

Adult Education and Immigrant Integration in California:

Effective Practices Across the
Immigrant Integration Framework

Authored By: Jennie Mollica and Peter Simon
High Road Alliance



Introduction: Adult Education and Immigrant Integration in California

California is home to more than 10.6 million immigrants — 26.8% of the state’s population.¹ The California Adult Education Program (CAEP) benefits approximately 340,000 English language learners each year, aiding attainment of language ability, a U.S. high school diploma, in-demand career skills, and other personal and professional goals. Facilitating immigrant students’ integration in their communities is at the heart of the State’s adult education mission and can yield immense benefits: publicly funded ESL courses contribute to significant increases in an immigrant’s likelihood of registering to vote or casting a vote, as well as reported earnings from three to at least ten years following ESL course enrollment.²

California has acted in recent years to better support immigrants’ economic mobility and social inclusion. In 2015 — the same year that Assembly Bill 104 established CAEP and allocated block grants to regional adult education consortia — Senate Bill 84 created the position of Statewide Director of Immigrant Integration to monitor the implementation of statewide laws and regulations serving immigrants. In 2018, Assembly Bill 2098 directed CAEP to measure the educational and integration needs of immigrant adults and the effectiveness of providers in demonstrating immigrant integration in civic and community life.³ An AB 2098 workgroup issued recommendations in 2019 to “promote California’s civic and economic health by developing coordinated statewide immigrant integration policies and initiatives.” The workgroup offered a definition of immigrant integration as follows:

Immigrant integration is a two-way process in which immigrants are embraced and welcomed by the receiving society with effective, culturally relevant, and linguistically accessible programs and services that facilitate and provide: upward social and economic mobility, increased civic participation, and multigenerational integration to build secure, thriving, and inclusive communities.

The AB 2098 workgroup recommended California’s adoption of a ten-area immigrant integration framework (or IIF, Figure 1) that is a valuable tool for adult education programs and partners: a means of describing and measuring the ways we participate in the dynamic process in which immigrants and receiving communities work and grow together as a society. In fact, adult educators — while the primary providers of ESL instruction, a core element in the integration process — contribute across the ten elements of linguistic, economic, and social integration that are identified in the IIF. In recognition of this central role of adult education (and in addition to recommendations related to statewide policy and

¹ <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/california/>

² Heller, B. and Mumma, K.S. (2020) Immigrant integration in the United States: The role of adult English language training. Cambridge: Harvard University. Retrieved 12.15.20 at: https://kirstenslungaardmumma.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/jmp_esol_20201021.pdf

³ AB 2098 language can be found at:

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB2098 Many of the AB 2098 directives are now codified in California Education Code, namely in Sections 84917 and 84920. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&division=7.&title=3.&part=50.&chapter=5.&article=9

systems change), the AB 2098 workgroup suggested voluntary roles for adult educators and adult education consortia related to their adoption of the IIF, including the following:

1. Use the IIF as a guide to assessing the breadth of immigrant integration needs in the local community.
2. Use the IIF to also assess internal capacity of instructional programs, support services, staff competencies, and community partnerships.
3. Communicate to diverse immigrant populations in local communities the available options to address their IIF-related needs and goals..
4. Develop collaborative partnerships to provide integrated and coordinated services across the IIF's ten elements.
5. Conduct individual needs assessment, education and career planning, and goal-setting referencing the IIF's ten elements.
6. Deliver curricula, programs, and services -- including but not limited to English as a second language (ESL) and English Literacy and Civics Education (EL Civics) classes -- that address the range of individual immigrants' needs and goals.
7. Adopt metrics -- including California's EL Civics program Civic Objectives and Additional Assessment Plans (COAAPs) -- to effectively demonstrate immigrant integration outcomes across the IIF's ten elements.
8. Engage in sharing and learning about model practices that relate to the IIF's ten elements and demonstrate immigrant integration outcomes.

