



2017-2020 Local Plan Biennial Modifications

Contra Costa County's Workforce Development Board supports a network that creates and promotes dynamic education systems, high-performing businesses, and a prosperous local economy with an abundance of high-quality jobs and skilled workers to fill them.

Contra Costa County's Local Plan Vision supports a network that creates and promotes dynamic education systems, high-performing businesses, and a prosperous local economy with an abundance of high-quality jobs and skilled workers to fill them. This vision is being realized through strategies such as:

- Analysis of the local and regional economy and priority industry sectors;
- Development and expansion of relationships with businesses and individuals from these priority sectors;
- Creation of a regional workforce intermediary organization that links, aligns and leverages the collective assets of all partners;
- Investment in initiatives that prepare workers for entry into career-pathway jobs; and
- Strengthening relationships with CTE providers and other networks to effectively leverage resources.

In accordance with policies and requirements established by the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB), this document provides two-year modifications to the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County's (WDBCCC) 2017-2020 workforce development strategic plan. These modifications are focused around the following five (5) designated priorities as set forth by the CWDB: 1) partnership with Contra Costa County's CalFresh Employment & Training (E&T) programs; 2) partnership with Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services; 3) competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; 4) services for English Language Learners, the Foreign-Born, and Refugees; and 5) other changes to the local plan pursuant to changes in labor market and economic conditions or other factors affecting implementation of the local plan. The WDBCCC worked closely with the Richmond Workforce Development Board to coordinate several plan elements to ensure collaboration and consistency across Contra Costa County.

The WDBCCC is submitting local plan modifications with Local Board Chair signature only at this point in time. Our Local Elected Officials have been informed throughout this process and provided opportunities to provide input. Upon State Board approval the WDBCC will submit the Plan to our Local Elected Official (Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors) for final approval and signature in time to meet the August 1st deadline.

Stakeholder Engagement and Community Outreach Efforts Scoring Matrix
Local Plan Modification - Workforce Partnerships
Summary of Community Outreach Efforts and Stakeholder Engagement:

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) staff worked closely with our Richmond Workforce Development Board staff (RWDB) to ensure a collaborative and non-duplicative effort of engaging stakeholders across Contra Costa County.

Three public input sessions were scheduled sub-regionally throughout the county between RWDB and WDBCCC, including one evening session; a flyer was created and an extensive data-base of public agencies, community-based organizations, board members, business representatives, board of supervisors, all local adult schools and community colleges, and community stakeholders was used to create an extensive distribution list for outreach and engagement. The WDBCCC business staff and the Small Business Development Center distributed the flyer and invitation to participate to hundreds of business across Contra Costa County as well as all of the local Chambers. Flyers were distributed widely and posted on the RWDB website, the WDBCCC website, and the EASTBAY WORKs regional website. Flyers were posted at the comprehensive AJCC to invite/encourage participants to attend and contribute to the input sessions.

Public input sessions included:

1. November 15 – Richmond Auditorium, Richmond; 3:00 to 5:00pm = 41 attended
2. November 29 – Concord AJCC, Concord; 5:00 to 7:00pm = 24 attended
3. December 4 – City of Pittsburg Council Chambers, Pittsburg; 10:00 to 12:00pm = 33 attended

Specific outreach to agencies/CBOs specializing in working with the target audiences referenced in the local plan modifications was conducted:

- English Language Learners/Foreign Born/Refugees – Lao Family Community Development has extensive experience serving ELL, foreign born and refugees, Lao staff participated in all 3 input sessions and contributed to the content of the local plan
- CalFRESH/CalFRESH E&T – the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) of Contra Costa County’s Workforce Services Department (which manages the county CalFRESH program) was invited to all session; the WDBCCC has been participating in a year-long strategic planning process with EHSD and the 2 current CalFRESH E & T providers, to establish a plan for addressing the need of CalFRESH and CalFRESH E & T in Contra Costa County, all stakeholders in this planning group were invited to participate and at least one member attended each of the 3 session and contributed to the content of our local plan
- Child Support Services – WDBCCC staff participated in the EHSD Child Support System conference call initiated by RWDB; the county Child Support Department was invited to all sessions and participated in all 3-input session and contributed to the content of our local plan

- People with ID/DD – the Department of Rehabilitation was invited to participate in all sessions and a representative was present at all 3 sessions in addition to local providers serving the ID/DD population, such as Futures Explored participated and contributed to the content of our local plan

In addition, WDBCCC hosted several smaller sessions to elicit input from specific audiences:

- November 6th – WDBCCC Full Board public meeting dedicated to input on the local plan = 16 attended
- December 3 – Partner MOU meeting was dedicated to input on the local plan = 10 attended

All sessions followed the same format where attendees were welcomed, informed of the goal of the session, and invited to participate in break-out groups to contribute their ideas to the priority topic. All responses were scribed and collected for input into the final product.

The WDBCCC local plan was posted for public comment from February 7th through March 8th and did not receive any public comments.

A. Regional Alignment, Coordination, and Integration of Services for CalFresh Recipients

Braiding Resources and Coordinating Service Delivery Among Local Partners

By partnering with the Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative (CCWC), a partnership of 10 local organizations who provide workforce development services, many of whom provide direct CalFresh services, the WDBCCC is able to network and disseminate information to diverse constituents across the county.¹ The WDBCCC will continue to provide labor market data, information on priority industry sectors, and in-demand occupations to help connect CalFresh recipients to employment opportunities in strategically identified industry sectors that pay a livable wage (advanced manufacturing, healthcare, transportation/logistics). The WDBCCC will utilize existing supportive/retention resources, and incorporate additional supportive/retention services available through additional partners such as CalWORKs (Childcare, Transportation). The WDBCCC will also work to strengthen and leverage existing relationships, while looking to expand networks with various resource providers in the coming year.

The WDBCCC has also contributed administrative and other support in the development of Workforce Integration Networks (WINs) in West, Central and East Contra Costa County. The WINs provide an opportunity for community based and local government service providers to come together to give updates on their work, and to collaborate on shared services for individuals in need. The WINs will serve as an important vehicle for coordination of services for people receiving CalFresh.

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) has served in an advisory capacity to the partnership of organizations coordinating and delivering services to people receiving CalFresh E&T services in the county. This partnership includes Opportunity Junction, Rubicon, the Food Bank of Contra Costa, and EHSD CalFresh E&T. Rubicon and Opportunity Junction are the entities that currently operate under the “third party match” model, delivering E&T services to CalFresh participants and receiving 50% reimbursement of federal funds.

