplemental VESL for workers going through CNC and IMM instruction in Spanish. The extra VESL introduces them to technical terms in English and prepares them for work in a majority-English speaking environment.

In addition to courses that prepare them for the NCLEX, foreign-trained nurses at the Bill Michelson Fund receive assistance in both general and occupational English to help them pass the test and to succeed in a patient care environment. Workers preparing for employment in nursing must achieve a high level of English competency in order

to pass a professional test and to interact with patients. Initially, the program predicted that nurses with the greatest proficiency in English would be the ones most likely to pass the NCLEX quickly. After finding little correlation between scores on an initial English language assessment and the pass rate for the NCLEX, the program began assessing workers' nursing skills in their native languages. They found that for these educated workers, achieving the levels of English competency needed to pass the test was less of an obstacle than becoming proficient in nursing skills. Nurses who already had the technical skills, when offered the opportunity to increase their pay substantially and work in their field of expertise, were highly motivated to improve their English language skills and did so no matter what their level in the initial assessment.

In some cases, programs focused on technical English as opposed to a more conversational and communicative approach to English. This was particularly common in manufacturing although it was used in construction and in programs that include a computer training component. We reviewed a variety of instructional materials that included glossaries, pictures of tools with their English names and technical materials from the workplace.

Determining instructional methodology

Good instructional practices make a difference. According to Elizabeth Platt (1996), content-based instruction (as opposed to grammar-based) is conducive to learning both vocational content and language when it is conducted in a manner in which content is adjusted to learner levels of comprehension and there is a positive affective relationship between teacher and learner and among learners. Furthermore, she cites research that indicates that cooperative learning and two-way classroom talk are standards for good instruction.²⁰

Each of the programs we observed offered instruction in small classes that allowed the instructors to become familiar with the needs of individual students. We also observed positive teacher-to-student and student-to-student interaction.

We observed, however, that in some cases the potential of the programs was not fully realized. In the initial phases of the STEP program, the college that delivered the training had not fully integrated the occupational content and continued to deliver a grammar-based curriculum even when the objective of the course was customer service. Furthermore, the observed classroom interaction was more teacher-centered than worker-centered.

Since many programs and their providers are struggling with limited resources, teachers are often part time and temporary. There is little time and ability to work with them on instructional methodology and classroom skills. It is also difficult to evaluate instructor performance when many of the instructors do not have a long-term role or commitment to the program. Programs that have more stable funding streams, such as joint labor management training funds, can employ a more consistent and permanent teaching staff, thus gaining an advantage in developing, encouraging and reinforcing good instructional methods.

Stage 3 SUPPORTING PARTICIPANTS AND CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNER SUCCESS

Incorporating supportive services

Going the extra mile to support LEP students training for jobs in the United States pays off. For example, the Milwaukee HIRE Center encourages a close connection between workers, case managers and other project staff. According to their final report, case management services for the project, provided by the AFL-CIO and Job Service, established a personal connection to staff who followed and promoted the progress of participants from entry into the project through placement and retention. Case management and project coordination required frequent visits to the classrooms and shops in order to maintain strong contact with the participants.²¹

The STEP program in San Francisco hired multi-lingual rank-and-file workers to provide direct and supportive services to workers enrolled in the program. This peer model, used in many workforce development programs around the country, helps workers in training feel at ease and supported. It also builds a link from the classroom to the workplace and keeps the instructors focused on the occupational goal.

Instituto del Progreso Latino offers help to the whole family. Family literacy, after-school programs, voter registration, citizenship preparation, job search, counseling and child-care are all provided at their center. Workers who participate in the VESL and bridge programs are part of a larger, supportive environment.

Both Atlantic Community College and Nevada Partners/CTA allow workers to repeat all or part of a course, in some cases, until they deem them job-ready.

Despite these kinds of extra services, barriers remain for LEP workers trying to join the economic mainstream. For example, Instituto del Progreso Latino found that

immigrant women participating in the manufacturing training program did not have as much success with job placement and wage levels as men in the program despite longer average work experience and a higher level of education. Program staff at Instituto found a pervasive system of discrimination against women in manufacturing.

The placement rate for the non-bilingual (English only) manufacturing program at Instituto in 2001 was 80% with a median wage of \$10.31 per hour. For the bilingual program, the overall placement rate was 54% but only 42% for women, with median wages of \$12.12 per hour and \$8.84 per hour, respectively.²² Women had other barriers in addition to this apparent discrimination. Little shift flexibility made childcare difficult. Transportation was also a problem for women. Since many did not have access to a car, they found it hard to commute to work for evening and night shifts.²³ As an organization with a history of advocacy and support for the Latino community, Instituto is working to address these issues. Recently, they received a grant that specifically provides funding to address the needs of low-income Latina women for training and economic opportunities.

