ELL Co-Enrollment Pilot Program Quarterly Stakeholders Brief

July - September 2020

Quarter 6 Upcoming TA

📖 **State Partners share Workplace Health & Safety resources, October 2020**

👥 **Workplace Health and Safety CoP for Navigators and Case Managers, October 2020**

💻 **Preliminary Evaluation Findings Webinar, October 2020**

💻 **Partner CBO Webinar on Implementing Online Training Programs, November 2020**

📖 **Publish Sustainability Toolkit, December 2020**

Quarter Five Activities At-A-Glance

ELL Co-Enrollment grantees spent Q5 collaborating with their partners to further refine and diversify the workforce and COVID-19 response services and supports being provided to ELL clients. Additional supports included providing tools to improve digital access to clients in need, such as iPads and internet hotspots, and workplace health and safety information for those currently working in or considering work in frontline positions. In collaboration with the TA and Evaluation teams, grantees also spent time this quarter considering program adaptations made in response to the pandemic, the implications of those changes on their program designs and what modifications, if any, they would like to carry forward. Highlights of Q5 include the following.

- Erica Bouris, IRC Director of Economic Empowerment, and Blanca Bonilla, Tulare Workforce Investment Board Program Analyst, were joined by Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, National Skills Coalition Senior Fellow and Efrem Bycer, LinkedIn Manager of Economic Graph to discuss providing workforce services remotely as part of the **California Workforce Association's 2020 WorkCon summit.** The conversation centered on supporting equitable access to and benefits for ELLs from the perspective of practitioners, funders, and policymakers.
- **Grantees invested time completing a Program COVID Adaptation Matrix that asked them to consider adaptations they have made to their programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**. Completing the matrix gave grantees the opportunity to step back and review changes they made to their program design in response to the pandemic and consider both the implications of those changes and which changes they may want to maintain moving forward.
- In August, grantees met with the TA and Evaluation teams along with state partners for a CoP call to discuss the grant modification and extension process.

The August CoP also provided room for grantee discussion on delivering services during COVID and included an introduction to the Evaluation team's intitial report findings. As a suppliment to this call, all grantees were provided with a FAQ on the grant extension and modification process.

- Virtual Coaching with each of the four grantee sites took place at the end of the quarter and focused on discussing the Program COVID Adaptation Matrix for each grantee, sharing of additional COVID response resources, and discussing opportunities for additional workplace health and safety and employee rights materials to support the work of ELL Navigators.

A Message from the Evaluation Team

Dear Grantees,

We are looking forward to meeting with your pilot teams for virtual site visits that will take place during late October and early November. Our plan is to hold Zoom interviews with grantee coordinators, 2 to 3 of your partners, Navigators, and focus groups with 3 to 4 ELL participants, most likely in Spanish, although maybe also in Chinese. In terms of time, we are planning 1-hour conversations for grantee coordinators and partners, a 2-hour conversation with Navigators, and 90-minute client focus groups. Currently, we are collaborating with grantee coordinators and Navigators to arrange these in a format that is accessible to all ELL participants.

The goal of the interviews and focus groups will be to gather more in-depth information about the progress you have made to adapt to the current COVID circumstances, including how you are conducting grant activities, from multiple perspectives. During these conversations, we will be asking about how you are promoting access to services for ELL participants, how you are conducting case management and co-case management activities, how you are building capacity to address digital skills gap challenges, and how are you engaging partners in your overall activities.

During September and October, we will also be engaging with EDD and CASAS to obtain reports from CalJOBS and TopsPRO and to discuss obtaining data on the ELL participant emerging outcomes that we expect to include in the final report. By the way, a special thanks to all of you who have worked diligently to ensure co-enrollment numbers are accurate. That work has really made a difference!

If you have any questions about the upcoming site visits, please feel free to get in touch with any of us on the evaluation team: Mahika Rangnekar (mailto:Mahika_Rangnekar@spra.com), Kate Dunham (mailto:kate_dunham@spra.com), and Renatta DeFever (mailto:renatta_defever@spra.com).