Addressing individual and community goals across the ten elements of the IIF is nothing new to adult education. Some would say *it's what we have always done*. ESL and EL Civics classes have always taught skills that yield linguistic, social, and economic benefits. Many immigrants also access career training, high school diploma or equivalency, and comprehensive support services through their adult education providers. But the IIF invites intentionality. It suggests that we partner more deliberately with our immigrant students to identify their goals and priorities, and that we critically evaluate the work we do to address those goals. It invites us to share and learn from each other about how we make a difference across the ten areas, and collaborate with other organizations to improve our impact. Finally, it invites us to recognize and celebrate the diversity of ways in which adult education contributes to immigrant integration.

With the implementation of AB 2098 and a deepening statewide commitment to embracing immigrant integration opportunities, the role of CAEP adult education providers and regional consortia cannot be overlooked. This brief shines light on the important work already underway to serve immigrants through CAEP programming and the effective practices that can be shared and scaled to benefit greater numbers of Californians.

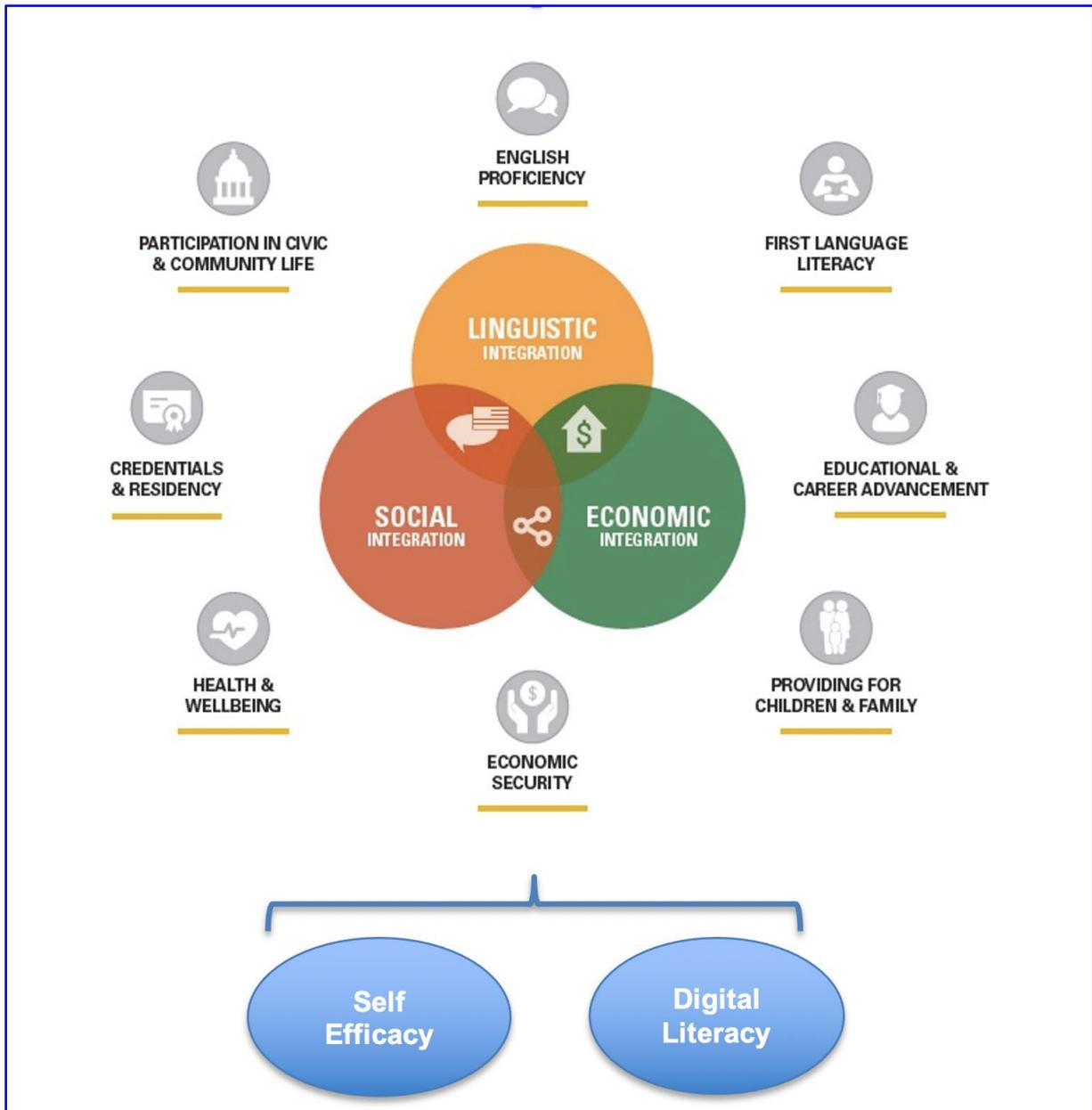


Figure 1. California's Ten-Element Immigrant Integration Framework (IIF)

Identifying Effective Immigrant Integration Practices: Purpose and Methods

The purpose of this brief is to identify a range of ways that CAEP adult education consortia and their partners are addressing the IIF's ten goal areas. By capturing these practices, CAEP will complement an emergent effort to gather data on immigrant integration activities and outcomes, informed by the AB 2098 workgroup and aligned with existing metrics. The brief will inform CAEP practitioners about creative solutions developed by their peers and inspire further innovation to better serve our immigrant students and communities.

To identify and learn about these effective practices, interviews were conducted with administrators and instructors representing 20 consortia in all regions of the state. Interviewees were asked about the roles their institutions play in supporting immigrant integration through curriculum and instruction, student support services, and community connections and referrals. They were asked to describe the partnerships, staff roles, data management tools, and funding sources that support their work in this area. Many of the interviewees also reflected more broadly on the role of adult education in supporting immigrant integration. Responses were analyzed to identify widely-used model practices, as well as innovations that stood out for their creativity, resourcefulness, or impact.

Effective Practices Supporting Immigrant Integration

A Culture, Not a Program