Supporting workers on the job

Social and cultural barriers to placement and retention can keep competent, skilled workers from getting and keeping good jobs.

The HIRE Center works with employers to provide support for LEP workers who are new hires. The Center encourages them to hire pairs of workers with higher and lower level of English fluency to facilitate orientation to the new work situation and promote retention. The Center also cultivates relationships with employers to help them address issues of culture and equity when integrating new workers into the existing workforce.

Teaching citizenship and worker/immigrant rights

Having a good job with benefits meets only part of immigrant workers' needs. Participating as full members of the community, the freedom to vote and help decide the direction of their adopted country, the freedom from intimidation and discrimination—are all important to immigrants. Occupational and language skill training provides an opportunity to help workers learn about their rights and engage in the process of becoming full citizens.

One of the strengths of established community based organizations like Instituto is its reputation and track-record as the place to go for a variety of services. Instituto incorporates a workers' rights component into its occupational program. It also provides citizenship training within the larger program.

In Atlantic City, HERE Local 54 does not address the workers rights issues or citizenship through the Atlantic Cape College program, but once the workers get placed in union hotels, they receive union training in workers' and citizenship rights and responsibilities. In Las Vegas, HERE Local 226 is seeking a way to integrate citizenship preparation into the services provided at Nevada Partners.

Most union-based programs use the unions' contractual relationships with employers to address discrimination once workers are hired. In apprenticeship programs, workers rights and union procedures are an integral part of the training. Unions provide workers with a way to respond organizationally to discrimination on the job.

Stage 4 BUILDING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This stage was the weakest among most of the programs.

Learning from programmatic experience

Many programs collect information about individual students that includes assessments, educational and job history, literacy levels and related information. However, some programs do not have the capacity or resources to aggregate that data or to track learners over time. Most programs can produce reports that include the number of participants, completers and job placements since funders generally require this type of data. These measures, while critical, do not gather and/or report all the information needed to improve and enhance programs.

Incorporating staff development

Although instructors and program operators alike recognize a need for staff development, many programs do not have the resources to meet that need. The Laborers-AGC Training Trust, however, is specifically commissioned through a joint labor-management trust to provide staff development, including instructor training. The national program trains and certifies instructors for the 75 joint funds that support apprenticeships and training for Laborers in the United States and Canada. Laborers-AGC courses in instructional methodology, curriculum development, adult learning theory and workplace literacy prepare effective instructors, such as the ones we observed. The Laborers-AGC has also recognized the importance of building a stronger program for workers with limited English proficiency. Currently, they offer a Spanish immersion program for instructors. National staff is also engaged in planning for future instructor development both to enhance instructors' ability to deliver bilingual instruction and to give them tools to enhance language development in workers with limited English skills. This innovative approach deserves further study and support.

Other programs without the national resources of Laborers-AGC are struggling to create staff development curriculum and have difficulty paying teaching and program staff to attend training sessions. (See comments on *Determining Instructional Methodology* in stage 2 on page 32.)

Common Challenges for Programs and Training Providers

As described throughout this paper, many factors make the development and sustenance of programs that serve the language and occupational needs of LEP workers difficult. In our study of these eight programs, we identified six areas that appear to be the ones of greatest challenge to programs aiming to serve LEP workers:

- learner assessment tools and utilization of assessment results;
- participant data tracking and evaluation;
- curriculum development;
- staff development;
- funding; and
- issues of equity and equality on the job.

Following is a discussion of each of these challenges.

Assessment

Learner assessment plays a critical role in programs. Screening, program design, curriculum development, data collection, instructional methods and reporting outcomes all depend on capturing, tracking and sharing information from learner assessments. Programs experienced problems in the following areas:

- **Inappropriate accountability measures**

We have already discussed how accountability measures required by WIA tend to force programs to exclude workers with low levels of English proficiency and low literacy levels even when these skills may not be necessary for the particular training program.

In addition, several of the programs used English literacy tests when they wanted to measure oral English language competency. In one case, a test of reading and writing designed for students entering college was used as a pre- and post-test by a college providing classes for service workers. College students need a different level of reading and writing skills than service workers who, most importantly, must interact with customers. The assessment, and the fact that the teachers would be evaluated based on their students performance on the post test, influenced the curriculum and moved it away from the oral English instruction that would have better met the program objectives.

- **Not sharing assessments with instructors**

A number of programs collect information about LEP workers' educational and employment history but do not share it with instructors. Without this information, instructors cannot be fully prepared to adjust their teaching to the specific group of learners.

