



**Working Together to  
Strengthen America's Immigrant  
Workforce: Partnerships Between  
Community Colleges and Immigrant-  
Serving Organizations**



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# **Working Together to Strengthen America's Immigrant Workforce: Partnerships Between Community Colleges and Immigrant- Serving Organizations**

MARCELA MONTES AND VICKIE CHOITZ

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# Introduction

Immigrants are a sizable and growing segment of our nation's workforce.<sup>1</sup> The 26.3 million foreign-born persons in the US labor force comprised 16.7 percent of the total labor force in 2015, and some have projected an increase of 9.9 million by 2030.<sup>2</sup> Yet many immigrants lack the education and English language skills needed to succeed in today's economy. About 30 percent lack a high school diploma or equivalent, and about half of the country's immigrant population is considered Limited English Proficient (LEP).<sup>3</sup>

Given these numbers, it would seem that improving immigrants' access to education, skill-building opportunities, and employment options would be a national priority. However, this is not the case, according to recent research by the Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative (AspenWSI) and others. As described in our recent report, "Improving Immigrant Access to Workforce Services: Partnerships, Practices, and Policies," immigrant and workforce organizations are challenged to effectively meet the needs of new Americans and individuals with Limited English Proficiency.<sup>4</sup> The reasons range from a lack of funding to confusing policies to limited support for coordination among the organizations that serve or could serve immigrants. The National Skills Coalition recently described similar challenges.<sup>5</sup>

One approach to helping expand immigrants' access to skill-building and career-advancement opportunities is the formation of partnerships between workforce organizations and immigrant-serving organizations. Workforce organizations — such as job centers, community colleges, and community-based organizations (CBOs) providing employment services, education, and training — know how to help people build skills and access jobs. Immigrant-serving organizations — such as worker centers and immigrant-focused CBOs — know, deeply understand, and are trusted by immigrant workers. After our research revealed that few such partnerships exist, we delved deeper into why that is and identified several challenges, including:

- Limited understanding among immigrant-serving and workforce organizations of the value of such partnerships;
- Lack of time and resources to develop and maintain partnerships;
- Lack of leadership and commitment to partnering with new and unfamiliar types of partners;

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<sup>1</sup> We use the terms "immigrant," "foreign-born," and "new American" interchangeably to indicate a person born outside the United States. The terms encompass those who are legally authorized to work in the US ("work-authorized" or "documented") and those who are not ("undocumented"). In some cases, we refer to "unauthorized" or "undocumented" immigrants — those who lack legal authorization to work in the US. They make up about one-quarter of all immigrants in the US. (Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "Naturalization Trends in the United States," *Migration Policy Institute*, last modified August 10, 2016, [http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/naturalization-trends-in-the-united-states](#)).

<sup>2</sup> For the number of foreign-born workers in 2015, see: "Foreign-born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics-2015," Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, USDL-16-0989, released May 19, 2016. Accessed October 17, 2016. For projections of foreign-born workers, see: Dowell Myers, Stephen Levy, and John Pitkin, *The Contributions of Immigrants and Their Children to the American Workforce and Jobs of the Future*, (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2013), accessed August 17, 2016, [http://www.americanprogressaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Immigrants-and-Their-Children-to-the-American-Workforce-and-Jobs-of-the-Future.pdf](#).

<sup>3</sup> The percentage in the workforce is slightly higher than that in the overall population. In 2015, the nation's 41.3 million immigrants comprised 13 percent of the U.S. population. See Anna Brown and Renee Stepler, "Statistical Portrait of the Foreign Born Population in the United States," *Pew Research Center*, last modified April 19, 2016, accessed August 17, 2016, [http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/19/statistical-portrait-of-the-foreign-born-population-in-the-united-states](#).

<sup>4</sup> The US Census Bureau uses the term Limited English Proficient (LEP) to classify people who report speaking English "less than very well." See Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "The Limited English Proficient Population in the United States" *Migration Policy Institute*, last modified July 8 2015, accessed August 17, 2016, [http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-population-in-the-united-states](#).

