

ADVANCING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR CALIFORNIA'S IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE WORKFORCE

IMMIGRANTS ARE A VITAL PART OF

California's communities and contribute powerfully to the Golden State's social and economic fabric. One out of every three workers in California is an immigrant, and nearly half of all children in California have at least one immigrant parent.¹ Yet, rising income inequality, an exorbitant cost of living, and the growing concentration of wealth all pose serious challenges to working people and families across our state. To build opportunity and reduce poverty, our advocacy efforts must include a strategy for advancing economic mobility for all workers.

Among California's workforce, immigrant and refugee workers face particularly burdensome and unique challenges. Although a majority of California's immigrant population has lived here for over 10 years and generates great wealth across various industries, specific barriers stand in the way of their employment opportunities. These include discrimination, limited English proficiency, and an inability to transfer foreign diplomas or professional licenses to the U.S. These barriers are compounded by difficulty accessing culturally competent job training and services through publicly funded structures. Community-based immigrant and refugee-serving organizations struggle to help immigrant workers overcome these barriers because of how existing services are structured, funded, and provided.

As the California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC) expands our efforts to ensure equity for immigrants and refugees, we are taking a closer look at how public investments that support the economic mobility of California's labor force include immigrants and refugees and thoughtfully advance economic justice. In 2016, CIPC initiated ongoing policy dialogues to identify key challenges and successes for economic development programs. Through these dialogues, a number of solutions emerged that require changes to the

existing systems intended to develop our workforce. Because community-based organizations (CBOs) help immigrants and refugees access the existing workforce development system, those same organizations are the ones best equipped to effectuate a systems-wide change.

This educational resource introduces California's immigrant rights and refugee-serving organizations to existing public structures for job training services and economic opportunities. This is a necessary first step to prepare for any broader advocacy effort aimed at existing workforce development structures and building immigrant equity and inclusion that go beyond traditional measures of economic success.² We hope that this information will strengthen efforts to support the economic and social inclusion of immigrant and refugee communities, benefitting California's existing workforce, their families, and future generations.

CIPC's Initial Participatory Research Identified the Following Common Challenges for Immigrants and Refugees Accessing Public Workforce Development Services:

- » English classes are held during work hours.
- » Job centers do not provide linguistically or culturally competent services.
- » There is a lack of vocational English classes.
- » Existing services are insufficient for people with trauma or mental health needs.
- » People are not placed in jobs that effectively match their cultural skills and previous work experience.

UNDERSTANDING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES

OUR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS are intended to improve California’s labor force by preparing well trained workers for available and growing employment opportunities. **Workforce development** refers to efforts that connect unemployed or underemployed persons with job opportunities through career planning services, workplace education, and skills training.

Workforce development includes the use of **adult education** programs and services that provide adults with the knowledge needed to be prepared for the workforce such as English Language Learning (ELL) courses, GED attainment, and vocational skills.

The primary federal investment in workforce development and adult education is through the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This federal law updates the main structures that govern workforce development and adult education resources for state and local governments. There are additional private and public funding sources that directly support or are leveraged to enhance workforce development and adult education services.

WIOA: A FEDERAL FRAMEWORK FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ENACTED IN 2014, WIOA UPDATES THE federal framework of a universal access system for job training and employment services through career centers, known as American Job Centers (AJCs). WIOA is an ambitious effort to align and respond to labor and economic needs on the local, state, and national efforts through federal grants and local planning. There are different eligibility requirements for the services provided under WIOA. As the primary public investment designated for addressing workforce training, education, and job placement, WIOA has the potential to have a broad impact on successful immigrant and refugee equity.

HOW DOES WIOA WORK IN CALIFORNIA?

Structurally, workforce development and adult education are decentralized under WIOA. States develop their own work plans based on federal guidelines and the state plans inform local and regional plans. Figure 1 lays out specific entities and their roles in informing and governing workforce development policies.



Photo by David Bacon

FIGURE 1. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE, STATE AND LOCAL (SIMPLIFIED)

CA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (CWDB)

- » Develops a 4-year plan in alignment with federal guidelines.
- » Plan serves as a frame work to develop policy, spending, and operations of local workforce programs in the state.

REGIONAL PLANNING UNITS (RPUS) AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS

- » Serve as governing bodies.
- » Develop regional and local plans in accordance with the state's plan and guidance.
- » Local and regional plans set a service strategy based on needs.