Data tracking and program evaluation

Programs collect a great deal of information about learners through the intake process and classroom activity. However, many do not have computerized data tracking systems that allow them to aggregate data, connect inputs to outputs, or track learners over time. Program after program talked of the huge expense of developing customized databases and not having the resources to get what they need and want. Even where databases could serve a good function, not having enough staff for data entry is another complication.

Some of the important questions that better data collection and tracking could answer are:

- What is the relationship of an individual's educational history to program success?
- How does native language literacy influence program completion?
- Despite successful preparation, is there discrimination in hiring or promotion?
- Do certain instructional methodologies lead to greater achievement?
- What kinds of support or intervention are most effective?

Curriculum development

Combined language and occupational training and education is not a common model of instruction. Vocational and language instructors expressed concern about their ability to meet concurrently the occupational and language competency needs of their students. ESL teachers often do not have experience in developing contextualized curriculum and may have only limited knowledge of occupational content and working conditions. Occupational/vocational instructors are unlikely to know much about second language acquisition. Consequently, they are likely to miss opportunities to teach and reinforce practical and functional language in their classrooms.

Staff development

Most teachers have experience in either occupational training or language education. Creating a cadre of instructors who understand both fields requires training and mentoring. Furthermore, so many instructors in adult education are part-time, contingent, or contractual workers. Expending scarce resources on teachers who may not be involved in the program over a long period of time is perceived as a risky investment.

Program leadership and staff also need to learn more about the many factors that help LEP workers achieve English language and occupational goals. Knowing about successful models, understanding accountability measures and familiarity with appropriate assessments are among the factors that help program staff work effectively.

Adequate funding

There is not enough funding available for programs that serve LEP workers. We have already discussed how changes in funding streams force programs to drop one group of needy clients while picking up another group. Some funds pay for program delivery but do not consider the importance of capacity building through curriculum and staff development. We also discussed how the tendency towards creaming for accountability measures excludes many LEP workers from publicly-funded training. The future of the workforce includes a large percentage of immigrants and their children, many of whom have limited English proficiency. Lack of resources for program development, delivery and capacity building will leave us playing catch up in the future.

Equity and equality in the workplace

Making sure that LEP workers have a chance to get and keep good jobs means not only training and education but also support for an end to discrimination in the workplace. Helping and supporting unions, CBOs and advocacy groups facilitate equal access to and fair treatment in the workplace is an important part of ensuring that education and training programs meet their objectives—both educational and social. Educational programs do not exist in a vacuum. They—and their clients—need the support of the whole community to ensure success.

Some Policy Hypotheses

The conditions in various industrial sectors— as well as differing stakeholder interests even within the same sector—produced program models with different objectives. We have identified the common program conceptualization and design stages that these programs developed as well as their greatest challenges in program development. There are important policy hypotheses suggested by our study about how best to serve employers looking for skilled workers and LEP workers looking for family-sustaining jobs.

Fluency and/or literacy in English is not a prerequisite for securing a family-sustaining job. We found a number of good programs that are successfully preparing workers to get relatively well-paid jobs before they achieve full English proficiency. Through good instructional methodology, worker support systems and contextualized curriculum, LEP workers can get good jobs.

Tailoring the nature of English language instruction and occupational training to the needs of specific jobs permits faster, yet successful, job placement, retention and advancement. Workers seeking good jobs in the hospitality industry learned enough survival English in a few weeks to fill out an English language job application, pass an English language interview and get and retain a relatively good job. Foreign-trained nurses working as low-paid homecare workers saw the possibility of U.S. certification and quickly learned enough English to pass the English language nursing certification exam. Some of these workers had spent years in the U.S. at low-paid jobs without becoming fluent in English. Our observations of apprenticeship training in construction confirmed that good instructional methodology helps LEP workers get well-paid, skilled employment before they are fluent in the English language.

Continuing English instruction is, nevertheless, in the long term interest of LEP workers, employers and communities. Even with a relatively good entry level job, workers without English proficiency have limited job mobility. The Candy Institute's program demonstrates the positive effect on productivity of continuing English instruction. There is an intrinsic benefit to society of increasing the common communication channels among residents in our country. We saw promising practices of ongoing English instruction in both the hospitality and manufacturing industries. The interest of one joint labor/management program in construction to increase the blending of technical instruction and English language education shows the promise of this kind of increasing commitment.

Accomplishing the appropriate matching of VESL education to occupational training, placement, retention and upgrading will require changes in policy and practice on the part of a number of public and private stakeholders.