A theme heard across consortia is that a commitment to immigrant integration is reflected not only in the individual courses and programs offered, but in a culture of collaboration and comprehensive, “whole person” services. Several consortia have used the IIF to define intended student outcomes across the ten elements and to commit to connecting students to community resources necessary to achieve those outcomes. Other consortia have not used the framework explicitly but have dedicated resources and established infrastructure necessary to bring community assets inside and link students

“We’ve been providing these services for decades, with different levels of support from others, but the [immigrant integration] framework and concept and vocabulary around that are relatively new. The phrase “immigrant integration” helps to coalesce different ideas into a structure. It gives us a better sense of what our vision should be around supporting immigrants.”

to services outside school sites. Creative fundraising and fund allocation support this regional infrastructure: one consortium described **holding CAEP funds at the consortium level** for staffing of collaborative activities, while other consortia said **accessing discretionary grants** (such as the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency’s ELL Navigator and ELL Co-Enrollment grants, or private foundation funds) enabled their collective impact work with key community partners. **Technology tools** such as case management software are used to support the referrals and data-tracking necessary for a truly collaborative system of education and service delivery.

Sonoma County Adult Education Consortium partners with the City of Healdsburg, Healdsburg Unified School District (HUSD), and a community-based organization, Corazon Healdsburg, to provide ESL, high school equivalency (HSE), and career technical education (CTE) classes at an accessible community center. The City and HUSD offer the classroom space at no cost and assist with advertising the classes; Corazon Healdsburg recruits students, provides bilingual wraparound support services to students and their families, offers on-site child care at no cost, and facilitates food and school supply distribution. Immigrant students feel safe and invited in this community space, and residents of the county’s rural areas are well served at this central location.

Curriculum and Instruction

A consistent theme among the instructional approaches taken to support immigrant integration is, in fact, the **integration of ESL with other content areas** relevant to students’ goals across the ten elements of the IIF. Much of the integrated ESL instruction is funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program, which supports “education services provided to English language learners who are adults... that enable such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States.” Allowable activities include literacy and English language acquisition, instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and workforce training. Programs funded under Section 243 of WIOA Title II must partner with the local workforce development system and prepare English language learners for employment.