Source: California Workforce Development Board³

IN 2016-17, OVER \$6 BILLION FEDERAL AND state WIOA and non-WIOA funds went to eight California agencies for workforce education and training programs. California's community colleges and schools receive a majority of the state funding for workforce while various departments and agencies receive state and federal funding to support employment training through alignment with existing programs.⁴

Separate from WIOA Title II adult education funding, California allocates \$500 million in state funding through the Adult Education Block Grant (AEBG). California's adult education system is comprised of seventy-one regional consortia which include at least one community college and school district. CBOs are not mandated participants within the adult education consortia but are critical partners to bridging connections and supporting adult education services for immigrants and refugees. CBOs may support their clients by engaging local workforce boards and adult education stakeholders to provide or build access to training and education programs.

WHAT IS WIOA ELIGIBILITY & ACCESS FOR IMMIGRANTS? WIOA core programs include access for immigrants and refugees, with some limitations that have reduced access and the effectiveness of these investments. Of the core programs listed below, Title I job training and placement services are available only to persons with valid work authorization. These services are available to immigrants with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and refugees.⁵ Figure 2 shows a simplified version of the funding flow structures.

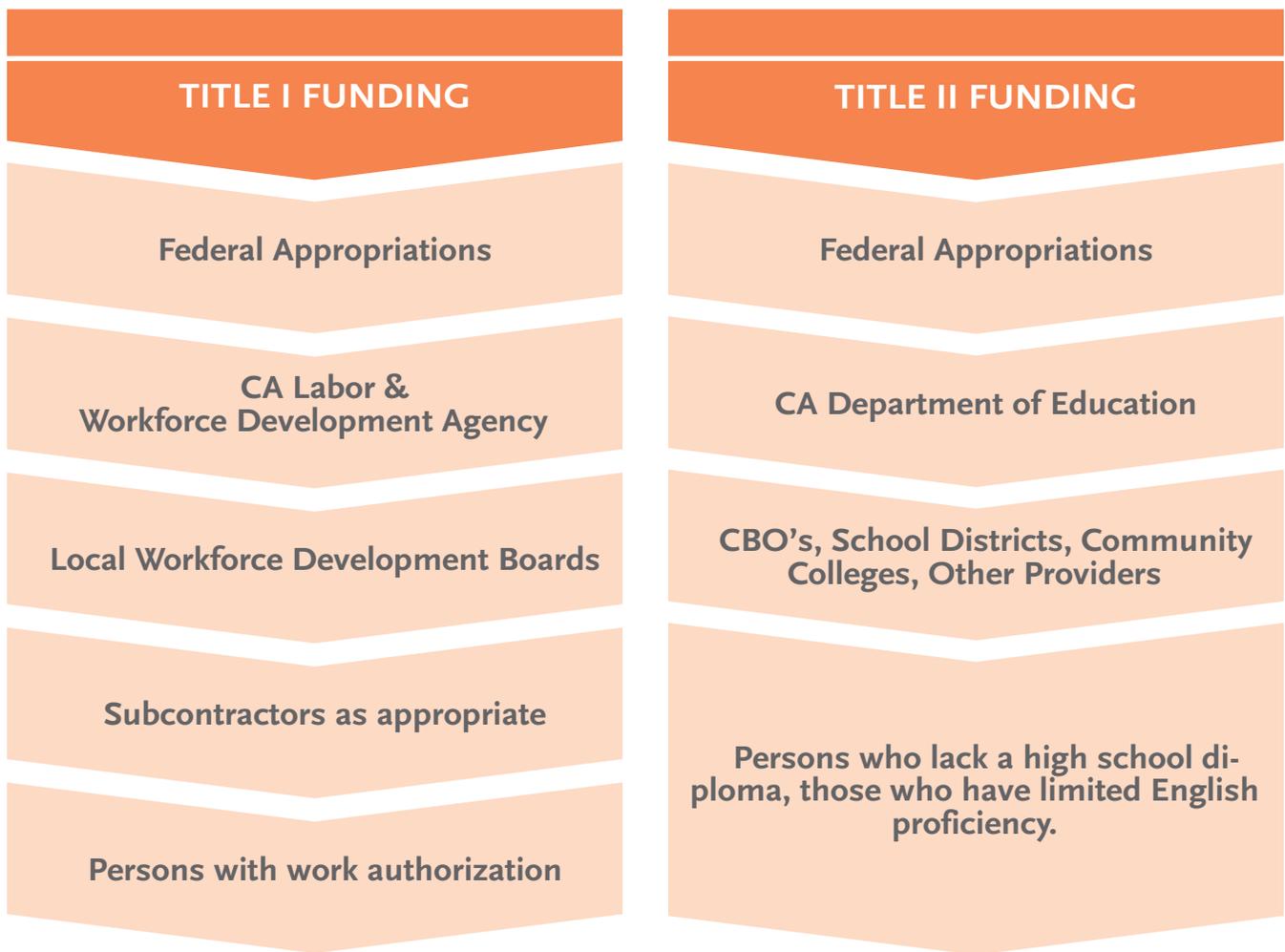
TITLE I: ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKERS, & YOUTH SERVICES. Administered by the Employment Development Department (EDD), Title I funds training services and job placement assistance for youth, adults, and dislocated workers. This funding is prioritized for persons who are basic skills deficient⁶, which includes LEP persons. People with work authorization, such as DACA recipients, are eligible for services while their work authorization is valid.

