

EL Workforce Navigator Pilot Project Case Study

Orange County ELL Workforce Navigator Program

Lead Grantee

County of Orange / Orange County Development Board <http://www.ocboard.org/>

Grant Partners

North Orange County Regional Consortium for Adult Education <http://nocrcae.org/>

Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance <https://www.ocapica.org/>

Project Overview

Orange County is home to diverse groups of English learners representing Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, Middle Eastern, and African immigrants and refugees. Almost half the County population speaks a language other than English (46%), and among this population, 45% speak English less than “very well.” Though the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) decreased from a peak of almost 160,000 in 2003 to just over 120,000 in 2016, data shows that there is much more to be done to support their educational attainment and career development.

Improving English language acquisition has been a long-standing priority for Orange County’s education and workforce system. Over 23% of Orange County workers aged 25 and older speak Spanish as a first language, while over 16% speak an Asian language as their first language. The ability to communicate verbally and in writing is one of the most important skills to ensure workforce success. Many employers in the region have cited communication skills as an issue in finding qualified workers. Increasing access to and retention in programs that build English fluency will pay dividends and is vital to help individuals improve educational performance, progress through higher education programs, and gain access to future employment opportunities.

Project Goals

The Orange County (OC) ELL Navigator pilot program targeted refugees and immigrants, primarily speakers of Spanish and Asian languages. The pilot program established the following goals:

1. Develop new partnerships and strengthen alliances with a wide range of partners to achieve seamless, comprehensive and integrated services.
2. Promote the OC AJCC system to increase opportunities and choices for the target population in obtaining employment and other services.
3. Enroll 50 participants from the targeted population and provide training in high demand occupations, leveraging Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds.
4. Increase the blending and braiding of resources with partners to leverage funding for individual job seekers.
5. Create systemic change within the WIOA system to ensure open access and implement a “no wrong door” policy for all job seekers and employers.

Program Design

The County of Orange / Orange County Development Board (OCDB), the lead grantee, oversees the County's workforce development activities and establishes programs to respond to local workforce needs, including labor market information, employment and training services, and business assistance. It operates a network of One-Stop Centers (AJCCs) and works in close collaboration with education, business, labor, economic development and other organizations with a stake in preparing the County's workforce. OCDB leveraged existing partnerships with Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA), the largest immigrant and ELL social service organization in the County, and North Orange Continuing Education (NOCE), a member of the North Orange County Regional Consortium for Adult Education (NOCRC), to work with AJCC staff, identify complementary roles and collaborate to support service delivery for English learners.

OCDB drew from prior experience implementing navigator programs for people with disabilities and on probation. Like its Disability Program Navigator Initiative, the ELL Navigator model co-located navigators in AJCCs, specifically at the Garden Grove One-Stop. Navigators were hired by OCAPICA, a procured provider of Title I services co-located at the Garden Grove AJCC.

Key Features of Program Design

Centralized Service Delivery

- Colocation of service delivery providers in AJCC/Adult School

Individualized Case Management

- Focus on specialized skills and specific barriers
- Tailoring services to meet the unique navigational needs of each client

Leveraging Resources

- Focus on co-enrollment
- Utilization of training opportunities to develop career pathway projects

Strengthening Partnerships

- Expanding links to community-based organizations and employers willing to work with ELL populations and develop career pathway opportunities

Core components of the model included:

Outreach and Marketing to increase the region's understanding of resources available for the targeted population. Recruitment was expanded through partnering with WIOA Title II and community-based organizations that serve ELLs and immigrants.

Building and Sustaining Partnerships, and tapping into the knowledge, resources, and support of partners to expand AJCC capacity to serve and accommodate clients.

Connecting with Other Initiatives within and across grant partners, especially with adult education providers, to ensure that clients access all available resources to complete the program.

Leveraging Funds and Resources through co-locating navigators within the OC AJCCs. Navigators, in turn, brought together multiple partners to foster collaboration and teamwork in serving ELLs with different support needs.

Increasing Knowledge in the workforce system by developing training to educate AJCC staff, partners, and employers on ELL and immigration topics.