<sup>5</sup> Marcela Montes and Vickie Choitz, *Improving Immigrant Access to Workforce Services: Partnerships, Practices, and Policies*, (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2016), accessed August 29, 2016, [http://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Improving-Immigrant-Access-to-Workforce-Services-Partnerships-Practices-and-Policies.pdf](#).

<sup>6</sup> Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, *Upskilling the New American Workforce: Demand-Driven Programs that Foster Immigrant Workers Success & Policies that Can Take Them to Scale*, (Washington, DC: National Skills Coalition, 2016), accessed August 17, 2016, [http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Immigrant-Workers-Success-Policies-That-Can-Take-Them-to-Scale.pdf](#).

- Limited and piecemeal funding for partnerships or for providing services to immigrants;
- Confusing or otherwise challenging eligibility requirements, performance measures, and data-collection methods;
- State policies that exclude many immigrants (e.g., professional licensing regulations);
- Lack of documented examples of model programs and a lack of knowledge of what works; and
- Limited assistance to support partnership-building, expansion, and sustainability (e.g., capacity-building support and peer-learning and leadership-development opportunities).<sup>6</sup>

This report is based on the experience of a small set of partnerships and begins to address some of these challenges by outlining the potential value of partnerships, sharing what partners told us it takes to develop and maintain strong partnerships, and providing examples of successful and promising partnerships. We interviewed leaders engaged in Building Community Partnerships to Serve Immigrant Workers (BCPIW), an initiative facilitated by the National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE) and funded by the Ford and Annie E. Casey foundations. BCPIW consists of seven partnerships between community colleges and immigrant-serving organizations or worker centers (see Textbox 1 for a list of the partnerships and the appendix for partnership profiles).<sup>7</sup>

The goal of the BCPIW initiative is to replicate and expand effective community college/community-based organization/worker center partnerships to address the workforce development needs of immigrants and immigrant workers. Its activities are designed to provide community teams with tools for successful partnerships that improve access to education and training opportunities, helping immigrant workers achieve family-wage careers.<sup>8</sup> In 2015, the Ford Foundation funded the seven partnerships for a learning and planning period of nine months. In 2016, the Annie E. Casey Foundation funded them for initial implementation efforts for a period of six months.

Throughout our research for this paper, we focused on documenting the motivations for partnership, factors that enable these types of collaborations, and strategies for funding and sustaining partnerships.

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<sup>6</sup> Marcela Montes and Vickie Choitz, *Improving Immigrant Access to Workforce Services: Partnerships, Practices, and Policies*, (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2016), accessed August 29, 2016,

<sup>7</sup>As we note in *Improving Immigrant Access to Workforce Services*, partnerships between immigrant-serving organizations and community colleges appear to be more common than partnerships between immigrant-serving organizations and other types of public workforce development organizations such as Workforce Investment Boards or public job centers.

<sup>8</sup> For more context and background information on BCPIW, see Darlene G. Miller and Nan Poppe, *Building Community Partnerships for Immigrant Workers*, (Washington, DC: National Council on Workforce Education, 2016).