TITLE II: ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY.

Administered by the CA Department of Education (CDE) and California Community College’s Chancellor’s Office, Title II funds education services to adult learners for English language attainment, High School Equivalency tests, and civics or citizenship classes, among other services that support attainment of education and workforce skills. This funding is not tied to immigration status and is an opportunity to support education without eligibility restrictions based on work authorization.

TITLE III: WAGNER-PEYSER ACT. Administered by the EDD, Title III makes employment services, such as job search preparation and placement services, an integral part of the AJCs. Title III creates a national system through which employers can seek out employees and job seekers can search for employment. This service is free of charge for employers and job seekers. Title III provides special attention to migrant and farm-worker persons. These services are limited to people with work authorization.

FIGURE 2. TITLE I & TITLE II FUNDING STRUCTURES



Barriers to Access. There are various issues in the WIOA structure that create challenges for immigrants and refugees. These include guidelines that define local implementation. For example, there is no mandate for local boards to partner with immigrant and refugee-serving CBOs. These CBOs are best situated geographically and are often trusted entities for California's ethnically diverse immigrant and refugee population. Hence, perspectives of impacted individuals and the trusted practitioners that work directly with them are not included in the decision-making process. This often results in services that do not adequately meet the cultural and linguistic needs of immigrants and refugees, which is evident in the gaps in services through the AJCs.

WIOA's contradicting program eligibility, defined by work authorization, also limits access to services. For example, undocumented persons are ineligible for work training and are often mistakenly turned away from services they do qualify for based on their ineligibility under Title I. Instead, they could be referred to English language classes and other adult education services funded through Title II or private grants.

Additionally, WIOA's focus on fast-paced employment metrics does not capture critical outcomes related to equity and inclusion, and indirectly incentivizes the quick achievement of

education, skills, and jobs. This does not always match the appropriate pace of persons who face multiple barriers related to immigration status, limited English proficiency, and/or mental health and trauma related issues.

Addressing WIOA's challenges. Recognizing the challenges of access to workforce development systems, California has taken some steps to promote best practices for reaching immigrants and refugees. These include:

- » California provided guidance requiring counties and regions with at least 15 percent LEP residents, to describe outreach plans to LEP-serving CBOs as well as to include an assessment of needs and services for LEP residents in their local and regional plans.⁷ This guidance was intended to uplift LEP persons as a service priority per California's WIOA objectives in its State Plan.⁸ Many of the local plans have been conditionally approved with detailed assessments pending.
- » California recently utilized WIOA discretionary funds for the development of a Workforce Navigator pilot.⁹ This pilot project, through partnerships between local workforce development boards and CBOs, is intended to help refugees and LEP residents navigate employment and job training services.



Photo via Alamy Images

In response to the State guidelines, CIPC and the National Immigration Law Center (NILC) provided public comments on the *Los Angeles Regional Plan*¹⁰ and the Long Beach *Pacific Gateway Local Plan*.¹¹ Highlights from the recommendations include:

- » Increased language access for LEP population.
- » Intentional engagement and representation of community organizations through outreach and implementation of an ad hoc committee on immigrant and ELL workforce issues.
- » Improved alignment between workforce development (Title I) and adult education (Title II) services.
- » Establish accountability mechanisms to share information publicly on how Local Plans are implemented.