Over the past nine months, the WDBCCC has played an active role in a CalFresh planning process in the county to prepare for the end of the waiver of the work requirement (in September 2019) for those classified as Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs). The process resulted in the development of three *Shared Impact Strategy* workgroups. The WDBCCC is continuing its participation in two of these workgroups, one related to the expansion of CalFresh E&T opportunities in the county, and another focused on outreach and recruitment of individuals that will soon be required to meet the work requirement. Participation in these workgroups will offer multiple opportunities for braiding resources and coordinating service delivery among partners for CalFresh recipients

Partnering with Organizations that Serve Specific Types of CalFresh Populations

The WDBCCC has identified and collaborates with local/regional partners serving CalFresh

¹ The CCWC includes: Rubicon, Adult Education (Mt. Diablo, Liberty, Martinez, Pittsburg), Contra Costa Community College District, Lao Family Community Development, New Horizons, Opportunity Junction, and San Pablo Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

populations to ensure awareness of resources available through WIOA (Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative, SparkPoint, Rubicon, Opportunity Junction, EHSD CalFresh Employment & Training). All of these organizations provide direct services to CalFresh recipients. The WDBCCC also convenes business information forums which provide information, resources, and hiring incentives to employers. These include the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), Employment Training Panel (ETP), and additional resources. The forums also provide an opportunity for partnering organizations to highlight their particular programs/resources available to targeted CalFresh populations.

The WDBCCC will conduct direct outreach to specific groups of jobseekers to highlight opportunities, including the reentry population and people with disabilities. In February 2019, the WDBCCC will sponsor an event for people with disabilities through its Disability Accelerator grant, many of whom are CalFresh participants. The WDBCCC hosts monthly PACT (Parole And Community Team) meetings of organizations promoting services available to the reentry population. These meetings are facilitated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and offer support for employment, CalFresh support, and disability services.

Types of Workforce Services Available to CalFresh Recipients Funded by Local/Regional Partners

Workforce services available to people receiving CalFresh that are and can be funded by local/regional partners include: services provided through the AJCC/One Stop system; computer technology skills through Opportunity Junction, and releasing of a driver's license by the Child Support Program. WIOA Title I places priority of service on low-income individuals, including those who are receiving CalFresh. In some instances, the income guidelines for CalFresh are higher than the LLSIL used for Title I priority eligibility. Because individuals receiving services from partners are not currently tracked by their CalFresh status, baseline data on the number of individuals and types of services that they are receiving is not available.

A total of 88 people on CalFresh in Contra Costa County in 2017 received CalFresh E&T services, including: case management; assessments; pre-employment job readiness training; career skills training, including job search, communication skills, career advancement; resume and job application preparation support; interview preparation; placement assistance including referrals to sector based employment; college orientation and success planning; financial education and financial coaching; and vocational training for administrative careers. The WDBCCC is part of the planning team that is working to increase access to CalFresh E&T services through expanding the pool of providers.

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) operates a One-Stop, branded as America's Job Center of California/EASTBAY Works, in Concord, CA, serving East, Central and West County. Services are also provided at numerous access points throughout the county. They include but are not limited to: Access to computers, faxes and phones for job search; Career, educational and work readiness assessments; A variety of career and job readiness workshops; Resource referrals for support services from public, private and non-profit agencies in Contra Costa County.

Providing training opportunities to eligible participants is a key service provided by the Workforce Development Board through the AJCC. The WDBCCC trains toward priority sectors that have been identified as opportunities for career advancement and income mobility for our job seekers. The priority sectors for this period include: (1) advanced manufacturing; (2) health

and life sciences; (3) energy; (4) information communications technology (ICT) and digital media; and (5) construction.

Contra Costa County Eastbay Works AJCC is integrated with the county CalWORKs program. In addition, the One-Stop Administrator manages the CCWORKS subsidized employment program for CalWORKs. The CCWORKS Employment Placement Counselors attend meetings across both bureaus (WFS & WDB/AJCC), conducting outreach and marketing for both bureaus.

A number of participants are co-enrolled across CalWORKs & Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and therefore able to take advantage of additional leveraged resources that may include individualized occupational job training, cohort trainings, support services, and subsidized work opportunities. CalWORKs and the WDB/AJCC works collaboratively on outreach and recruitment for all cohort training opportunities.

Integration of People Receiving CalFresh into Sector Pathway Programs

A number of WDBCCC partners offer sector pathway programs into which CalFresh recipients are integrated. FutureBuild offers extensive wrap-around services for participants in their pre-apprenticeship construction program, leading to employment opportunities in multiple building trades. Opportunity Junction provides computer training and a broad range of supportive service to help individuals prepare for administrative careers. Rubicon Programs provides wrap-around and specialized supportive services specifically targeted to the re-entry population. The Association of Manufacturers Bay Area (AMBayArea) is interested in providing work-based learning/training opportunities to underserved populations in the county. All programs include active outreach to CalFresh participants.

Partnering to Provide Supportive Services and Facilitate Program Completion

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the CalFresh population faces significant challenges that impact employment and successful completion of workforce development training. These include health and mental health issues, lack of housing, responsibility of caring for dependents, and lack of access to transportation. The WDBCCC will collaborate with multiple partners on the delivery of services to address these challenges for people receiving CalFresh. Key partners in the provision of services include: Rubicon, the Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative (description on page 1), CalWorks (if co-enrolled), WIOA Title I Adult/DW programs, Pell grants, housing providers, county-based services that address issues such as transportation and childcare, and a range of community based organizations across the county.

Retaining Participants in Regional Sector Pathway Programs

It can be a challenge to support retention in sector pathway programs for individuals with the level of barriers experienced by many people on CalFresh. The local board and its partners will engage in frequent communication and updates regarding the status of individual participants, in order to identify and serve participant needs. Tailoring the program to meet the specific needs of the individual is another way to facilitate retention and increase motivation. Delivering program services in a culturally sensitive way can also be an effective strategy for supporting retention.

B. Existing Workforce and Education Program Partnerships to Serve Non-Custodial Parents

Partner Collaboration to Provide Supportive Services

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) helps participants in its workforce services programs to access a variety of supportive services that assist them in successfully securing livable wage employment. The WDBCCC provides assistance with transportation, subsidies for materials for education and training programs, and/or work tools or clothes. The WDBCCC also provides referrals to other organizations and services in the community that provide supportive services, including child care assistance, housing support, mental and physical health services, and substance abuse support.

In addition, the WDBCCC and the Child Support Program (CSP) currently participate in the Parole and Community Team (PACT), a collaborative effort organized around parolees. In the past, CSP participated in the Workforce Integration Networks (WIN) of the WDB, where CBOs, adult education and training providers, and workforce development partners convened regularly to improve services and outcomes across the County.

Ensuring a Comprehensive Provision of Services

To ensure that non-custodial parents receive the comprehensive services they need to achieve successful employment outcomes, the WDBCCC will explore the possibility of creating a Memorandum of Understanding with the CSP to facilitate greater communication, coordination of services, and tracking of non-custodial parents. This will help to ensure that individuals seeking higher wage employment can get access to GED support, ESL classes, or adult basic education classes, as well as the skills and credentials to obtain higher wages. Greater coordination with the CSP will allow the WDBCCC to provide the full range of support to these individuals.

Impact of Eligibility Criteria on Ability to Provide Workforce Services

As part of the process of determining priority for services, WDBCCC has to document six months to a year of income for potential recipients of services. Sporadic employment or non-reporting of income, which are common for the NP population, can create difficulty in documenting this history. The desire on the part of some NPs to show as little income as possible to avoid garnishment of their wages can thus impact their eligibility for workforce services.

