

ELL Co-Enrollment Pilot Project Sustainability CoP Summary Notes, January 2021

SUSTAINABILITY COP OVERVIEW

The ELL Co-Enrollment Pilot Project Sustainability CoP took place on January 19th and focused on introducing grantees and their partners to the Sustainability Toolkit and engaging them on their plans and challenges related to sustaining their work with ELLs. A main topic included understanding what practices, strategies and approaches grantees had developed through the course of the pilot that they intend to sustain after the grant period. It also made space to hear from grantees on what sustainability challenges remain for them and what state level policy changes could support their work with ELLs in California. The CoP was attended by members of the Tulare, Pomona, and Verdugo project and partner teams.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND THEMES

The Project Team identified several key takeaways and general themes that stood out across CoP participants from the 3 attending grantee partner teams.

Grantees lifted up numerous practices they plan to carry forward after the end of the grant. These included the use of common referral and intake forms, maintaining MOUs with partners, collaboration and communication with diverse stakeholders, leveraging of partner resources, and continuing to focus on work with their local ELL populations. In particular, communication practices with partners and collaborators was emphasized, specifically around recruitment and enrollment. Co-location of staff between partners was highlighted as a particularly strong strategy for building trust with community members and partners alike.

Adaptations made in response to the pandemic may remain useful even after the pandemic ends. The Pomona team in particular highlighted several components of virtual service delivery, including the enrollment process, as ones they are considering to maintain even as the public health situation evolves. Additionally they highlighted the use of supportive services in the form of technology support as necessary for this continued remote engagement of clients. It was noted however that this would need to be coupled with an ongoing investment in building the digital skills and access of clients and weaving digital skills training opportunities across all partners.

Including ELL Navigators and frontline staff in program and strategy conversations is particularly important when working with ELLs. Staff in these roles are integrated into their communities and can best support the creation of responsive programs and strategies.

A challenge grantees noted as a barrier to sustaining their work with ELLs was simply the investment of time and resources required. Designating a sustainability lead and team requires an investment of resources that often times can be difficult to put together, particularly when it includes the engagement of multiple partners. One grantee suggested that their team would strive to integrate the work of sustainability into their everyday processes rather than designate a separate role or team to address carrying forward this work.

The diversity of ELLs and their unique needs was also highlighted as a challenge to sustainability. Grantees represent and serve large counties with incredibly diverse ELL populations, all with differing levels of language, education, and employment goals. To serve these populations there is also a diverse collection of local non-profits and community based organizations. Coordinating work and best practices among such a large collection of organizations can prove difficult.

POLICY CHANGES TO BETTER SERVE ELLS

As part of the Sustainability CoP grantees and their partners also noted several policy and system level changes that would assist with sustaining their work with ELLs.

In order to serve the ELL population there should be no other requirements attached to funding opportunities. ELLs are already an underserved population in need of services and attaching additional eligibility requirements to use of funds (such as family income) create barriers for potential clients in need of services.

Greater flexibility in the types of organizations that can apply for ELL funding opportunities would allow for better coordination and delivery of services to ELLs. It was pointed out that in some areas there are no qualifying organizations and this precludes certain regions from being eligible for funds to support ELLs. Allowing for greater flexibility in who can apply for funds will allow for local level decisions around partnerships to come together focused on how to best serve ELL populations rather than how to meet RFP requirements. Although having flexibility in who can serve as the lead applicant was highlighted it was also acknowledged the importance of maintaining clear incentives and parameters around including CBO level partners.

Reimagining how data systems such as CalJOBS and TOPSpro work together. Recognizing that organizations using CalJOBS and TOPSpro desire to continue using those systems, the grantees strongly emphasized the need to further develop both entities to allow for them to more simply share data between them. Fixing this data portability issue would allow for greater data sharing and collaboration between partners serving ELLs and others. An additional suggestion posed was to allow for greater access to CalJOBS by adult school partners in order to assist in data sharing, collaboration, and joint case management. It was also suggested that increasing the ability to use predictive analytics within these systems would support the outreach and recruitment efforts of ELL and other clients eligible to be served.