COMMUNITY-INFORMED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

WHILE WIOA FUNDED STRUCTURES and programs have challenges reaching immigrants and refugees, there are community-informed model programs that are shaped by the needs of immigrants and refugees. Funding for these programs varies, but often includes some form of private funding. Below are some examples:

- ◆ The **Diversity in Health Training Institute (Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, CA)** supports immigrants and refugees to be more successful in healthcare careers. The institute provides services that healthcare educators say their students need and enhance job placement and performance in collaboration with healthcare employers. The organization also engages in efforts to improve workforce development and adult education systems so immigrants and refugees are better served. For more information, visit www.dhti.org/who-we-serve/.
- ◆ Through a partnership with the Santa Rosa Junior College, the **Graton Day Labor Center (Sonoma, CA)** has developed pathways for day laborers and domestic workers to access vocational training, including a curriculum that is tailored to workers' learning

needs. Collaborating with stakeholders, like community colleges, can leverage public funding and resources to uplift strategies that integrate unique community needs to create successful economic development programs. For more information, visit www.ncwe.org/?page=sonoma_team.

- ◆ **The Green Janitor Education Program (Los Angeles, CA)** is a partnership between local government, business, and client representative stakeholders under the guidance of the Building Skills Partnership. This program uses public and private funds to provide janitors professional development. Workers are trained as part of their paid workday. The trainings include education in operations, management practices, and safer and environmentally friendly cleaning practices. The program also empowers workers to be key stakeholders in building sustainability alongside building owners and managers. For more information visit www.buildingskills.org/programs/greenjanitor/.

To see more examples, see the National Skills Coalition's report *Upskilling the New American Workforce* available at nationalskillscoalition.org.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE OF WIOA

IN ADDITION TO WIOA FUNDING, there are resources available to support workforce development and adult education. Most counties have a supplemental budget and CBOs can advocate for resources to address key challenges. Moreover, it is important for CBOs to consider collaborative funding opportunities, in order to leverage knowledge, capacity, and skills of each organization. Below is a brief list of some other programs and resources:

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG): The California CDBG program, federally funded through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is intended to support the community and economic development of low and moderate-income rural communities. This funding provides local governments the opportunity to support needs-based programs for communities. Nonprofits must apply for funding through their municipal or county government. Also available is the federal CDBG, which focuses on urban development. Seattle used CDBG funds to supplement a program that creates avenues through which English learners could participate in English language classes. Nonprofits can talk with their local government to see how funds are currently used and whether they may be expanded to support community programs for immigrants and refugees.

Visit: www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/active-funding/cdbg.shtml

National Leadership Grants for Libraries: Funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, these federal grants support library projects that are grounded in serving community needs. One grantee in Rhode Island implemented the Adult Lifelong Learning Access Program in which public libraries created “Learning Lounges.” These spaces provide services such as citizenship preparation, writing a resume, applying for jobs, and other job preparation assistance. Organizations may consider how their local libraries can support programs and services that promote inclusion for their local community members by offering English classes, financial literacy courses, and other related curriculum.

Visit: www.ims.gov/grants/available/national-leadership-grants-libraries

Susan Harwood Training Grant Program: Administered through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) under the U.S. Department of Labor, these grants support safety and health hazard training and education for workers exposed to hazardous health environments. Nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. In Oakland, two grantees have used this funding to enhance workers’ knowledge of health and environmental safety generally and within their industries. These programs also address language barriers through culturally competent training and outreach.

Visit: www.osha.gov/dte/sharwood/

Adult Education Block Grant: This ongoing state funding supports California’s adult education consortia provision of English language courses, citizenship preparation, and other adult education services. The local regional consortium makes decisions regarding the planning and implementation of programs.

Visit: www.aebg.cccco.edu/About/Adult-Ed-Block-Grant-Framework

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

How can I connect my clients to readily available services?

