

EL Workforce Navigator Pilot Project Case Study

San Diego ELL Workforce Navigator Project

Lead Grantee

San Diego Workforce Partnership <https://workforce.org/>

Grant Partners

International Rescue Committee <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/san-diego-ca>

KRA Corporation <https://www.kra.com/>

Grossmont Unified High School District <https://www.guhsd.net/>

Grossmont Adult Education <https://adultschool.guhsd.net/>

Project Overview

San Diego is a border community in which one in four residents is foreign-born and more than 50,000 adults speak English “less than well.” SDWP’s pilot initiative serves the city of El Cajon, one of the region’s largest immigrant communities. Since 2007, there has been a huge influx of more than 20,000 refugees and immigrant families to this area, particularly from Iraq and Mexico. More than 43% of residents speak a language other than English at home and one in three are foreign-born. Furthermore, El Cajon is the poorest city in the County; nearly 25% of families live in poverty.

There is a critical need for effective workforce services that meet the needs of this community. Adult English learners are less likely to walk into an AJCC due to language and cultural barriers, and instead seek services from adult education or CBO providers. Even when they do seek services in the AJCC, they struggle - in part, because they require a more intensive level of support and preparation to navigate the range of services available through the AJCC. At the same time, the local AJCCs have lacked connections to local providers that can offer culturally and linguistically accessible supportive services.

Project Goals

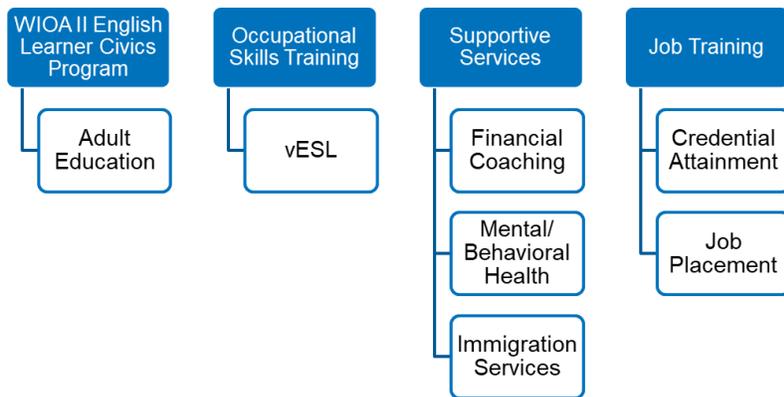
The San Diego ELL Workforce Navigator Project sought to provide responsive, culturally and linguistically accessible services to English learners by deepening partnerships between Title I and Title II providers, and immigrant-serving CBOs. The project targeted adult immigrants and refugees unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both English language and academic courses. The pilot aimed to serve 100 adults over the 18-month grant term.

Program Design

The San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP), the lead grantee, is the local Workforce Development Board and funds job training programs and business services in San Diego County. It procures providers to run six AJCCs and generates research on regional labor market needs. As lead grantee, SDWP brought together three key stakeholders in El Cajon: International Rescue Committee (IRC), Grossmont Adult School, and the local AJCC – East County Career Center (ECCC) operated by Grossmont Unified School

District – with the aim of streamlining processes and creating best practices to better serve English learners in the workforce system. During the grant term, IRC became a Title II adult education provider and the AJCC provider was re-procured and shifted from Grossmont Unified to KRA Corporation.

The pilot model is rooted in a community-based approach led by IRC that connects clients served by a provider they trust (CBO and/or adult school) to dedicated ECCC staff. This structure provided clients access to an integrated array of supportive services delivered in culturally and linguistically accessible formats and ensured they received high quality services as they transitioned to and continued services in the AJCC.

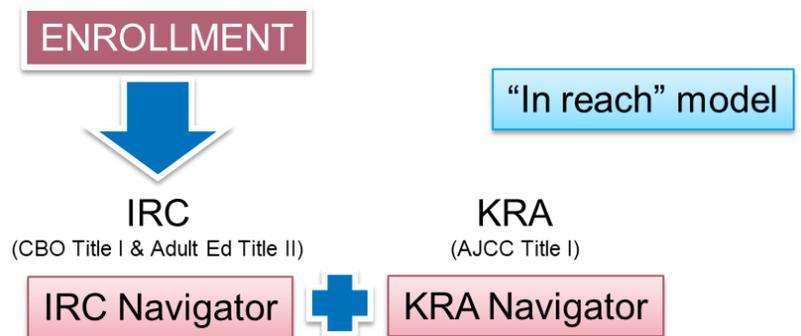


Two navigator positions provided recruitment, enrollment and ongoing support for ELL clients: the ELL Preparation Coordinator based at IRC and the ELL Workforce Specialist based at the ECCC. The navigators collaborated to conduct eligibility and needs assessments, develop individualized plans, and to connect clients to internal and external services while in the program. The IRC ELL Preparation Coordinator was also particularly focused on the phase of services