## BOX 1: BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO SERVE IMMIGRANT WORKERS<sup>9</sup>

| PARTNERSHIP  | LOCATION                     | BCPIW PROGRAM FOCUS  |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| <b>National Day Laborer Organizing Network</b> (part of the Pasadena Community Job Center) <i>and</i> <b>Pasadena City College</b>   | Pasadena, California         | Vocational English as a Second Language (ESL); green construction; green housekeeping  |
| <b>International Institute of Minnesota</b> <i>and</i> <b>Saint Paul College</b> (a community and technical college)   | Saint Paul, Minnesota        | Preparation course for Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) for immigrant students interested in enrolling in Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) programs; bridge and support classes for LPN and other health care students |
| <b>Centro Laboral de Graton</b> <i>and</i> <b>Santa Rosa Junior College</b>  | Sonoma County, California    | Green landscaping program with OSHA 10 Certification and Forklift Operating Certificate  |
| <b>Neighbors Link Northern Westchester</b> <i>and</i> <b>Westchester Community College English Language Institute</b>  | Westchester County, New York | Certified Home Companion Training  |
| <b>Community Campus Partnership</b> (an entity of the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus), <b>The Learning Source</b> , the <b>Community College of Aurora</b> , <i>and</i> the <b>Aurora Welcome Center</b> . | Aurora, Colorado             | Adult Basic Education (ABE) and ESL health care bridge programs designed for immigrant students  |
| <b>Jewish Vocational Service</b> <i>and</i> <b>Skyline College</b>   | San Mateo County, California | Gateway to Health Careers noncredit course   |
| <b>Kentucky Dream Coalition</b> <i>and</i> <b>Bluegrass Community and Technical College</b>  | Lexington, Kentucky          | Entry-level certification program in biotechnology   |

<sup>9</sup> For brief profiles of each partnership, see the appendix.

# Methodology

The following questions guided our research:

- What factors have motivated community colleges and immigrant-serving organizations to partner and build programs together? What value have they been getting? What have been the costs?
- How have partners utilized partnership to create programming that is effective for their targeted populations?
- What challenges have partners encountered and how have they sought to overcome them?
- What institutional, local, and state policies have enabled and hindered the goals and outcomes of the partnerships?<sup>10</sup>

We conducted our research during the first half of 2016. The process included reviewing project plans for each BCPIW partnership and interviewing the NCWE project directors. We also conducted telephone interviews with leaders representing each partnership, focusing on understanding their motivations for partnership, each organization's role, initial successes and challenges, internal and external success factors and barriers, and funding strategies.

We attended the March 2016 BCPIW Community of Practice Meeting hosted and led by NCWE in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The convening provided an opportunity for partnership staff members to connect in person and learn from one another's work. We observed presentations by and discussion among BCIPW members and learned from the attendees about their work together. In addition, AspenWSI conducted two focus groups during the convening, one with representatives of immigrant-serving organizations and the other with community college representatives. We also brought together all meeting participants for a discussion of relevant federal and state policies.

## Why Partner? What Is the Value of Partnership?

Intentional partnerships between workforce development and immigrant-serving organizations are relatively new, although those involving community colleges appear to have a slightly longer track record.<sup>11</sup> What has motivated the early adopters to reach out to unfamiliar organizations and seek to work together in an intentional way to expand skill-building opportunities for immigrants and provide them with better employment options?

Our research found that BCPIW partners recognized that each had much to gain from the other. They recognized that partnering enabled their organizations to leverage other organizations' expertise and resources, allowing them to fill gaps in service and build a foundation for additional collaboration to benefit immigrant workers.

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<sup>10</sup> We did not analyze participant outcomes because that was not the focus of this research and because the partnerships were so new at the time of our research. The appendix includes some initial participant outcomes provided by the partnerships.

<sup>11</sup> Marcela Montes and Vickie Choitz, *Improving Immigrant Access to Workforce Services: Partnerships, Practices, and Policies*, (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2016), accessed August 29, 2016, [http://www.aspeninstitute.org/~/media/AspenInstitute/Files/Publications/ImprovingImmigrantAccessToWorkforceServicesPartnershipsPracticesandPolicies.pdf](#). And *Expanding Educational and Career Opportunities for Immigrant Students at Community Colleges*, (Westchester, NY: Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, 2015), accessed September 20, 2016, [http://www.cccie.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Expanding-Educational-and-Career-Opportunities-for-Immigrant-Students-at-Community-Colleges.pdf](#).

## WHAT IS THE VALUE TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN PARTNERING WITH IMMIGRANT-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS?

Because little research has documented or mapped this type of partnership, we explored the value of partnering from the perspectives of community colleges and immigrant-serving organizations. In interviews and focus groups, community college representatives in the BCPIW discussed factors motivating the decision to partner and the value-add they have gained from partnering.