Obstacles to Providing Services to the Child Support Program Population

There are currently several obstacles to providing services and establishing meaningful partnerships for service delivery. First, the CSP cannot spend money on direct services to NPs, limiting their ability to support them directly. In addition, many of the CSP tools are punitive and can increase the individuals' barriers to employment, for example, through suspending their driver's license for delinquent child support payments. Furthermore, current child support laws are written with the assumption of a traditional family structure of a husband and wife who divorce. These laws do not reflect the reality of many non-custodial parent situations.

An additional challenge is that NPs may not want the CSP to know they are working, due to a fear of wage garnishment. Furthermore, the CSP, the WDB, and other service providers are

also not always aware of all of the programs in which an NP may participate. This could be addressed through a formal partnership where CSP includes a referral to WDBCCC services and a waiver on increased payments while the client is meeting specified workforce development goals. This will increase the likelihood of good communication between CSP, the WDBCCC and the client.

Additional Tools to Motivate and Support Participation

The CSP could incentivize their clients to participate in workforce programs by reinstating suspended driver's licenses upon enrollment in a training or education program, or upon meeting another defined employment goal. In addition, the CSP could also work with non-custodial parents to reduce their child support payments in exchange for participation in a workforce training program, until new employment is secured.

Obstacles to Meaningful Engagement in Local Partnerships

There are several potential obstacles to expansion of the partnership between the WDBCCC and the CSP. First, the CSP operates on a "One-strike, you're out" approach, which can make it challenging to establish relationships with individuals who may be facing multiple barriers to employment and may need greater support to achieve their goals. A second potential barrier is that NPs may not want the CSP to know they have started working, since that could impact their required child support payment amount. This could be mitigated, however, by reducing child support payment during the duration of a work training program to increase participant buy-in. Finally, the CSP, the WDBCCC, and other service providers may not always be aware of all the programs in which the client participates, which makes it more difficult to coordinate efforts to help an individual.

Retaining Individuals in Relevant Workforce and Education Training Programs

The WDBCCC will work closely with program participants to ensure that they have access to the full range of services they need to successfully complete their training. The WDBCCC will identify the unique mix of supports and training services that each individual needs and will coordinate with relevant partners, including the CSP, to ensure they get everything they need and to address any challenges that arise.

Existing, New and Prospective Partnerships for Workforce Training and Education

The WDBCCC will build upon its current partnerships with employers, educational systems, unions, and community-based organizations to continue improving the coordination and leveraging of resources. In addition, the WDBCCC will further strengthen and codify its partnership with the CSP, including through the potential signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

Braiding Resources and Coordinating Service Delivery

The WDBCCC will continue to work with partners to braid resources and coordinate service delivery in the county, with a strengthened focus on providing support to non-custodial parents. Coordination with partners will primarily take place through the Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative (CCWC), Parole and Community Team (PACT), and the Workforce Integration Network (WIN). The CCWC is an innovative public/non-profit partnership of Contra Costa County workforce development organizations that currently operate within the County. It was

created specifically in response to the request for proposals to provide Adult and Dislocated Worker career services under WIOA. The PACT is a mandatory orientation meeting that gives people just released from prison a chance to see what services are available in their communities to help them succeed at home. The WIN is a network of public, private, and government agencies committed to working together to create a broader, more integrated system of workforce services designed to leverage public and private resources, enhance access to WIN member services and improve long-term outcomes for individuals using these services, reducing duplication and increasing efficiency.

Engaging CBOs with a History of Serving the Targeted Populations

As evidenced by the networks listed above (CCWC, PACT, WIN) the WDBCCC has a history of working collaboratively with CBOs, education partners, and private and public agencies, in effort to not only leverage resources but to better connect target populations to the services best suited to their needs. The WDBCCC and its partners continue to research and reach out to organizations that can add value to the network. The CSP will be invited to participate in the PACT and WIN meetings.

Referral Process and Forms for Tracking this Population

The WDBCCC does not currently have a referral process with the CSP or the family court, but is in discussions with the CSP about establishing a Memorandum of Understanding that would lay out the referral process between the organizations and that would establish data sharing so the CSP can track the non-custodial parents with whom they work.

Tools and Incentives that LCSAs can use to Promote Workforce Development Participation

As indicated elsewhere in this document, there are a number of tools and incentives that can be employed by LCSAs to provide motivation to NPs to participate in workforce development and training. One key approach is to negotiate a reduction in the amount of child support payments during participation in workforce training, as a way to support enrollment and retention. Another is for the LCSA to develop a more collaborative relationship with NPs, so that they understand that participation in workforce development and education can be beneficial to them as well as their families. Increasing non-custodial parents' awareness of available hiring incentives, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, is another useful incentive for motivating individuals to participate in these employment training opportunities.

C. Serving Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Ways in Which AJCC Staff have Gained Knowledge About Serving Individuals with ID/DD

In addition to focusing on college graduates with disabilities, a central focus of the Workforce Board's Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) project is improving employment outcomes specifically for individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD). This has been achieved by partnering with two Community Based Organizations (CBOs) (East Bay Innovations and Futures Explored) that are experts in this field and that also receive funding from Regional Centers. As the DEA Project Lead, the One-Stop Administrator has participated in DEA quarterly convenings and learning community meetings and provided information to the AJCC staff on best practices to improve services to this population.

Representatives from the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and Futures Explored (staff and consumers) have served as experts and facilitators of the Strategic Planning break-out sessions which focused on ID/DD needs and identified a wealth of resources to help AJCC staff expand their knowledge and strengthen their capacity for working with this population.

In an effort to ensure AJCC staff are fully trained, AJCC MOU partners recently completed a matrix that identified which trainings each MOU partner agency can provide as well as areas in which training is needed. The DOR will provide training on serving individuals with ID/DD through this mechanism.

Additional programs and resources about serving individuals with ID/DD that the WDBCCC can access include the following:

- Partnership with CBOs East Bay Innovations and Futures Explored (both funded by Regional Centers)
- Disability Employment Accelerator Employment Development Department Project Managers to provide technical assistance regarding effective work with the ID/DD population
- Department of Rehabilitation - including Work Incentive Planners (WIPS) and Windmills Training²
- Contra Costa BRIDGES to Success program, which provides an alternate route to specific County jobs for people with developmental disabilities
- EHSD Navigators who connect individuals with needed services within Contra Costa's Employment and Human Services Department and beyond
- CCCOE Workability programs provide pre-employment training, job placement, and follow-up for high school students in special education including those with ID/DD

Connecting with DOR Point of Contact on Supportive Services

The DOR point of contact offers direct services at the Concord Comprehensive AJCC and serves as a "resident expert" and link to additional supports for individuals with ID/DD. Additional partnerships with CBOs receiving Regional Center funds also maximize WIOA Title I training dollars while providing the additional supports (specialized assessments, job coaching, life skills, social skills, etc.) individuals with ID/DD may need.