prior to co-enrollment in Title I and II, helping clients address any barriers that would preclude them from accessing ECCC services, while the AJC ELL Workforce Specialist was also focused on helping clients to transition from the program to employment and training opportunities. By strengthening partnerships between IRC and the ECCC, the navigators created culturally-responsive bridges between ELL clients and the AJCC and offered seamless access to a broader variety of short-term vocational training, contextualized remedial skill development, and career pathway bridge programs than are traditionally accessed only through the AJCC system.

Flow of Services

The IRC ELL Preparation Coordinator was responsible for the following: conducting outreach to both prospective and existing Title II clients; providing in-language case management to help the client understand Title I services; preparing needed documents; and enrolling the client in Title I services. To further facilitate enrollment in Title I services, the IRC ELL Workforce Preparation Coordinator connected with



the ECCC ELL Workforce Specialist in a team meeting that allowed planning for a seamless and supportive transition to Title I services. The ECCC ELL Workforce Specialist then took the lead in helping the client access ECCC services and training resources, while continuing to coordinate with the IRC navigator on supportive services.

Navigators' Roles

IRC's ELL Workforce Preparation Coordinator position and role included:

- Outreach to the community, including in-reach to English learners accessing services at IRC and students in Title II classes;
- In-language pre-AJCC case management to prepare clients for the AJCC experience;
- Supporting the client in gathering requisite documents such as work authorizations, transcripts, test scores, diplomas, certificates, and short-term training funds;
- Screening for and enrollment in Title I services;
- Assessing and connecting the client to supportive services; and
- Job placement assistance.

Qualifications/Credentials included:

- Bachelor's degree in a related field or equivalent of related professional experience
- At least two years of related professional experience
- Experience in a non-profit setting and prior experience working in employment services
- Experience working in a diverse and non-traditional setting with diverse client base

Demonstrated Skills and Competencies included:

- Grant-writing, program coordination and record-keeping experience
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to make presentations
- Computer literacy required, particularly knowledge of MS Office applications
- Strong written, verbal, computer and interpersonal communication skills are essential
- Arabic language skills required –Spanish or Farsi language skills a plus
- Knowledge of local workforce system
- Job coaching
- Case management

Coordinated Case Management Activities

Upon enrollment, clients participated in **multiple assessments** to determine skills, experience, goals, and barriers. Assessments included:

- ✧ **CASAS**
- ✧ **Individual Employment Plan**
- ✧ **Career Cluster Survey**
- ✧ **Non-Verbal Aptitude Assessment**

Based on the results, the client was referred and enrolled in the appropriate IRC, ECC or partner services.

IRC and ECCC **share the client's case file** containing all pertinent documentation and Individual Employment Plans. **The file travels with the client.** IRC controls the file until the client is referred to ECCC for enrollment. Documentation of IRC services following file transfer is provided to the ECCC navigator to include in file.

Ongoing client tracking is provided by both IRC and ECCC and recorded in CalJOBS. E.g.:

- ✧ Supportive Services
- ✧ Assessments
- ✧ Updates to IEP
- ✧ Non-WIOA Services

The ECC ELL Workforce Specialist position and role includes:

- High-touch navigation support to ensure clients access to needed AJCC services;
- Focus on connecting English learner adults to training resources, including training funds;
- Coordination with IRC Workforce Preparation Coordinator to ensure that supportive services continue to meet the needs of the client; and
- Job placement assistance.

Qualifications/Credentials:

- Experience and education related to employment services with increasing levels of responsibility.

Demonstrated Skills and Competencies:

- Ability to work with a diverse group of people from different backgrounds
- Knowledge of workforce system
- Job coaching (including career planning, job search, resume writing, and interview preparation)
- Case management
- Knowledge of local employment market trends and needs, as well as wrap-around services.

Collaboration with Partners

The IRC was the provider of supportive wraparound services for all pilot clients. IRC follows the Annie E. Casey Center for Working Families model of integrated economic empowerment services, whereby job-seeking clients are provided with a “bundle” of services that comprehensively responds to their needs.