Many institutions can make a difference in how successfully the nation matches LEP workers to family-sustaining jobs. Although this paper primarily analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the actual training providers and identifies the particular challenges that they must overcome in order to strengthen their program outcomes, these programs are very much influenced by the policies and programs of a variety of other players. Unions, employers, community-based organizations, government, community colleges and other educational providers are just a few. In the recommendations section of the paper, we outline some of the practice and policy changes that each of these stakeholders could and should consider.

Worthy of special mention is the role of the public workforce development system. The public workforce development system has been relatively unresponsive to the language and employment needs of LEP workers. LEP workers face numerous barriers to access the public workforce development system. These barriers include low levels of English language proficiency, low literacy in their native language, unfamiliarity with the U.S. employment system and lack of translators at service centers. Furthermore, the accountability measures that have been put in place to ensure that public workforce dollars are spent effectively sometimes have the unintended consequence of excluding the workers who could most benefit from the system.

We hope that this paper will contribute to an understanding of promising practices that are currently working to assist LEP workers get and keep good jobs. We also hope that this understanding will result in greater collaboration between public and private providers of services to LEP workers— to the benefit of working families and communities across the country.

Further research, identification of promising practices and technical assistance in replicating the best practices are important next steps to serving the needs of workers with limited English proficiency and their current and future employers. Our hope is that this paper will help to stimulate those developments.

Recommendations to Stakeholders

Good programs are serving the occupational and English language needs of workers with limited English proficiency who want to get, keep and advance in good jobs. Unfortunately, there are not enough of them. And where they are doing a good job, they need help to flourish. Based on this study, we have recommendations that we believe will contribute to improving occupational and language training for LEP workers. We have grouped these recommendations into several basic categories according to their likely sponsors.

Public system

- Expand accountability measures to reflect major workforce development stakeholder objectives for occupational and language instruction for LEP workers
- Eliminate barriers to offering language and occupational training simultaneously
- Help leverage multiple funding streams, both public and private, to support innovative programs that do not fit neatly in WIA categories
- Seek out existing programs serving LEP workers for partnerships with the public system to enhance services to this population
- Support capacity building for programs that serve LEP workers by funding staff development, data tracking and demonstration projects

Labor/management partnerships

- Increase support of incumbent worker VESL programs
- Seek new partnerships with public systems and community based organizations to help integrate LEP workers into the workforce
- Build supports on the job for LEP workers
- Integrate citizenship and workers' rights into job training programs
- Track program outcomes by demographic and LEP groups to identify potential equity and cultural barriers to employment access, retention and upgrading
- Support/develop specific career ladder training and ongoing education and training for LEP workers

Employers

- Clarify the real language fluency and/or literacy needs for jobs
- Provide employment opportunities for good jobs for LEP workers
- Support VESL on work time for LEP workers
- Track promotional and other employment outcomes by demographic and LEP groups to identify potential social and cultural barriers to employment access, retention and upgrading

Unions

- Include funding for education and training for LEP and other workers on unions' bargaining agenda
- Support and enforce agreements that link training and education to improvements in pay and conditions of work
- Track employment and union-sponsored program outcomes by demographic and LEP groups to identify potential social and cultural barriers to employment access, retention and upgrading
- Use union ability to meet and confer and negotiate to ensure equal access to training and good jobs for LEP workers
- Recruit, train and support LEP workers as members
- Integrate citizenship and worker rights training into both job training programs and other union membership training
- Use guaranteed seats on local and state workforce boards to advocate for better services to LEP workers (see recommendations under the public system above)

Community-based organizations

- Reach out to unions and unionized employers to improve job placement and retention of LEP workers
- Provide multiple levels of vocational and language instruction to meet the needs of the community
- Integrate citizenship and workers rights into job training programs

Educational providers

- Improve staff development programs to assist instructors in learning more about both vocational and language instruction methodologies
- Increase commitment to providing customized services for workers and employers
- Ensure that assessment measures match learning objectives

Education and training programs for LEP workers

- Increase understanding of the use and abuse of assessments and the different kinds of assessment
- Improve assessment protocols
- Develop data tracking mechanisms for program evaluation and improvement as well as accountability
- Connect training program outcomes to worker and employer success
- Develop and conduct staff development for program staff

National workforce development organizations

- Build a staff development curricula for vocational and ESL instructors who are working in the field of VESL, bilingual and blended instruction
- Promote network development for program operators and practitioners to share good and promising practices in the field
- Develop regional and national environmental scans to capture good program models
- Create a clearinghouse for curriculum and training material

Research organizations

- Continue to collect and disseminate research on what works for LEP workers in occupational and language instruction, including target population variations as well as the relationship of outcomes to program design