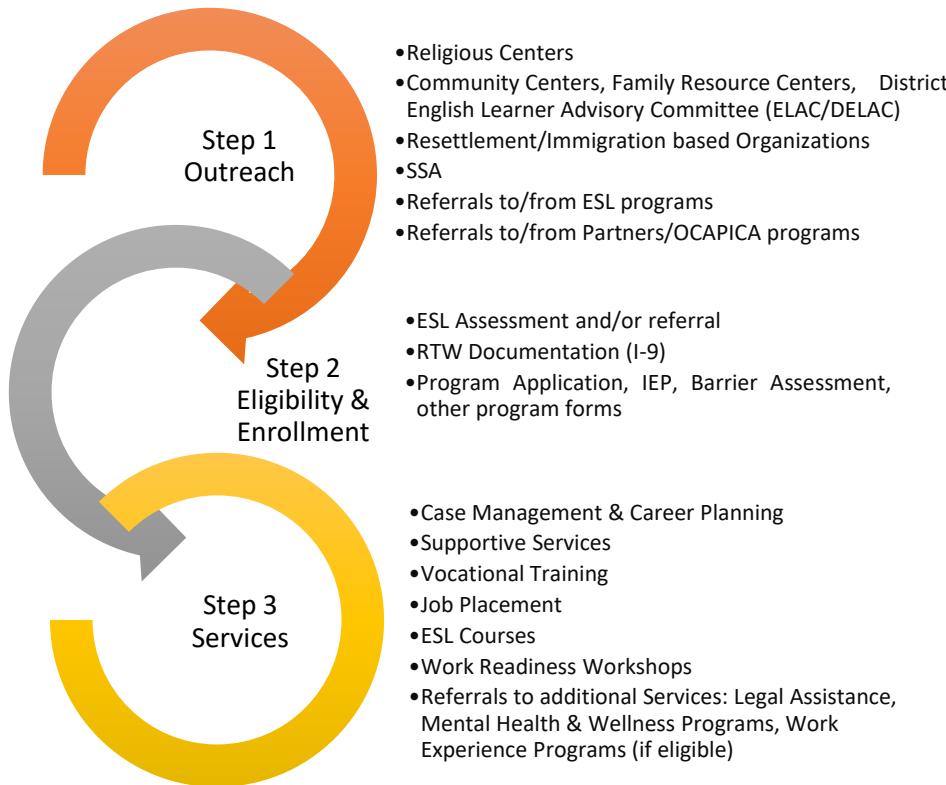
Meeting Business Needs by equipping navigators to serve as a resource to the business community. They responded to employers' needs by providing information such as English as a Second Language (ESL) training and immigration services.

Flow of Services

Navigators were responsible for conducting targeted outreach to potential clients, determining eligibility, and increasing access to workforce services in the AJCC and community. Once a client was connected to

the program, navigators worked with them to complete an initial assessment to determine their ESL skill level, education and employment needs, and barriers to employment. The assessment was used to inform the Individual Service Plan – an informal contract outlining services to be offered.

Navigators provided individualized case management to clients from the time of intake until program completion. They coordinated ESL services directly with local adult education providers through each provider's preferred channels. Navigators coordinated other services, including mental health services, housing assistance, and citizenship assistance through referrals and follow-up.



Navigators' Roles

The ELL Workforce Navigator position and role included:

- Conducting community outreach and recruitment events;
- Conducting needs assessments of program clients and businesses;
- Building relationships with CBOs and businesses to find employment and/or training opportunities for ELLs;
- Developing ideas for new programs and services that benefit adult learners in the transition phase;
- Providing appropriate referrals for participants in need of employment and vocational training services;
- Case management
- Linking clients to local community resources and employment opportunities that will develop pathways to a self-sustaining lifestyle;
- Documenting client participation and progress;
- Job coaching (resume development, job search and applications, etc.)

Qualifications – Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Required:

- Fluent in one of the following languages: Farsi, Arabic, Korean, Vietnamese or Spanish.

- Bachelor's Degree or equivalent experience
- Ability to work in multidisciplinary team of peers, employers, and families
- Ability to provide case management services for different levels of support
- Demonstrated knowledge and sensitivity to various cultures and underserved populations
- Familiarity in job/career development, as well as with service providers.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills.

Collaboration with Partners

The pilot created opportunities for increased collaboration among named grant partners and between them and an expanded network of partners. OCDB partnered with NOCE to provide ESL courses onsite at the Garden Grove AJCC. OCAPICA was able to leverage grant resources against services provided at the AJCC to expand clients' access to vocational training. Colocation at the AJCC helped NOCE and OCAPICA learn a lot about one another's services. OCAPICA also partnered with Huntington Beach Adult School (HBAS) to provide services to their ESL students. OCAPICA leveraged additional resources to provide outreach and host office hours for navigators at NOCE and at the Huntington Beach Adult School. Finally, OCAPICA opened a satellite location in a mall, across from Huntington Beach Adult School, to provide wraparound services to clients, especially those referred from HBAS.