Evaluation Finding Highlights

A series of necessary adaptations ensued after the emergence of COVID-19 and pilot teams have adapted operations to rise to the different challenges that originated from those circumstances. **During the last round of interviews, we learned that one of the key responses from pilot teams was to adapt services for remote and online delivery. Some grantees have emphasized multiple modes of communications—phone calls, texts, and mailers—to ensure all ELL participants can access the information and services provided**. During this transition, it became evident that multipronged efforts are necessary to broaden access among participants. These efforts are conducted through three primary strategies:

- Broadening ELL participant access to computers and Internet services;

- Finding ways to close the digital skills gaps via training and leveraging partners' resources, and;
- Building capacity among staff to support ELL participants in this period of transition.

Regarding these, we heard grantees have made progress in providing computer equipment either directly or through loaning programs. More recently, grantees also started working on providing ELL participant digital skills trainings and seeking ways to build staff capacity to support participants in this respect. Overall, increasing ELL participants' digital literacy skills and overall familiarity with technology and building capacity among staff to help is of paramount importance to ensure access to the services and activities provided.

Pilot service delivery has continued, but at a slower pace, which may make the achievement of initial grant goals unattainable even after the extension of the period of performance. Some partners that played a key role in the delivery of services and enrollment are not yet operating at full capacity and this has further slowed down referrals and thereby enrollment. In person recruitment and recruitment events—two of the most effective recruitment strategies among ELL participants—are just restarting opening new opportunities to increase pilot participation. We expect that participant retention will be a relevant topic in the coming months, so we will explore in upcoming data collection activities.

Importantly, in this new context, **some grantees are needing to redefine the roles of their existing partnerships not only in terms of referrals but also in terms of the services they provide**. For now, some grantees are in the midst of renewing communication efforts and are considering the need to seek new partnerships that could benefit their ELL participants. We expect that data sharing, specifically around co-enrollment, and further structuring co-case management approaches will be part of the efforts to reengage partners.

Grantees in this pilot program serve ELL participants who tend to be "essential workers" and perform jobs on critical infrastructure categories such as health, infrastructure, manufacturing, service, food, safety, and other essential jobs. As such, they reported a continued focus on job development and placement on industries that are continuing to hire despite COVID-19. **Navigators continue to play a critical role in assisting participants through job searches, job application submissions, and organizing hiring events with employers via Zoom or social media.** Because they are trusted messengers within the ELL communities in which they work in, we think they play a key role in communicating current health and safety guidance as well as best practices and protections available to them.

Support is critical in assisting grantees and their partners with making further improvements in operations and in the virtual delivery of services. For example, while some grantees have an electronic signatures process in place, others do not. Having this in place would help using time to support clients in other meaningful ways. More recently, grantees are also mentioning the need of building capacity among staff to better support ELL clients. We, the evaluation and the TA teams, are looking forward to connecting with you during the upcoming project activities to learn more about ideas and plans you have to accomplish your goals. Until then, please feel free to get in touch with any comments, questions, or anything that you think would be relevant for other grantees to know.

Resource Link Library

The National Skills Coalition brief "Amplifying Impact: How policies that combine investment in English language skills with digital learning pay off for workers and businesses" explores several innovative approaches to English language learning during the pandemic.

The bog Remote Job Readiness Resources for Clients with Lower Levels of Digital Literacy, published by Switchboard, lays out steps to take and key considerations for engaging learners with low levels of digital literacy.

Pathway to Recovery Resources by Workforce GPS is a resource library that includes a variety of tools for workforce development professionals on remote service delivery, supporting frontline workers, online learning resources and more.

The Roadmap for Racial Equity, An imperative for workforce development advocates, Special Edition: Immigrants and English Leaners presents data to support an equitable approach to engaging immigrant job seekers.

The quick fact sheet Applying a racial equity lens to digital literacy, published by the National Skills Coalition, shares data on the prevalence of digital literacy and digital skills among immigrant worker populations.