Many integrated ESL programs are **addressing students’ work-related training needs**. One adult school created a construction pre-apprenticeship program that integrates both ESL and math instruction. Another consortium blends its ESL class with a Spanish-language CTE class for licensed child care operators — supporting students’ English and native-language literacy and career growth. Many consortia have adopted the evidence-based I-BEST model of integrated ESL and CTE courses; in some cases, this design enables ESL students to enroll alongside adult basic education (ABE) and other non-ESL students, furthering their integration goals and encouraging their use of English in and outside the classroom.

Glendale Local Education and Resource Network Services (GlendaleLEARNS) learned from their career pathway program for adults with autism that a comprehensive education, training, and supportive service model shows results. They designed their biomanufacturing and medical assisting training programs to embrace the whole student by integrating ESL, career training, paid work-based learning (using WIOA Title I Work Experience funds), tutoring, academic and career counseling, and case management.

CAEP consortia are **approaching ESL integration in creative ways that address the complexity of students’ goals**. Several consortia use ESL curricula that integrate multiple immigrant integration topics, enabling them to track outcomes aligned with the IIF. An integrated ESL/Citizenship course was developed

collaboratively — and is now co-taught — by two instructors. Another consortium offers a co-taught ESL and transfer-level English course, designed to bridge between adult school and the community college.

San Luis Obispo Adult Education Consortium arrived at a creative solution to their ESL students' difficulty transitioning to college-level English. Adapting the I-BEST model, Cuesta Community College brought together credit English faculty with an ESL instructor to co-design curriculum and develop strategies to support English language learners' transitions from ESL to credit English courses. Students enroll in an online English class offered asynchronously, allowing them to continue working during daytime hours. Two evenings per week, they meet with the ESL instructor in a supportive workgroup session, where they review the college-level English content and also receive support with any technology challenges. The two teachers are paid for their weekly collaboration time, when they coordinate lessons.

For ESL students with young children, a **family literacy instructional model** has proven effective. Several consortia offer ESL classes in partnership with K-12 districts, either at school sites or via referrals to the adult school. Consortia tailor their program to parents of children ages 3-5, providing ESL classes as well as early childhood education; or to parents of school age children, supporting children's school success and parents' active engagement in school matters.

Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium's Family Success Initiative empowers families to support children's success in school by teaching leadership skills within school communities. Contextualized ESL and Spanish-language classes cover multiple topics aligned with the IIF, connecting parents to multiple community resources and preparing them to take active roles in their families' education and development.

Several consortia facilitate immigrants' access to for-credit and college-level instruction by **mirroring noncredit and credit courses**, i.e. enrolling students in concurrent non-credit and credit sections that take place in a single class. One consortium now offers all six levels of ESL classes in a mirrored non-credit/credit format, notably ensuring their accessibility among undocumented students for whom federal financial aid for college courses is not an option. Another consortium invites its community college partner to deliver selected ESL classes at the adult school in a non-credit/credit format, so that adult education students are introduced to college courses at a familiar location and at no cost. Consortia also offer mirrored non-credit/credit CTE programs, with some reserved non-credit seats enabling students to explore a CTE area without cost or concern about grades.

Student Support Services

Consortia invest significantly in support services to help students achieve their goals across the IIF's ten elements. Bilingual counselors and administrative staff offer **services in students' native languages**, and some consortia also make use of language lines for on-call interpretation assistance. Schools distribute **multilingual outreach and informational materials** about their services, and one consortium developed a bilingual version of the online community college application. Several consortia described **counseling**

and support that is “embedded,” “integrated,” or “intrusive” as most effective at reaching students; this means visiting classes rather than asking students to come to them and, during online instruction, appearing on Zoom calls or on Canvas to make their presence known. Consortia also embed **bilingual one-on-one tutoring** in ESL classes to support both English and digital skills-building.