Outreach to Employers to Support CIE

The WDBCCC will be participating in local discussions with its DOR District partner to align strategies with the CIE BLUEPRINT which seeks to:

1. Improve collaboration and coordination between local educational agencies, DOR districts, and regional centers to prepare and support all individuals with ID/DD who choose CIE;
2. Increase opportunities for individuals with ID/DD who choose CIE to prepare for and participate in the California workforce development system and achieve CIE within existing resources; and
3. Support the ability of individuals with ID/DD to make informed choices, adequately prepare for, transition to, and engage in CIE.

² The Windmills curriculum, used by more than half of Fortune 500 companies, is aimed at raising awareness of the limitations often imposed upon people with disabilities due to lack of knowledge or low expectations.

The WDBCCC has been invited to join the Local Partnership Agreement (LPA) as a community partner whose participation supports the intention of the LPA to foster collaboration in order to streamline service delivery, engage communities, and increase CIE opportunities for individuals with ID/DD.

In addition to supporting employer engagement strategies identified in the LPA, a component of the DEA grant is the creation and hosting of Employer Forums (next forum to occur in February 2019,) which aim to reduce stigma and to educate employers on the benefits of hiring people with disabilities including ID/DD. Because the DEA partners have specific expertise with ID/DD, a host of strategies have been identified to improve employment outcomes for this specific population, including:

1. Windmills Disability Etiquette training for an employer audience
2. Expansion of the type and duration of employment retention services after placements with ongoing support for both employee and employer
3. Job Task Analysis to address the disconnect between the qualifications advertised in job postings and what is really required for the job
4. Customized employment in which jobs are reconfigured to address the specific capacities/talents of the individual (example: Google created a low-light, distraction-free environment to maximize productivity of their employees with autism)
5. Assessments of AJCC facilities, services, and program delivery done by ID/DD consumers/customers
6. Identification of Employer Champions willing to share their experiences with other employers

D. Serving English Language Learners, Foreign Born, and Refugees

Braiding Resources and Coordinating Service Delivery

Refugee program benefits and services in California are provided at the local level by county social services/welfare departments. Refugee programs and services are administered by a County Refugee Coordinator. Refugee forum meetings are held to discuss the issues and concerns of the refugee population in an effort to develop solutions for implementing services for successful refugee resettlement.

The WDBCCC will partner with the County Refugee Coordinator to collaborate with CBOs that have specific expertise in serving this population to collaborate and coordinate service delivery. One major convener of refugee service providers is the East Bay Refugee Forum. Some members of the Forum include:

- **Afghan Coalition** provides safety net wrap around services including advocacy for access to services, translation, health education, mental health referrals, English as a second language (ESL), computer literacy, microenterprise, cultural counseling, and cultural events.
- **African Advocacy Network** provides safety net service assistance, immigration legal services, education, interpretation, community navigator services for new arrivals who herald from countries across the African continent.
- **Catholic Charities of the East Bay** assists with refugee resettlement and refugee employment services, social adjustment services for new arrivals, housing assistance, general legal services, social support and mental health services, financial assistance

and emergency shelter services.

- **Jewish Family and Community Services of the East Bay** is a provider of refugee resettlement services in Contra Costa County.
- **Lao Family Community Development** provides employment and job training, ESL, youth programs & services, microloans, financial literacy, and crime victim support assistance.

The WDBCCC will engage in numerous activities to encourage coordination and the braiding of resources. First, WDBCCC will facilitate the co-enrollment of clients in workforce programs and supportive services to leverage support for potential barriers to progress, such as housing, transportation, job training, and child care. The WDBCCC will work with partners to facilitate warm hand offs and referrals. It will also encourage collaboration rather than competition among organizations through its grantmaking processes, by awarding points for collaboration in RFPs.

The WDBCCC will convene CBOs to seek additional resources to support this population in Contra Costa County in a coordinated way. Potential funding opportunities include the Reception and Placement program funding through the U.S Department of State Diplomacy in Action and the California Workforce Accelerator fund.

Process for Retaining this Population in Regional Sector Pathway Programs

The WDBCCC will seek to retain this population in regional sector pathway programs by effectively matching the skills of immigrant workers to the local economy and capitalizing on any training and education the individual has received prior to coming to Contra Costa County. This will help increase participant success in programs.

In addition, by collaborating with partners, the WDBCCC will also be able to offer participants access to an array of programs so that they have more support (such as child care or transportation) and more options for securing livable wage jobs. The WDBCCC will work with partners to ensure participants have access to program navigators and case managers to help them understand their current skills and future career path, and can navigate the available resources. The WDBCCC will also work to structure programs in a way that supports long-term participation by avoiding duplicative assessments and undue paperwork, and offering employment services and work experience programs that allow flexibility to work and study part-time (i.e., earn and learn opportunities such as On the Job Training (OJT) and apprenticeship programs.)

The WDBCCC will also ensure that training is focused on critical skills, including foundational soft and work-readiness skills needed for retention and advancement and stackable certificates in high-demand sectors so individuals can follow a clear path to build on current skills.

Incorporation of Workforce or Employment Services Plans Developed by Stakeholders

The Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department has a Refugee Services Plan for 2016-2019 that describes the support available to refugees in the county to help them attain self-sufficiency. The goal of Refugee Social Services (RSS) is to engage all eligible refugees in social services and work activities to prepare them for employment and the move into self-sufficiency. The following services are available to assist refugees in becoming self-sufficient, by helping them address the language, cultural, and other barriers they face: employment and training services (including American workplace culture; resume writing; and interviewing, networking, and computer skills), ESL classes, retention services, referrals to other

services, and more). The WDBCCC will coordinate with these providers to determine how to integrate and coordinate the existing services for refugees into other efforts by the WDBCCC.

Implementing Best Practices Regarding Co-enrollment, Leveraging and Partnership

The WDBCCC Local Plan Modification public input meetings included stakeholders and community-based organizations in the region who represent English Language Learners (ELLs), and asked for their input on how the WDBCCC might better serve this population. Suggestions included the provision of services at night and on weekends, navigators to help people understand available options, programs offered in different languages, sensitivity training for employers, work authorization document training, translators, outreach to faith-based organizations, career and technical training while learning English, and warm hand offs to other service providers as needed. These suggestions align with best practices outlined in the California Workforce Development Board Policy Brief on Serving ELLs.

Building on these two sources of recommendations, the WDBCCC will implement the following practices to most effectively serve ELLs:

- convene an ad hoc committee to focus on immigrant and ELL workforce issues, braid resources, and increase coordination with the existing county refugee services, adult education partners, and community-based organizations;³
- collaborate among diverse partners and draw on the unique expertise of each to provide more robust services;⁴
- use trusted agents (such as public libraries and adult education providers) to recruit and serve ELL job seekers; and
- work closely with adult education organizations to integrate services and supports, such as transition counseling and math and reading classes.

³ As recommended by the State Board, this effort will build on existing local organizational structures.

⁴ This could include adult schools, community colleges, libraries, municipal government, immigrant advocates, and other community groups.