IRC’s programming includes:

- Screening and enrollment in public services
- In-house, bilingual vocational ESL program (VESL Plus) with integrated, one-on-one employment counseling that prepares adult English learners for entry-level employment in 8-12 weeks (a key referral option for those adults that are not yet ready for engagement with AJCC services but need support in finding work quickly)
- Access to funding for short-term work supports, including transportation subsidies and funds for clothes
- Access to sector-specific bridge programs in healthcare, telecommunications, hospitality, and building trades that offer short-term, contextualized learning to support language and basic skills development
- Financial education and coaching
- Access to financial products that support self-sufficiency and economic stability, including low-interest auto loans, low-interest emergency loans, and credit-building loans
- Free tax preparation services
- Bureau of Immigration Affairs (BIA) Accredited immigration legal services
- Referrals to accredited, culturally appropriate childcare
- Health and wellness programming

In addition to named grant partners, the ELL Navigator team worked closely with training providers and employers. Staffmark, an employment agency, placed qualified candidates into jobs and organized a job fair for students. The IRC also partnered with the Foothills Adult School to offer a Class B Commercial Drivers Program and CompTIA Program. The East Regional Adult Education Consortium offered ESL classes to refugee/newcomer clients at IRC. Partnerships were also being developed with Western

Medical Center, San Diego State University College of Extended Studies, CVS Pharmacy, and Marriott Hotels.

Featured Successful Practices

Career Pathway

CompTIA Certification

The CompTIA Certification program prepared students to pass the CompTIA certification (an industry-recognized IT credential) and supported them to find jobs in the IT sector. The course offered a model of blended English language instruction with technical skills training. The first cohort represented a mix of English learners (many of whom had advanced IT skills) and Title I customers, which created positive dynamics among students, who were able to support one another. In the morning before each class, EL students received additional language support to help them progress through the curriculum and pass their certification test. In the last two weeks of the course, industry experts visited the class to share career advice, while students worked on their resumes and interview skills. In total, 16 people enrolled in the program and 14 students completed the course. All students received vouchers to take the certification exam; as of October 2018, 10 students had passed the first of the three exams.

VESL Plus Hospitality Link

The VESL Plus Hospitality Link Program was developed by the IRC in San Diego to help refugees with limited English proficiency to secure entry-level housekeeping jobs that have the potential for long-term employment in the hospitality field. This 10-week program included half-day vocational ESL (VESL) instruction, followed by half-day classes in work readiness training (WRT). These classes laid the foundation for helping clients assume a housekeeper's role and responsibilities.

Bridge Programming

A bridge program model was successfully applied in the ELL Navigator Program. ELL clients began by enrolling into a Title II Integrated English Learner Civics program where they were concurrently enrolled in occupational skills training with real-time weekly contextualized support. This design allowed clients to ease into occupational skills training by learning the prerequisite foundational and training skills they needed to be successful. The bridge program model of integrated service delivery also included employment and financial coaching, benefits screening and access to income supports, and connection to additional services. ELL clients participated in the following bridge programs during the duration of the ELL Navigator Pilot:

- *Pharmacy Tech Bridge Program* –Cohorts of ELL clients attended Pharmacy Technician Training. Those who successfully completed were able to enroll in externship opportunities with CVS and other pharmacies where, at completion, they earned their Pharmacy Technician Certificate. Once they earned a certificate, IRC and KRA worked together to place them in employment.
- *Customer Service Bridge Program* – This was a sector-specific career pathway program providing contextualized foundational skills, curriculum-based classroom training for the service industry, and occupational skills training and certification from SDSU's College of Extended Studies.
- *Healthcare Bridge Program* – This sector-specific career pathway program offered contextualized foundational skills and the medical terminology necessary to meet all prerequisites for entry into occupational skills training. At the completion of the training,

participants had the opportunity to enroll in the Healthcare Interpreting Training course at the Grossmont Health Occupation Center and to prepare for the national interpreter training exam.

Customer Success Story

Mr. M. arrived in the US as a refugee from Afghanistan in February 2016. With experience in interpretation and logistics support for the US Army in Afghanistan, he wanted to gain employment and stability by applying his skills in the US workforce as quickly as possible. He joined the ELL Navigator Program in March 2018 and enrolled in East County Career Center, the local AJCC, as well as IRC's Management in Customer Service Bridge Program – a sector-specific career pathway program providing contextualized foundational skills, curriculum-based classroom training for the service industry, and occupational skills training and certification from SDSU's College of Extended Studies. WIOA Title I funded supportive services were used to support Mr. M. in pursuit of his goals, and upon completion of his training he was hired by the IRC for a part-time temporary position in the Employment Department. Within three months, he earned a full-time position with benefits and a wage increase. In order to further expand his opportunities, and through support from the AJCC, Mr. M. accessed ITA/WIOA-funded training dollars to begin a 12-month certificate program in Accounting from UCSD Extension which he looks forward to completing in 2019.