OCAPICA offers a wide range of services in-house that meet the needs of immigrant communities and has the benefit of 20 years of partnership with Orange County's leading community-based organizations.

OC ELL Workforce Navigator CBO Partners

OCCORD, OC Food Bank, Advancement Project, Los Amigos of Orange County, FACT, Anaheim Union High School District, Healthy Marriage and Families, Casa Teresa, Refugee Forum of Orange County, Delhi Center, Giving Children Hope, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, World Relief Garden Grove, Project Motivate, Tiyya, Miry's List, Pars Equality Center, Uplift Charity

Coordinated Case Management Activities

After completing the intake orientation and enrollment in the EL Navigator program, clients completed an **Individual Initial Assessment** to determine their educational level, work experience, goals, and barriers. They also met with an adult education partner to complete a **NOCE English Assessment and Performance Evaluation**.

Information from these assessments was used to help the navigator and client together draft the **Individual Employment Assessment Plan**, that outlined the client's needs, service plan and training service plan. The plan was used by all partners who received referrals for the client.

Navigators referred clients to the appropriate services. Navigators coordinated ESL services directly with local adult education providers; they also coordinated support services, including mental health, housing assistance, job search, and legal aid.

Client referrals and outcomes were tracked in the **Participant Tracking Spreadsheet and CalJOBS**.

Navigators coordinate with staff at OCAPICA and in the community to connect clients to mental health services, housing assistance, citizenship assistance, and CalWORKs services through in-house and community referrals and follow-up. During the grant term, OCAPICA built stronger partnerships with organizations providing immigration legal services.

In addition to named grant partners, the ELL Workforce Navigator program focused on developing partnerships that could assist in the delivery of services in the following key areas: education/vocational training, legal assistance/civic engagement, supportive services (housing, food, transportation), mental health services, and citizenship/naturalization. Most of these partners came from

the local community and included religious centers, Family Resource Centers, school districts, adult education providers (Huntington Beach Adult school, Coastline Community College, Golden West College, Orange Coast College), resettlement agencies, and regional CBOs. In addition, the EL Navigator Program sought to build partnerships with local employers, including restaurants, car dealerships, shops, and banks.

Featured Successful Practices

Career Pathway

The ELL Navigators successfully launched a pilot career pathway project with QBICS, a vocational training school. The goal of the program was to obtain a certificate in Medical Assisting, followed by on-the-job training (OJT) with a local laboratory with potential for future employment. QBICS had a full-time staff member that spoke both Arabic and Spanish and was able to provide language support for participants.

Cultural Competency Training and Acculturation Workshops

OCAPICA developed acculturation workshops geared toward clients. Workshops covered what acculturation means, strategies to adjust to a new life and opportunities in the U.S., explained programs and services and how to access them either through OCAPICA or other providers, policies and strategies to empower the immigrant community. Workshops also covered basics like hygiene, common sense behavior when going to doctor appointment and other activities of daily living. OCAPICA also added a workshop on citizenship preparation on tablets since citizenship exams will now take place on tablets.

OCAPICA also developed cultural competency training for service providers. Topics included things that are important to be aware of when working with others. The training is based on a cultural competency continuum modeled after mental health training materials and modified for AJCC staff and CBOs providing wraparound services to English Learner Workforce Navigator program clients. Feedback on the training indicated it increased staff awareness of fears and barriers immigrant English learners experience. This awareness is benefitting clients, in that staff are now better able to help clients access support and information they really need – rather than just meet typical program requirements.

Customer Success Stories

OCAPIA enrolled a male customer who was an operation and maintenance Engineer at Akkaz Power Station in Iraq. He was the head of the operation department and was responsible for predictive and annual maintenance for all power plant equipment such as pumps, fans, turbines, motors, and pipes. In addition to his degree in Mechanical Engineering, he has many advanced certifications in Exciter, Seal Oil Systems and Hydrogen Systems.

In 2017, the customer and his family were granted a Special Immigrant Visa to the United States. He was referred to OCAPICA by Social Services (Welfare- to Work program). Through OCAPICA programs (Employment Preparation Program and English language Learner Workforce Navigator), he was enrolled in a job training program and placed at Facilities Maintenance and CUF department at OC Public Work as an Engineering Tech Trainee. After 7 months, he was offered by OCPW the permanent position of Assistant Plant Operating Engineer with an annual salary of \$79k.