A. CalFresh Population Overview and Needs Assessment

1. Size and Characteristics of CalFresh Population

As of November 30, 2018, there were 24,228 individual CalFresh participants in Contra Costa County, equal to approximately 2.0% of the total population of the county. The participant population is 35% male and 65% female. Of adult CalFresh recipients, 76% are between the ages of 19 and 49, and 24% are from age 49 to 64. Of the adult CalFresh population, slightly more than 1% have limited English proficiency, and 1.9% are not citizens of the United States.¹

An important CalFresh target population for employment and training supports are those identified as ABAWDs (Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents), who became subject to work requirements during the welfare reform process in the 1980s.² Since the great recession in 2008, ABAWDs in Contra Costa County have had a waiver of work requirements due to higher than average unemployment rates in the county. However, in September 2019, the federal waiver of work requirement for ABAWDs will expire for Contra Costa County. The County Employment and Human Services Policy and Planning Division estimates that between 3,900 to 4,600 individuals classified as ABAWDs will be at risk of losing their CalFresh benefits unless they can begin meeting the requirement that they be enrolled in an employment and training program or employed for at least 80 hours per month.³ The ABAWD population includes 61% male and 39% female. According to County data, 33% of this group is Black/African American, 29% are white, 14% are Hispanic or Latino, 4% are Asian, 2% are multiracial, 4% are "Other" and 14% are identified as "Unknown." The age distribution of the population includes: 20 and younger: 8%, 21 to 30: 38%, 31 to 40: 28%, and 41 to 50: 25%. Data show that 98% of the ABAWD population in Contra Costa County is proficient in English, and that 2% are Spanish speakers, with fewer than 1% who have another primary language. In the category of citizenship, just 3% of those classified as ABAWDs are non-citizens.

CalFresh E&T has been available to residents of Contra Costa County for a number of years, although it has included a relatively small number of participants, in part due to the voluntary nature of the program. The small scale is also due to the lack of capacity among local providers to support the necessary administrative overhead and also provide eligible 50% matching funds in order to receive reimbursement. In Federal Fiscal Year 2017 there were a total of 88 CalFresh E&T participants in Contra Costa County, of whom 30% were female and 70% were male. Within that group, 45% were Black/African American, 30% were White, 10% were multiracial, 8% identified as "Other", 3% Asian, and 2% American Indian or Alaska Native. In addition, 18% of the group identified as Hispanic or Latino. The age range of participants was as follows: 18 to 35: 48%, 36 to 49: 41%, 50 to 59: 9%, and 60 or older: 2%. Among current participants in CalFresh E&T programs in Contra Costa County, 100% are English proficient.⁴

¹ Data provided by Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department, Workforce Services Division on December 19, 2018.

² The ABAWD classification includes adult CalFresh recipients between the ages of 18 and 49 who are considered able-bodied and do not have dependent children.

³ Fact Sheet: Contra Costa County CalFresh Recipients May be Facing ABAWD Time Limits Previously Waived, Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department, Policy and Planning Division, March 2018, for internal distribution.

⁴ Data provided by the California Community College Foundation on December 12, 2018.

2. Workforce Services Needed

CalFresh recipients in Contra Costa County who are able to work have multiple challenges to success in the regional and local labor market. Many have a limited work history, lack a high school diploma or GED, lack stable housing, and have physical or mental health challenges. These characteristics of the CalFresh population have particular implications for the types of workforce services that are most beneficial. While optimal outcomes can be obtained by participating in sector-based training, many CalFresh participants need a more basic level of workforce and other supportive services that can include remedial education, basic/essential skills training, and social emotional skills required to navigate the workplace.

A history with the criminal justice system and limited English proficiency represent other challenges common to the CalFresh population. Based upon their differing circumstances, CalFresh recipients have the need for a range of workforce services. Each individual is unique, and it is critical that services be tailored specifically to meet individual needs.

For individuals who lack previous experience in the workplace, training in basic or essential skills is critical to helping them function effectively in the workplace. These skills include effective communication with customers, fellow employees, and supervisors.

Those with educational limitations may require support in obtaining a GED or high school diploma, or may need more basic literacy instruction. Adult Education programs associated with local school districts in the county offer support in obtaining a GED or high school diploma, and other community based organizations can provide literacy support. Limited English proficiency CalFresh recipients can also be served by Adult Education and these community based partners.

As the WDBCCC expands the array of workforce services accessible to CalFresh recipients, it will be guided by the following best practices identified in a recent report by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support:

- Services are based on an individualized assessment of the workforce-related strengths and weaknesses of SNAP clients;
- Services comprehensively address an individual's need for skills training, basic skills education, and overcoming barriers to employment;
- Services help participants earn credentials valued by employers in their chosen industry or sector; and
- Services help develop skills that are closely linked to labor market demands in the local area.⁵

3. Employment Barriers

While the majority of those who receive SNAP/CalFresh benefits have a strong commitment to participating in the workforce, there are significant barriers that prevent them from doing so. These barriers were identified by both participants in public forums throughout the county, as well as in a recent national study on SNAP recipients. Perhaps the most important barrier is a lack of recent work experience. In a recent study, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of non-

⁵ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E & T) Best Practices Study: Final Report, USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, November 2016.

employed SNAP recipients had not worked in the past 18 months.⁶ The longer an individual remains outside the workforce, the more difficult it becomes to reenter.

Physical and mental health conditions were identified by public meeting participants as another major impediment to successful employment. A substantial portion of people on SNAP/CalFresh have a physical, mental, or other health condition that limits their capacity for work. National data show this number to be close to half of all participants.⁷

Limited education is another barrier experienced by a significant number of CalFresh recipients in Contra Costa County. More than 30 percent of SNAP recipients lack a high school diploma, and 9 percent have not completed the eighth grade.⁸ In an era where job requirements for education and training continue to grow, this represents a major hindrance to successfully entering the job market.

Taking care of children or other individuals was mentioned multiple times as a barrier to employment in the public forums and in the national study. Nearly one quarter of SNAP participants nationally had at least one child younger than 3-years-old.⁹ The cost of childcare can easily account for a majority of the earnings for someone in an entry-level job or less than full time employment.

Limited access to transportation is frequently identified by CalFresh recipients as a barrier, with public transportation unavailable or requiring an inordinate amount of time to get to training or the workplace. This barrier is particularly acute for individuals living in the eastern portion of the county.

A range of resources eligible for CalFresh E&T 50% reimbursement are available through the existing CalFresh E&T program in Contra Costa County. These include:

- Case management, including goal setting
- Participant assessments
- Pre-employment job readiness training
- Career skills training, including job search, communication skills, career advancement
- Resume and application preparation support
- Interview preparation
- Placement assistance including referrals to sector based employment
- College orientation and success planning
- Financial education and financial coaching
- Vocational training for administrative careers (Opportunity Junction)

Participant reimbursements for the following costs related to CalFresh E&T are also available:

- Dependent care to enable participation in CalFresh E&T activities
- Transportation to training or work
- Clothing and tools required for training, interviews or work

⁶ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participants' Employment Characteristics and Barriers to Work, Mathematica Policy Research, James Mabli, Irina Cheban, July 19, 2017.

⁷ The Mathematica study found that 49% of individuals receiving SNAP fell into this category, p. 27.

⁸ Ibid, page 28.

⁹ Ibid, page 28.