Consortia tailor counseling and support services to embrace the diversity of students’ immigrant integration goals. Several consortia describe their commitment to **identifying students’ interests and needs in areas encompassing the breadth of the IIF** through up-front assessment, so that they can address these needs comprehensively both in and outside the classroom. Providing access to emergency food, laptops, mental health care, and legal aid are common services. Also, numerous adult education providers described **talking openly with students about residency status** and assisting with procedures related to DACA, financial aid eligibility, out-of-country transcripts, etc.

“Immigrant integration is not just for our ESL students, it’s for all immigrants. And it’s not a program; it’s an approach to support services.”

State Center Adult Education Consortium counselors work actively with undocumented adult education students to make their educational pathways affordable and accessible.. In addition to advising them on financial aid options, they work closely with SBAEC members and partners to help students obtain the necessary documents and verifications needed to submit the attendance requirements for AB 540. They also provide a “warm hand-off” to member colleges or partners to ensure the students know how to obtain their attendance verification, fill out the California Dream Act application and AB 540 Affidavit.

Integration across educational institutions is a common theme when consortia describe their approaches to transition support for immigrant students. Whether a transition specialist is housed at the adult school, in the community college, or at the consortium level serving multiple institutions, a key function of this position is **helping students bridge between adult and post-secondary education**. Often the transition specialist is bilingual and explicitly focuses on immigrant integration goals. In one consortium, the college’s CalWORKs counselor visits the adult schools weekly to facilitate transition. Multiple consortia noted the importance of individualized support around the college application process, particularly for adult school students for whom language may be a barrier. Several regions host regular Transition Team meetings where staff share resources and identify collaborative solutions to student needs.

North Orange County Regional Adult Education Consortium found a way to involve its former students who had transitioned to community college in an innovative approach to immigrant student support. The ESL Mentoring Program hires and trains these current college students for 20-hour-per-week peer mentor roles. Adult school ESL students who are motivated to advance the community college are assigned a mentor, who supports them through each step of a Guided Pathway: creating a clear curricular pathway, entering the path, staying on the path, and learning toward intentional outcomes. Mentors connect mentees to a variety of campus and community resources and check in on academic progress. AB 540/DACA students, in addition to being assigned a dedicated ESL counselor at the college,

are supported by an ESL mentor who guides them through the eligibility requirements for in-state college tuition.

Partnerships

Adult education providers cannot address the extent of IIF goals without dedicated partnerships. Consortia have adopted creative ways to leverage funding, facilitate students' access to resources, and build a no-wrong-door system of programs and services. Some of these partnerships were already highlighted in the descriptions of instructional strategies and support services. In this section, three key partnerships will be emphasized for their key role in supporting adult education students' attainment of IIF goals.

"This is not just immigrant integration; it's also helping our partners understand, gain cultural competency and understand who English language learners are. That's the piece we need to think deeper about."

First, collaboration with community colleges and their credit-bearing programs contributes toward students' English proficiency, educational and career advancement, credential attainment, and economic security. Consortia described **building seamless ESL pathways** by mapping and aligning curriculum across institutions, and **defining career pathways from adult schools to college-level instruction, certificates, degrees, and transfer**. One consortium offers a one-month bridge program, co-taught by an adult school ESL instructor and a community college faculty member, that prepares students to transition directly into for-credit allied health training programs. Collaboration also involves colleges' Admissions and Records departments in **smoothing the enrollment process for immigrants**, and specifically assisting undocumented students with necessary paperwork.

Coast Adult Education Consortium uses an effective approach to expanding adult education offerings beyond the limitations of their CAEP funding. An adult school and its neighboring community college district have established an Inter-agency Service Agreement (ISA) allowing the community college to deliver noncredit classes at the adult school site. Students access the classes at a convenient and familiar location and at no cost, the adult school records their learning outcomes, and the community college receives state Full-Time Equivalent Student (FTES) payment for its instruction. The ISA approach is attracting the attention of other consortia with interest in its replication.