### ► Community colleges gain access to populations of students they often have difficulty reaching.

Community college partners discussed how immigrant-serving organizations often facilitate access to students who otherwise might not have come through their doors. Some interviewees noted declining student enrollments and reduced state general funding, saying that accessing this potential new pool of students is quite helpful, particularly because state funding for many community colleges often depends on full-time equivalent enrollment numbers.

The community college partners also pointed out that immigrants and their families are integral, but underserved, members of a local population the colleges are committed to serving. One interviewee noted that helping immigrant parents to access education and, ultimately, better jobs helps stabilize families and improves the educational and long-term economic prospects for their children.

Access to these populations strongly motivated many of the community college leaders to develop partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations. As one interviewee noted, “Partnering to better serve immigrant students is just the right thing to do.”

### ► Immigrant-serving organizations know, understand, and are trusted by immigrants and have longstanding expertise in providing appropriate and necessary supports.

BCPIW community colleges see immigrant-serving organizations as important partners, with longstanding ties to the community. These organizations provide supports that immigrants and their families need to achieve economic and social stability, both of which are essential for succeeding in postsecondary education and training. College leaders noted that immigrant-serving organizations can provide a safe space and resources for many immigrants, especially those who are newly arrived. For example, these organizations often provide assistance with housing, food, clothing, transportation, and language and legal services, among other services, all of which help immigrants get settled in a new country. Immigrant-serving organizations also often provide critical support services such as case management, transportation assistance, and child care for immigrant college students. As much previous research has shown, these types of supports help vulnerable students stay focused on education and training, improving their chances of success.<sup>12</sup>

Colleges also viewed immigrant-serving organizations as important allies in developing academic programming that can increase students' chances of success.

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<sup>12</sup> Studies documenting similar types of partnerships between community colleges and CBOs more broadly have identified similar trends: vulnerable low-income students often find community colleges intimidating and hard to navigate; they prefer to go to a CBO where they consider the environment more welcoming. See Maureen Conway, Amy Blair, and Matt Helmer, *Courses to Employment: Partnering to Create Paths to Education and Careers* (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2012), accessed August 17, 2016, [http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/courses-to-employment-partnering-to-create-paths-to-education-and-careers](#); *Partnerships: A Workforce Development Practitioner's Guide*, (Boston, MA: Commonwealth Corporation, 2013), accessed August 17, 2016, [http://www.commonwealthcorp.org/publications/partnerships-a-workforce-development-practitioner-s-guide](#); Jill Casner Lotto, *Increasing Opportunities for Immigrant Students: Community College Strategies for Success*, (Valhalla, NY: Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, 2011), accessed August 17, 2016, [http://www.cccie.org/publications/increasing-opportunities-for-immigrant-students](#).

programming that can increase students' chances of success. For example, Saint Paul College in Minnesota, Skyline College in California, and Aurora Community College in Colorado all described the value of the “bridges” and other pre-college courses and supports they had developed with their partners. These programs prepare students to bypass or accelerate through the hurdle of developmental education coursework. Program directors at Saint Paul College noted that the partnerships make these programs “more efficient and cost-effective.” For community colleges, such partnerships not only increase their student pool; community colleges also indicated that, with the added support of their immigrant-serving partners, they are starting to see improved student success rates and outcomes.

## WHAT IS THE VALUE TO IMMIGRANT-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS IN PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY COLLEGES?

Interviews and focus groups with representatives of immigrant-serving organizations revealed several ways that partnering adds value to their work.

- ▶ **Community colleges provide immigrant constituents with access to skill-building and credentials, both of which can improve their opportunities in the labor market.**

Immigrant-serving organizations stressed that a significant value of partnering with community colleges is the ability to offer their clients programs to improve their skills — including English language skills — and earn credentials that can help them do better in their current jobs and prepare for better employment. For example, staff of Centro Laboral de Graton in California discussed the value to their members of the green landscaping program developed in partnership with Santa Rosa Junior College. Day laborers with extensive work experience in landscaping, but no formal certifications to signal their skills to potential employers and clients, trained in environmentally friendly maintenance methods. They also earned certifications, including the OSHA-10 safety certification. According to the staff of the immigrant-serving organization, its members can become more knowledgeable and valuable employees, which in turn can increase their bargaining power for wages or other improved employment conditions. Furthermore, staff believe the community college credential makes the workers more marketable in the industry.