- Emergency housing assistance and one-time utility payments
- Legal services related to housing, employment and expungement
- Medical expenses as required for employment
- Test and registration fees such as GED

4. Current and Prospective Local Partnerships

The WDBCCC recently participated as a member of the Core Planning Team for a process in Contra Costa County designed to prepare for the expiration of the ABAWD work requirement waiver in the county. As a result, the WDBCCC has been able to become better informed about CalFresh and CalFresh E&T. It has also forged stronger relationships with key partners providing workforce services for those participating in CalFresh, including the following:

- Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services-Workforce Services department, which provides assessments for CalFresh eligibility and maintains data on CalFresh participants in the County.
- Rubicon Programs, which serves as one of the two CalFresh E&T providers in the county, using AB109 matching funds to focus services on individuals experiencing reentry. Rubicon served a total of 74 CalFresh E&T participants in 2017.
- Opportunity Junction, an east county CalFresh E&T provider. Opportunity Junction provided CalFresh E&T services to 14 participants in 2017.; and
- The California Community College Foundation, which serves as an intermediary for CalFresh E&T providers in Contra Costa County.

The WDBCCC will build upon these strengthened relationships to better provide WIOA services to CalFresh participants.

The WDBCCC is currently engaged in the next stage of the process of planning for the expiration of the ABAWD work requirement waiver, participating in two multi-stakeholder workgroups involved in planning and implementation. The first group is focused on the expansion of CalFresh E&T provider capacity in Contra Costa County, will be planning outreach to potential CalFresh E&T providers, assessing their capacity to serve in this role, and providing support as needed. The second workgroup and providing outreach and assessments to CalFresh recipients to determine who may be eligible for exemptions.

5. Information Sharing to Evaluate Need

The WDBCCC will continue to expand its collaboration and information sharing with staff in Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services-Workforce Services who are responsible for the CalFresh program. Participation in the CalFresh E&T workgroup will also help the WDBCCC to keep fully updated on the development of new workforce services for the CalFresh population. As a result, the WDBCCC will better understand the workforce services needs of the CalFresh population, and can plan for delivery of Concord AJCC/One Stop services to meet those needs.

The WDBCCC will share information with the backbone organization for CalFresh E&T in Contra Costa County, the California Community College Foundation, regarding its planned expansion of CalFresh E&T capacity in the county. This will enable the WDBCCC to determine how it can best provide support to CalFresh E&T participants through WIOA-funded services. Because demand for CalFresh E&T services in Contra Costa County will increase significantly following the expiration of the ABAWD waiver in September of 2019, this will be a particularly important time to strengthen information sharing regarding needed services.

B. Assessment of Need and Population Size for Non-Custodial Parents

1. Child Support Program Population Overview

There are 25,274 open cases with non-custodial parents (NPs) in Contra Costa County; 9,500 of those individuals have a physical address in the county. Of those local individuals, 3,707 (39%) have no active employment record¹⁰ and 1,936 of these individuals (20.4%) have a current or past record of incarceration.

With regard to sex, 89.8% of NPs are male while 9.86% of NPs are female, and 0.34% are unknown. In addition, 26.99% of NPs are African-American, 29.73% are Hispanic, 22.64% are white, 14.84% are unknown, fewer than 5% are Asian or Pacific-Islander, and 0.2% are Native American or Alaskan Native.

The table below shows the areas of the county with the highest concentrations of NPs. These areas are largely concentrated in the eastern and western portions of the county.

Table 1: Cities in Contra Costa County with Highest Concentration of Non-custodial Parents			
	Percentage of Total County Population	Percentage of Total Child Support Population	Location in County
Bay Point	1.97%	4.49%	East County
San Pablo	2.72%	6.05%	West County
Pittsburg	6.29%	13.04%	East County
Antioch	9.74%	19.01%	East County
Richmond	9.59%	16.54%	West County
El Sobrante	1.10%	1.69%	West County
Oakley	3.64%	5.12%	East County
Martinez	3.35%	4.31%	Central County

2. Services Needed

This population faces the challenge of needing to earn a sufficient wage to both provide child support and pay for the cost of living in a region with a skyrocketing cost of living. Many non-custodial parents are underemployed or sporadically employed, and have low levels of education, making it even more challenging to secure employment and earn sufficient wages. Individuals with a history of incarceration face a particular challenge because they often have substantial child support payments in arrears when they are released from prison.

¹⁰ An active employment record is an indicator that Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services received information of an active relationship between the non-custodial parent and an employer and has not received subsequent information informing them that the employment status has changed.

The populations in Contra Costa County have need for a variety of services to help them in meeting their parental responsibilities. Some of the most critical services for this population include the following:

1. Support to obtain a GED in order to better qualify for positions
2. Support and training to gain basic skills and other essential skills required to be successful in the workplace
3. Improved tracking of Child Support participants and coordination with them to set payment amounts at an appropriate level

Additional services that would be useful for this population include:

1. English as a Second Language instruction for those who are learning English.
2. Sector-based training so people can obtain higher paying jobs.
3. Legal assistance in renegotiating the terms of their child support obligation so that it is an appropriate amount in relation to their financial circumstances.
4. Greater communication between the Child Support Program and partners, including the WDBCCC, regarding client participation in training programs, to inform decisions on renegotiating terms of child support obligations until the individual has become employed.
5. Realistic financial planning support.

Overall, there is a need for a less punitive approach to working with non-custodial parents that encourages employment and can lead to better outcomes for everyone involved. In addition, there is a need for enhanced identification of individuals who are *willing* to pay child support, but are financially unable. Since motivation is a key element to success in workforce training and employment, these individuals could then be more strongly targeted for workforce services, compared to other groups.

3. Services Currently Provided

Non-custodial parents (NPs) are included among the population of those who receive services from the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC), but the WDBCCC has not separately tracked those individuals in the past. The WDBCCC and partners do provide services that may benefit individual members of the Child Support program population, such as reentry and financial mobility services.

The WDBCCC will work with the Child Support Program (CSP) to better coordinate efforts to work with NPs. The CSP will work on improved identification of NPs who would benefit from workforce services, and on referring those individuals to the appropriate supportive services. The WDBCCC and partners will also start tracking NPs so they can improve communication and coordination with the CSP and make it easier for the CSP to track individual's employment status.

4. Barriers Experienced by Child Support Program Participants

Child Support Program (CSP) participants in Contra Costa County face a variety of barriers to meeting their parental responsibilities.

First, many individuals face challenges such as the extremely high cost of housing, a suspended drivers license (as a result of delinquent child support payments), substance abuse, domestic violence, and/or bad credit history and difficulty accessing low-interest loans.

In addition, many individuals in this population face barriers to becoming employed. Undocumented, formerly incarcerated, and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities all face specific challenges to employment, as described elsewhere in this plan, which can compound the challenges faced in securing a job that allows the individual to meet their child support payments.

The CSP also faces barriers in effectively serving this population. CSP cannot spend their funding on direct services. In addition, the program faces significant challenges in communicating with case participants about updates to their employment status. Participants often do not realize they need to communicate updates or choose not to out of fear of losing wages to child support payments.