LEP immigrant and refugee clients, who have less experience with employment processes in the U.S., may benefit from seeking services from a local CBO to ensure better access to AJC services. Unfortunately, some AJCs may have limited cultural competency or capacity to support clients with unique barriers to employment. Due to these structural challenges, initiatives like the ELL Navigator Pilot Program and relationships with immigrant-serving workforce partners are critical to improving the workforce development system.

- » **American Job Centers** are intended to be a hub for employment training services. You can find your local AJC by visiting <http://www.americasjobcenter.ca.gov/>.
- » **CalJobs** is an online resource for job seekers. Please visit <https://www.caljobs.ca.gov>.
- » **CA Adult School** provider directory can be found at <http://californiaadultschools.org/cas/>.
- » **California Community Colleges** are an important resource and partner. Please visit <https://home.cccapply.org/> (for more information).

These are just a few online resources. Organizations may consider conducting asset mapping with local adult schools and community colleges regarding what programs are available.

Who are the decision-makers and key stakeholders to support funding for workforce training and adult education services?

CBOs should highly consider developing relationships with two key entities: the local workforce development board and adult education consortium. You may begin that relationship through conversations with the local community college, adult schools, and attending local workforce board meetings.

Engaging with decision-makers will create opportunities for representative groups to inform key decisions so that they reflect the needs of immigrants and refugees within the community.

- » Find your Adult Education Regional Consortium at aebg.cccco.edu/Consortia/Consortia-List
- » Find your local workforce development boards at http://cwdb.ca.gov/local_boards/

I am new to this work. How can I get involved in workforce development efforts to better assist my immigrant and refugee clients?

Some WIOA structures, including workforce boards, may have long-term practices that do not respond to changing needs locally, including access for LEP populations or barriers facing immigrant workers. However, WIOA's federal and state rules provide clear guidance and mandates for reaching workers with barriers to employment, including the LEP population. The LEP population is considered a priority population under Title I. Highlighting how your organization can collaboratively help WIOA structures successfully serve this population can support prioritization of immigrant and refugee serving efforts.¹²

CBOs can play an important role in advancing economic development for their community through engagement and advocacy with workforce and adult education stakeholders. An essential component of supporting local workforce needs is ensuring that the local labor force, and all its individual demographics, is visible to workforce boards and others that make decisions and manage the structures and programs. Workforce systems have a vested interest in ensuring they meet the needs of their local population, including mandates to support LEP populations.



CBOs may participate in public meetings, meet with workforce board members, and local AJC managers, and provide technical assistance through developing a relationship. This may include collaborating with the board on available grants and funding to develop programs that are customized for the local immigrant and refugee populations.

How do I engage locally with my local workforce development board? How do I find my local plan?

The boards typically publicize their meetings and agendas on their individual websites. The CA Workforce Development Board houses information on its website, including a list of local boards and the local plans:

- » Regional Plan: http://cwdb.ca.gov/plans_policies/local-and-regional-plans-drafts/
- » Local Plans: https://cwdb.ca.gov/plans_policies/local-plans-with-executive-summaries/

How can I access funding for community classes and services?

There are multiple financial resources available, including both private and public funding. Below are some tools and resources for funding.

- » **Career Pathways**, developed by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), helps service providers in California find initiatives to explore career pathways through a variety of filters such as partnership, delivery, design, support, and measurement. Users are also able to compare grants through these filters to identify which are best suited for their program(s). See <http://cacareerpathways.clasp.org/>.
- » **Adult education funding** is managed by the CA Department of Education through Title II. Your organization can apply for this grant by visiting www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/fg/. Information about who qualifies and how to qualify for this funding can be found on pages 177 to 179 of this document: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/wioa-aef-la-final-rule.pdf>.
- » **“One California” Immigration Services Funding** is administered by the California Department of Social Services. This state funding supports community education, outreach, and immigration legal services. The community education and outreach grants incentivize partnerships between CBOs and adult education or economic development programs. For more information, visit www.cdss.ca.gov/Immigration-Services.

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THE CALIFORNIA IMMIGRANT POLICY CENTER WAS FOUNDED IN 1996, AS CALIFORNIA REELED FROM THE UGLY AFTERMATH OF PROPOSITION 187 AND HARSH FEDERAL COPYCATS. OUR STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION HELPS TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT PRO-IMMIGRANT PUBLIC POLICY AIMED AT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS. WE ALSO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, TRAINING AND EDUCATION ON IMMIGRANT ISSUES.

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