Representatives of the Pasadena Community Job Center in California and Neighbors Link in New York state noted the value of contextualized courses offered by their community college partners. Contextualized English as a Second Language (ESL) courses teach English skills within the context of a particular industry (e.g., teaching English using specific health care content for students pursuing studies related to health care).<sup>13</sup> They indicated that the contextualized classes helped students learn both English and the vocational material better and faster.<sup>14</sup>

Interviewees from immigrant-serving organizations believe contextualized education helps students do their current jobs better and empowers them as workers. As an example, Pasadena Community Job Center staff reported that contextualized English language instruction

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<sup>13</sup> Contextualized education is similar to, but different from, integrated education, which integrates basic academic or English education into vocational skills training.

<sup>14</sup> There is some emerging evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of contextualization in improving student success rates. The Washington State I-BEST program provides students with contextualized basic skills instruction concurrently with college-level career training. Studies find that I-BEST students achieved greater basic skills gains and were more likely to continue into credit-bearing coursework, earn college credits, and attain occupational certificates than similar non-I-BEST students. See: Matthew Zeidenberg, Sung-Woo Cho and Davis Jenkins, *Washington State's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Program (I-BEST): New Evidence of Effectiveness*, (New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2010). See also: Davis Jenkins, Matthew Zeidenberg, and Gregory S. Kienzl, *Educational Outcomes of I-BEST, Washington State Community and Technical College System's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program: Findings from a Multivariate Analysis*, (New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2009). Finally, for emerging evidence on contextualized math in particular, see: W. Charles Wisely, “Effective Basic Skills Instruction: The Case for Contextualized Developmental Math,” PACE Brief 11-1, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2011).

helped improve communication between domestic workers and their employers. Being able to communicate more effectively helps workers better understand employer expectations and empowers them to negotiate better schedules and pay.

► **Community colleges can provide access to career pathways.**

Immigrant-serving organizations view partnerships with community colleges as opportunities to help their clients advance within career pathways and access a new set of postsecondary resources. A focus on developing career pathway educational opportunities at community colleges represents a shift for immigrant-serving organizations. Several of these organizations had worked with community colleges before BCPIW but on short-term, “one-off” programs (e.g., a single English course). The BCPIW has helped partnerships better understand the concept of career pathways and conceive and implement these types of opportunities for their immigrant constituents to build skills and advance in their careers.

Examples come from three BCPIW partnerships that focus on health care. The immigrant-serving organizations and their partner colleges have developed “bridge” programming and other college-readiness supports to help clients or members access postsecondary training. Many of the immigrant-serving organizations had offered educational and workforce programs in the past but none leading to college credit or credentials, and most of the instructors had been volunteers without formal training in college teaching. In each case, the partnership has enabled the immigrant-serving organization to leverage the college’s academic expertise and develop bridge programs or prep courses that reflect what immigrant students will learn and experience if they enroll in the college and continue their education to earn credentials. As the representative of one immigrant-serving organization stated, “This is worthwhile to do because we owe it to our communities to open up doors — especially when working with the community college, which has a huge door to push. But once we have access to it, it’s such a game changer because the resources at the community college are enormous.”

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► **By partnering, smaller and lesser-known organizations can gain credibility with funders and other stakeholders.**

Staff of the immigrant-serving organizations in BCPIW, particularly day labor centers and worker centers, said that a key benefit of partnering with a community college was the connection to a larger, established, mainstream organization. This connection can increase the credibility of smaller immigrant-serving organizations with funders and improve their access to resources and networks.