There are a wealth of resources in Contra Costa County available to support job seekers that could benefit non-custodial parents seeking employment. The CSP could better support program participants in addressing their barriers to employment by being more aware of these services and resources, and by implementing systems to better identify participants that may be eligible for or would benefit from those services. Some of the existing resources that could help non-custodial parents address their barriers to employment include:

1. **Opportunity Junction** provides comprehensive financial services, job training, career counseling, and placement assistance. Their services can be useful to individuals with a past history of incarceration and other individuals with limited employment history or employable skills.
2. **SparkPoint Centers** are financial education centers. The services focus in three areas: managing credit, increasing income (from accessing public benefits to finding a good job), and building savings and assets for financial literacy. These services could help non-custodial parents establish greater financial stability, which would help them with meeting child support payments and get support in finding a good job.
3. **Free and low cost adult education resources** offered by school districts and community colleges throughout the county.
4. **Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act** funding of up to \$5,000 for individual training, including case management and supportive services.
5. **Fidelity Bonding Program** through the Employment Development Department, which can help individuals with low credit become bonded. This can help individuals increase their employability.
6. **Pell Grants** to support further education.

5. Information Sharing to Evaluate Need

To best evaluate the needs of this population, the Child Support Program (CSP) will identify individuals that would benefit from training and employment support and will connect those individuals with WDBCCC and other partners for assessment and delivery of needed workforce services. The WDBCCC will also work with the CSP to establish a communication pathway for updating CSP staff on the progress of clients in workforce training, employment, and retention. To support this, the WDBCCC will amend their intake process to track whether they are working with a non-custodial parent and will get necessary permissions from participants so they can share information with CSP, depending on confidentiality requirements. The WDBCCC has taken part in initial conversations on setting up a system to enable those who are working

towards employment to get temporary relief on their child support payments. Finally, the WDBCCC will coordinate with other relevant partners that serve this population to better identify needs and track progress.

C. Partnerships and Engagement to Increase Competitive Integrated Employment for Jobseekers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD)

1. Engagement with Local Partners

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) has existing partnerships with several organizations, in an effort to increase Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) for jobseekers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD). Current partnerships include: Adult Education programs through West Contra Costa Unified School District and Mt. Diablo Unified School District (WCCUSD), Earn and Learn, Regional Center, Futures Explored, East Bay Innovations, the Department of Rehabilitation, Employer Advisory Council, and Bridges to Success. Potential partners include Best Buddies, Adult Living Center, Commercial Support Services, Toolworks., and Green Ridge.

One example of WDBCCC work in this area includes current implementation of a grant from the California Employment Development Department for the Disability Employment Accelerator grant. Through this grant the WDBCCC serves a diverse population that includes: 1) People with intellectual and developmental disabilities, 2) Those with physical disabilities, and 3) Veterans with disabilities. This project seeks to accelerate employment for people with disabilities (PWD) in regional high-demand industry sectors through three key strategies: 1) Developing and supporting work-based training that can facilitate the transition to full time employment; 2) Educating employers in regional high-demand sectors about the benefits of hiring PWD; and 3) Strengthening partnerships and communication between education, high-demand employers and workforce service providers in order to create a more direct path to employment for PWD in the East Bay Region. Other project partners include community colleges, University of California Berkeley, St. Mary's University, and the other workforce development boards within the Regional Planning Unit.

In addition, many of the organizations in Contra Costa County have participated in the development of the Alameda and Contra Costa Local Partnership Agreement (ACC-LPA), where a wide set of partners from both counties came together to foster preparation for and achievement of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) in the region.

The core ACC-LPA partners that are located in Contra Costa County include:

- Regional Center of the East Bay
- Department of Rehabilitation, Greater East Bay District
- Contra Costa County Office of Education
- Mount Diablo Unified School District
- San Ramon Valley Unified School District
- West Contra Costa Unified School District

This group will continue to meet quarterly to expand and solidify their efforts, bringing in new partners (including the WDBCCC), and creating county-specific sub-groups that can focus on the specific issues and collaboration needed within each county.

To increase engagement with local partners and increase support for jobseekers with ID/DD, WDBCCC would like to enhance coordination among partners working with this population. The ACC-LPA lays out significant thinking on referral processes, information sharing, and other practices for guiding the collaborative work of partners. To improve partner coordination in Contra Costa County, WDBCCC and other partners will work to align with and build off the approaches identified in the LPA to establish consistency and cohesion in practices. WDBCCC will also work with partners to coordinate regular (quarterly or semi-annual) meetings of all local partners to improve coordination, information sharing, and partnership.

WDBCCC will work with partners to analyze the current service delivery systems to identify modifications that would make them more effective and accessible. For example, WDBCCC will work with partners to improve the referral system with steps such as increasing linkages between partners to service providers, creating a partner referral mechanism for tracking referrals, and ensuring warm handoffs in both directions. Other steps may include revising the information that is available to partners and the ID/DD population to make the language more accessible (such as fewer acronyms), and fleshing out training opportunities that can affect individuals with ID/DD, such as training direct service providers to become certified to ask if people have a disability and what supports they need.

2. Local Board Partnerships

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) currently has partnerships with a variety of organizations (as described in Section 1) to coordinate their efforts to serve individuals with ID/DD. In order to implement the plans described elsewhere in this document, WDBCCC will form additional partnerships with organizations in the community. In the future, the WDBCCC will build upon relationships established through its DEA initiative. Additional planned partnerships include the Office of Federal Contract Compliance and the Ernst and Young Centers for Excellence to explore the possibility of creating a pilot for employing autistic individuals in Contra Costa County. The WDBCCC will also research models such as Toolworks, a social enterprise in the County that employs more than 100 individuals with disabilities in janitorial and staffing businesses, and Project Search, a national program with local branches that prepares young people with significant disabilities for success in CIE.

WDBCCC has a number of employer partners that have expressed interest in hiring individuals with ID/DD. The WDBCCC will seek to further educate employers on how to work with individuals with ID/DD. To further the plans described in this document, WDBCCC will develop long term partnerships with employers to improve education and awareness levels for working with ID/DD populations and increase employment opportunities for individuals with ID/DD.

3. Level of Participation

The initial CIE LPA meeting in Contra Costa County will be held on January 29, 2019. While the regional CIE LPA was originally structured to include both Alameda and Contra Costa counties, the core partners determined that it would be valuable to meet at the county level in order to make the meetings more productive. The WDBCCC will attend this meeting as an invited community partner, will participate in the development of strategic goals for 2019, and plans to become a regular participant in subsequent quarterly meetings.