Funders

- Support a national summit of high road workforce programs for LEP workers
- Support network development
- Support dissemination of best practices
- Support start up and development of demonstration projects
- Support capacity building
- Help programs develop tools for assessment, staff development and data tracking
- Help connect good programs to the public system for continuity and development
- Reward best practices
- Support continued research

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Research Methodology

Program	Survey	Interviews	Observation	Printed Material
<i>Instituto Del Progreso Latino</i>	■	■	■	■
<i>Milwaukee HIRE</i>		■		■
<i>The Candy Institute</i>	■	■		■
<i>Nevada Partners/ Culinary Training Academy</i>	■	■	■	
<i>Atlantic Cape Community College</i>	■	■	■	■
<i>STEP Program Local 2</i>		■	■	
<i>Laborers-AGC/Southern California</i>	■	■	■	■
<i>Foreign Born Registered Nurse Program</i>		■		■

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Endnotes

¹ Capps, R., Fix, M., Passel, J.S., Ost, J., Perez-Lopez, D., *Immigrant Families and Workers: a profile of the low-wage immigrant workforce*. Brief No. 4. Urban Institute, Immigration Studies Program, November 2003, p. 3.

² The U.S. Census Bureau's report *The Foreign-born Population in the United States: March 2002* states that the foreign-born civilian non-institutionalized population of the U.S. represents estimated 11.5% of the total U.S. population. Adding the estimated institutionalized population brings the total estimated foreign-born population closer to 12%. Gibson and Lennon in their report *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1980–1990* state that the 1930 census reported a foreign-born population of 11.6%.

³ National Center for ESL Literacy Education, *OECD Review of Adult ESL Education in the United States*. Washington, D.C., Author 2003, p. 19.

⁴ Wrigley, H.S., Richer, E., Martinson, K., Kubo, H., Strawn, J., *The Language of Opportunity: expanding employment prospects for adults with limited English skills*. Brief, No. 2. Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, D.C., August 2003, p. 1.

⁵ See Appendix 1.

⁶ John Carrese, STEP; Patricia Owens, Atlantic Cape Community College; and Maria Gatti, Nevada Partners/Culinary Training Academy.

⁷ Milwaukee Spanish Track Project, HIRE Center, *Final Report*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2003, p.6.

⁸ A high road approach to workforce development supports an economy that competes on the basis of innovation, quality and skill rather than on low wages and benefits.

⁹ Milwaukee Spanish Track Project, *Final Report*, p. 11.

¹⁰ IBID, p. 15.

¹¹ Capps, R., Fix, M., Passel, J.S., Ost, J., Perez-Lopez, D., *Immigrant Families and Workers: a profile of low-wage immigrant workforce*, p. 3.

¹² Workers may get higher math scores if they are tested in their native language.

¹³ Thomas-Breitfeld, S. and Liu, S., *Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Reauthorization: building a better job training system for Hispanic workers*. National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C., 2003. p. 3.

¹⁴ CASAS is the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System. CASAS along with TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) are two of the most common testing systems used by the public workforce system and by public institutions of post secondary education.

¹⁵ Milwaukee Spanish Track Project, *Final Report*, p. 11.

¹⁶ In some cases, there is not a sharp distinction between the types of services offered in preparatory or remedial programs and those offered in the models listed. The differentiation is significant because of how the instruction is positioned in relationship to occupational training. In other words, is it considered a part of the occupational training or concurrent with the occupational training or is it a prerequisite for it?

¹⁷ For a VESL course in a meat processing plant, one lesson includes a reading passage about where meat comes from, what happens to it in the plant and where it goes after it leaves the plant. The course covers common abbreviations and technical terms. It also includes identification of serial numbers, different kinds of meat, the expression of English system weights and how to report discrepancies on the job. The curriculum developer prepares assessments that test the workers' English oral comprehension, reading, writing and speaking as related to the customized curriculum.

¹⁸ Interview with Frederika Kaider, Candy Institute Director, August 2003.

¹⁹ Summative assessment is the educational term used to describe a final assessment at the end of a period of instruction.

²⁰ Platt, E., *The Vocational Classroom: a great place to learn English*. Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C., 1996, p. 3-4.

²¹ Milwaukee Spanish Track Project, *Final Report*, p. 11.

²² These statistics are not entirely comparable since the English only numbers are a composite of male and female rates and the bilingual numbers are broken down by gender.

²³ Sweet, E. and Betancur, J., *Bilingual Manufacturing Training Programs: the challenges and opportunities presented at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning*. Annual Conference, Baltimore, Maryland, 2002.



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