Centro Laboral de Graton staff described how working with Santa Rosa Junior College to develop the green landscaping program helped position them to raise additional funding from foundations and other local sources. Staff of the International Institute in Minneapolis, although larger than the day labor centers in the network, discussed how partnering with the college increased their credibility with funders and local policymakers, enabling them to secure additional funding and become more effective as policy advocates for the communities they serve. The institute representatives noted that their collaboration with Saint Paul College raised their public profile and helped them advocate more effectively for resources allocated by the state legislature.

# What Does It Take to Build, Manage, and Maintain Strong Partnerships Between Immigrant-Serving Organizations and Community Colleges?

Representatives of both immigrant-serving organizations and community colleges noted the amount of time and resources it takes to build partnerships. All informants stressed the importance of building relationships and trust from the very beginning. They shared that this process was often challenging, requiring high levels of commitment from all organizations involved. Partnerships discussed various strategies for building relationships and capacity to collaborate.

Because many of the BCPIW partnerships are new, lessons shared in this section, such as learning about potential local partners, are particularly relevant in pre-partnership or early partnership stages. Still, some BCPIW partners had extensive partnership experience, and we share their insights as well.

- ▶ **Organizations should carefully consider potential partners, take the time necessary to develop relationships, and be deliberate about establishing roles and responsibilities.**

During focus groups at the March 2016 BCPIW Learning Community meeting, we asked BCPIW partners to share their advice for organizations interested in engaging in this type of partnership. Although the advice we heard may not be new to seasoned partnership builders and supporters, it deserves mentioning for those readers who may be newer to partnership building and to remind those more experienced of the basics.

- ***Be deliberate and strategic when selecting partners and building relationships.***

BCPIW partners discussed the need to be deliberate when engaging in partnership work. To ensure a sustainable common agenda, partners should be chosen carefully, and the mission and goals of the partnership should align with those of both organizations. Said one interviewee, “We didn’t just jump in, we jumped in intentionally.” Another BCPIW partner representative shared a list of key questions to consider when assessing potential partners: “How important is the work for their partner on a scale of one to ten? Does their identified level of importance align with your identified level of importance? How feasible is it to address the identified problem in partnership?”

- ***Commit time for face-to-face communication.***

Multiple BCPIW partners stressed the importance of continuous and face-to-face communication. Respondents noted that telephone meetings, while good for maintaining communication, are not enough to develop and sustain collaboration. Regular, in-person communication builds trust and relationships. One partnership said that their lack of face-to-face communication might have “hindered their early partnership” activities.

- ***Develop memoranda of understanding and very specific work plans.***

In a partnership, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) can be an effective tool to define organizational roles and duties; establish shared understanding of roles and responsibilities; assign specific staff members to points of contact and roles; and establish methods to collect, share, and manage data. An MOU is also a safeguard for continuity during any staff turnover. Informants noted that the MOU should reference a staff position rather than tying responsibilities to an individual, preventing confusion or lapses in activity when staffing changes.

BCPIW informants suggested that partnerships should develop a very clear, intentional work plan that delineates what each organization and staff role is responsible for, while allowing for

flexibility should adjustments be necessary. For example, each BCPIW partnership developed a work plan, and NCWE technical assistance providers monitored progress during monthly calls with each partnership.

► **Partners need to invest time in learning about each other's organizational culture and developing personal and organizational connections.**

BCPIW partners stressed the many differences between immigrant-serving organizations and community colleges. They reported that, unless acknowledged and planned for, big differences in organizational policies, practices, and culture can cause significant tension in a partnership and undermine successful partnership and programming.

Both partners need to recognize this and be open to learning from each other. For example, interviewees described community colleges as large institutions with complex bureaucracies and immigrant-serving organizations as more nimble and fast-paced. In addition, as BCPIW partners noted, community colleges are often regulated by state and federal policies and regulations that administration and staff have little control over and that can be difficult to understand or change.

Interviewees suggested that it is important for the immigrant-serving organization to learn as much as possible about the college partner and the various departments that may be involved in the project. Moreover, different community college departments — from the registrar, to one or more academic departments, to financial aid, to student support services — are likely involved in various projects; immigrant-serving organizations need to be familiar with all of the relevant departments, including their roles and key staff.