A second example of collaboration facilitating students' IIF goal attainment involves adult schools and the public workforce system. Through partnership with local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and their America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs), adult schools can facilitate eligible students' co-enrollment in educational and WIOA programs and subsequent access to resources such as individual training accounts (ITAs), on-the-job training (OJT) and work experience subsidies, supportive services, and job placement assistance. Consortia have arranged co-location by **delivering adult education at the AJCCs** or by **housing an AJCC at an adult school or a community college**. One consortium described how their **AJCC and adult education facility co-located with a legal services provider**, to ensure that students'

residency status concerns could be addressed. One consortium used an ELL Navigator grant to locate **transition specialists at the AJCCs**, where they could meet with immigrant job-seekers and connect them with adult education.

Sequoias Adult Education Consortium convenes weekly meetings of a cross-agency team of AJCC staff and the consortium’s counselors and ELL navigators. The team reviews individual student/client cases to identify needs for additional services and follow-up. Regular contact has built awareness among frontline staff of resources available through the adult education and workforce development systems, while making it easier for students to access the education, career training, and job search assistance they need.

Finally, collaboration between adult education consortia and community-based organizations (CBOs) frequently contributes to immigrant integration outcomes. In many communities, consortia rely on CBOs for **answering questions about legal rights**, such as the technicalities of AB 540, options for earning income while studying, small business assistance, and pathways to U.S. citizenship. One consortium holds large-scale “Citizenship Registration Events” several times a year with its CBO partners. Several consortia named **the public library as an essential partner**, whether for co-located classes and support services or to connect students to library cards and reading materials. Consortia also expanded their capacity to connect students with employment through **partnerships with community-based job search assistance organizations**.

South Bay Consortium for Adult Education convened members to review data on its immigrant students and was struck by one troubling fact: thirty percent of adult school students had no health insurance. They decided to focus immigrant integration efforts on a tangible target through a health insurance enrollment campaign. Members established a network of referral partners, including Gardner Family Health which worked with the adult schools to design instructional modules on healthcare in the United States and visited classes to answer questions. The intentional campaign led to referrals to Gardner for insurance enrollment, with a measurable and lasting effect on the community. The consortium partnered with the Alliance for Language Learners Integration (ALLIES) to develop the [Community Connections Toolkit](#) as a resource for other regional collaboratives serving immigrants.

Conclusion

Interviews with CAEP consortia revealed their deep commitments to providing immigrants with courses, support services, and resource linkages that relate to the ten elements of the IIF. Interviewees spoke with pride of the creativity with which consortia members and partners design collaborative solutions to students’ immigrant integration needs. They described — in greater detail than this brief is able to capture — effective practices, many of which have come about under the consortia’s current three-year plans as they have strengthened infrastructure and staffing, developed new partnerships, tested fresh approaches, and embraced a more expansive role in supporting immigrant students. Universally, those who described these practices expressed interest in sharing with and learning from their peers,

contributing to a statewide movement to embrace immigrants' goals as the goals of our adult education system.

The consortia interviewed also described challenges to their immigrant integration work. These include creating a collaborative rather than a competitive consortium culture, designing (and funding) complexly collaborative programs, connecting low-level ESL students to career pathways, effectively serving undocumented students, and reflecting comprehensive service outcomes in data systems and reporting. The challenges were generally framed with an eye to the future, however, with examples of recent progress made to address them, and with a good deal of reflection on the opportunities ahead.

Additional Resources

For more information on specific effective practices, and for contact information for exemplary programs, please contact CAEP TAP at tap@caldulted.org or (888) 827-2324. In Spring 2021, CAEP TAP will launch the *Advancing CA Adult Education* website (previously known as Practice with Promise). The new *Advancing CA Adult Education* site will be a repository of innovative, emerging, and model adult education programs throughout California that have demonstrated positive outcomes for students, agencies, and/or consortia. Model programs will be reviewed and added to the repository via a nomination process and will be awarded annually at the CAEP Summit. Beyond highlighting adult education programs, *Advancing CA Adult Education* will be a source for current research and practice aligned to the state priorities, CCCCO Vision of Success, and the CDE AEO State Plan. Practitioners are also invited to connect with colleagues eager to share about their program successes either individually or via online communities of practice. Stay tuned for more information and for the launch date.