D. Engaging with Partners to Better Understand the Needs of English Language Learners, the Foreign Born, and Refugees

1. Local Board Engagement with Stakeholders

1. Target Population

A total of 6.7% of the households in Contra Costa County are limited English speaking households, with higher concentrations of limited English speakers in some areas. In the county, 24.7% of the population is foreign-born.^{11, 12}

Contra Costa County is designated by the California Department of Social Services as one of ten refugee-impacted counties in the state, with a large population of refugees residing there.¹³ These resettled refugees have varying levels of education; some are highly educated but may not understand the American job market or what employment opportunities are open to them while others have low education levels and require intensive assistance.¹⁴ In 2013-2017, 43% of refugees were from the Middle East/Iraq, 27% were from Iran, 10% were from Africa, 4% were from Afghanistan, and 4% were from Southeast Asia.¹⁵

Barriers for the refugee population include: lack of documentation; limited education, lack of computer literacy, and limited English proficiency; limited access to childcare and transportation; homelessness; for undocumented individuals, a mistrust and fear of seeking help; lack of self-confidence; the double barrier of lacking general literacy skills and lacking English language skills; cultural stigma about applying for benefits; and cultural limitations for women from countries where education and employment are not encouraged for females. Refugees with higher levels of education and professional experience in their country may not be aware of the resources available to help them obtain employment related to their previous training. Additionally, refugee women who traditionally would have stayed home to raise children are increasingly seeking employment due to the high cost of living in the United States.

The political climate has also decreased the feeling of safety in these communities, causing even documented individuals to experience the fear of separation from their families. This can make it less likely for individuals to pursue services and workforce training that they are eligible for.

Furthermore, addressing the needs of refugees requires an understanding the different circumstances of various refugee groups. For instance, according to WDBCCC partners, Afghan refugee families are often Special Immigrant Visa holders and can work as soon as they arrive. The men are often well educated and have fewer barriers, while the women tend to experience more employment barriers and may be illiterate in their own language. Serving such a family requires a customized approach for each individual in order to meet their particular needs.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1602.

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP02.

¹³ Refugee Impacted Counties. California Department of Social Services. Accessed on December 11, 2018. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Refugees/CRCs/Refugee-Impacted-Counties>

¹⁴ Refugee Services Plan. Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department. Plan Years 2016-2019.

¹⁵ Refugee Arrivals Into California by Country/Region of Origin. Federal Fiscal Years 2013-2017. California Department of Social Services.

2. Gaps in Services

Gaps in services for English Learners (ELs), foreign born, and refugees include the following: a need for greater availability of resources in all the languages that individuals need, additional support for people who are contradicting cultural norms, training in cultural competence (e.g., eye contact in a job interview or working in teams once employed), job coaching, and educational training programs targeted specifically to this population. Several key gaps in services include access to supportive services for child care, transportation, resources that are available on evenings and weekends, and mental health services and support. Public input meeting participants also cited knowledge-based gaps that affect this population's ability to participate in the workforce system, including computer and technology skills and knowledge (along with low access to computers), education, knowledge on legal rights in the workplace (i.e., on issues such as hours and safety), language barriers, and vocational training.

For service providers, meeting participants also named the following gaps: a lack of smooth handoffs between agencies and services, insufficient interagency communication, low cultural competence of staff delivering services, and a lack of agency capacity. There is also a lack of connections to other organizations, including faith-based organizations and organizations that help more highly-educated professionals. Participants also cited a need for more contextualized ESL classes to help students bridge from language instruction to skills needed for employment (e.g., working in groups, critical thinking, etc.).

3. Strategies for Outreach and Recruitment

Public input meeting participants suggested a number of strategies that the WDBCCC plans to implement to improve outreach and recruitment to target populations. For reaching the Hispanic community, strategies included advertising services through the Spanish media, including bilingual radio stations, television, and Spanish Facebook ads. More broadly, meeting participants recommended identifying community-based, faith-based, and cultural organizations that serve specific populations and have a strong position in specific communities and/or are run by individuals from those communities. WDBCCC will work with those organizations to share information and resources in a targeted way to specific groups. Similarly, WDBCCC will make information about workforce services more broadly available by providing information and resources at other community access points, including schools (preschools, K-12, adult schools, and community colleges), libraries, SparkPoint centers, the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) office, Latina Center, Lifelong Medical Care, and local businesses. Finally, WDBCCC should consider working with members of this population who have received employment support to provide information to others in their community.

Meeting participants also suggested strategies for partnering with organizations that serve specific populations. For example, WDBCCC should partner with Adult Schools, which have a strong history of serving this population and could provide transition specialists that can support individuals in transitioning to community college. In addition, WDBCCC should build partnerships with key organizations that work with refugees in the area, such as Catholic Charities of the Bay Area (the primary supporter of refugees in the Bay Area), International Refugee Council, Monument Impact, and Lao Family Services.

In addition, meeting participants recommended that WDBCCC strengthen referral relationships to improve client outcomes. This would include identifying community-based organizations for referrals for wrap-around support for clients receiving workforce services; establishing a cross-referral relationship with CoCo Kids for identification of parents who need workforce services;

and establishing referral relationships with organizations that provide support in applying for an Individual Tax Identification Number for those who do not have a social security number.

The WDBCCC will also seek to expand opportunities for communication with partners that directly serve this population, in order to learn more about their resources and how the WDBCCC can leverage and support their activities.

Finally, meeting participants recommended WDBCCC help organizations improve their capacity to work with this population by increasing the number of their staff and leadership that reflect the communities of the populations they serve and by building the cultural competence of all staff.

4. Strategies for Working with Partners

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (WDBCCC) identified a number of strategies for working with partners to better serve the LEP, foreign born, and refugee populations.

First, the WDBCCC will work to increase collaboration among partners by using Workforce Integration Network (WIN) meetings to convene providers to discuss how to best support this population and working with partners to help them figure out how they can support their client's employment and training needs.

The WDBCCC will also work to improve the referral process with partners and coordination of services through the WINs. They will ensure warm handoffs between organizations and follow up on referrals to confirm clients are receiving the services they need. The WDBCCC will also increase coordination with partners to provide more integrated services for clients. They will work with partners to hire community navigators to serve the populations and individuals most in need, to help them navigate the services they require.

In addition, the WDBCCC will work with partners to increase communication and outreach to the community. First, they will work with partners to support the development of a centralized information hub that outlines all relevant resources available to this population to ensure WDBCCC, partners, and community members are aware of all community resources available. They will also work with partners to streamline messaging to the immigrant community about services and programs to make it clear that available resources are integrate and connected. The Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative will also play an important role as a referral network for this population.

The WDBCCC will work to expand relevant educational opportunities for this population, such as concurrent vocational and language training, and partnering with community colleges to enable individuals to participate in non-credit community college courses (which they can enroll in regardless of citizenship status).

The WDBCCC will work to expand connections to employers and opportunities for employment. They will expand employer partnerships to encourage direct employment where possible. They will also partner with a foreign degree evaluation service (i.e., Upwardly Global) to help individuals find employment opportunities to apply training and education from their home country. Finally, WDBCCC will work with partners to host job fairs with job opportunities targeted for this population.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Instructions

The Local Board chairperson and local CEO must sign and date this form. Include the original signatures with the request.

By signing below, the local CEO and Local Board chair agree to abide by the Local Area assurances included in this document.

**Local Workforce Development Board
Chair**



Signature

Bhupen Amin
Name

Chair, Workforce Development Board
Title

9/20/19
Date

Local Chief Elected Official



Signature

Candace Andersen
Name

Chair, Board of Supervisors
Title

09/10/19
Date