Interviewees noted that personal connections are as important as organizational connections. For facilitating partnership projects, they mentioned the need for a key organizational leader who can champion the partnership at the college and help with understanding community college regulations. Additionally, it is key to have an administrative contact who can assist with booking rooms, act as a liaison with college departments, and perform similar day-to-day tasks.

Organizational and personal connections can pay off for partners and immigrant students. For example, the leader of one immigrant-serving organization served on the college's foundation board. This helped her learn more about the college and how it operates. It also helped her gain valuable information about scholarship funds and other potential resources for students in college-based programs.

It is just as important for college administrators and faculty to be informed about the immigrant-serving partners and the partnership so they can understand their value. This contributes to buy-in and widens support. Staff from Bluegrass Community and Technical College in Kentucky discussed how their Office of Latino Outreach and Services has supported the college's partner, the Kentucky Dream Coalition, in delivering workshops for college faculty and staff who work with immigrant students, giving them a better understanding of such policies and issues as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).<sup>15</sup>

Both community college and nonprofit partners noted that learning, meeting, and legwork activities can put stress on a partnership. Perhaps most important, such activities take time and absorb staff resources. Partners discussed the need to be creative with limited resources and place a high priority on this work to nurture and grow the relationships necessary to maintain partnerships.

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<sup>15</sup> DACA, a 2012 executive action by President Obama, allows undocumented individuals who came to the United States as children and who meet certain other conditions to apply to obtain work authorization and have deportation from the US deferred for a renewable period of two years. For more on DACA, see: "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals," *Department of Homeland Security*, accessed August 29, 2016,

► **Partnerships require committed leaders who can articulate the value of partnership and who can support dedicated, open-minded, flexible, and creative program staff in implementation.**

BCPIW partners stressed the need to have or build strong leadership that can guide and support staff in implementing a collaboration. Supportive leaders can aid frontline staff responsible for implementing the partnership and working outside their usual institutional boundaries by articulating internally and externally why this new type of partnership and work is important. Furthermore, leaders can be essential in helping staff strategize how to develop new partnerships and access new resources, as well as help to open doors to such resources.

Additionally, BCIPW leaders and staff pointed out that successful program staff are skilled at building relationships and trust — they have high “partnership intelligence.” Several partner representatives noted that it can be difficult to learn about a partner concurrently with implementing a project together. One compared the process to “a couple running a household and raising children together starting on the first date.” “At the first meeting, everyone is going to be cryptic, not open,” noted an interviewee from an immigrant-serving organization. “You can’t run the first meeting like a meeting, you run it like you are running a workshop and do ‘get to know you’ activities. After you’ve broken the ice, then you can ease into things.”

Unless organizations already have program staff who are experienced partnership builders, new partnerships may need professional development in this area. For instance, BCPIW technical assistance providers helped several sites strengthen this capacity.

► **Community colleges that have not previously targeted immigrant populations should be intentional in designing and implementing strategies for reaching and teaching them.**

Community college representatives discussed how their immigrant-focused organization partners have deep community roots and extensive experience working with immigrants. Immigrant-integration organizations and worker centers know the populations they serve and are intentional in using methods, such as popular education, that have been successful in engaging their clients.<sup>16</sup>

Many community colleges have less experience serving this population in an intentional manner or specifically considering their academic needs. Given that community colleges are charged with providing multiple educational services — from adult basic education, to transfer degrees, to customized training — and to many different types of students, it can be difficult to focus on a particular set of students. However, in working with their partners, BCPIW community colleges have become more intentional in designing programs that explicitly take into account the needs of immigrants.

For example, administrators of the Westchester Community College English Language Institute (ELI) discussed their efforts to improve ESL instruction to serve new Americans at Neighbors Link. ELI developed a new instructional approach for its ESL course offered at the Neighbors Link worker center. Instead of locking students into a prescribed course format, workers can leave class at any time if they secure a job. ELI administrators agreed that this type of nontraditional instructional strategy requires unique preparation and intentionality in order to create an appropriate learning environment for day workers.

In another example, Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) adapted its advising model to better meet the needs of Hispanic and immigrant students. At this college, the standard policy had been to assign students to a faculty advisor based on the location of the campus where the student took classes and the student’s declared academic pathway. This process

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<sup>16</sup> By connecting curricula and instruction to students’ life experiences, popular education methods enable adult learners to collaborate in their own learning.

resulted in the assignment of many Hispanic and immigrant students to faculty who were not familiar with some of the barriers to success that Hispanic and immigrant students can face. To improve the effectiveness of advising for these students, the college established a group of faculty specifically dedicated to advising these students. These faculty receive training and support from community partners such as Kentucky Dream Coalition and BCTC's Office of Latino Outreach. BCPIW partners at BCTC believe these faculty are now better equipped to advise Hispanic and immigrant students.

► **Supportive state policy environments and policies enable this work.**

A number of BCPIW partners emphasized that their work could benefit from leveraging existing state policies and from creating policy environments that are more hospitable to immigrant-integration strategies. For instance, staff connected with the partnership between Westchester Community College ELI and Neighbors Link mentioned the New American Opportunity Centers created by the New York State Office of New Americans. This program provides a potential funding opportunity for organizations serving immigrant workers, and the state has chosen Neighbors Link to apply for and receive these funds. The three-year funding from that grant helps Neighbors Link provide free English language education, *pro bono* lawyers for immigration issues, and other supports specifically for immigrants.<sup>17</sup>

The BCPIW partnerships in California described the state's new funding framework for Adult Basic Education as a potential source of support (see the next section in this paper, which is focused on funding). The partnerships also pointed to the state's new professional licensing law (SB1159), which enables immigrant workers to access certain occupational and professional licenses using an Individual Tax Identification Number in lieu of a Social Security Number. The interviewees note this as another example of a state policy that offers opportunities for institutions to work together on programs and certifications that could help unauthorized immigrant workers.<sup>18</sup>

► **Partnerships should consider the role of employers when developing programs.**

Employer engagement in BCPIW partnerships ranged from providing support for curriculum development to providing internships and support with job placement. For example, the Aurora Partnership worked with the local University Hospital Campus to modify the hiring system to flag job applicants from the surrounding community, which is comprised of a large immigrant and low-income population. This change ensures that community residents get an interview for posted jobs. The Community Campus Partnership, one of the Aurora BCPIW partners, is affiliated with the medical campus; partners described this affiliation as a critical asset in developing programs that respond to industry needs.

In another example, Skyline College and Jewish Vocational Service secured internships for a number of program participants at the beginning of the BCPIW program. However, after the original contact person at the employer site resigned, the internship opportunities ended as well. This speaks to the importance of developing organizational agreements and to developing wide organizational buy-in for partnerships and projects.

Worker centers engage with employers somewhat differently from other immigrant-serving organizations. A variety of employers come to these centers to hire workers for nontraditional and short-term jobs such as housekeeping, gardening, and small painting and repair jobs. Also,

<sup>17</sup> For more information on Opportunity Centers, see "Opportunity Centers," *New York State Office for New Americans*, accessed August 17, 2016,

<sup>18</sup> For more information on CA SB1159, see "SB-1159 Professions and vocations: license applicants: individual tax identification number (2013-2014)," *California Legislative Information*, last modified September 28, 2014,

most worker centers have a mission to empower and support their members in organizing and advocacy efforts to improve working conditions in this informal labor market. Because connecting members to career and skill building opportunities is a fairly new activity for worker centers, some partners pointed to the need for more research to determine how centers can integrate a skill-building and career-advancement agenda into their focus on worker rights and empowerment.

► **Partnerships see significant value in being part of a national initiative that provides flexible resources, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities.**

All BCPIW partners valued the National Council for Workforce Education's BCPIW network. In particular, partners highlighted the importance of NCWE support from coaches and the opportunity to participate in peer learning meetings.

NCWE coaches provided site-specific technical assistance, conducted monthly calls and other communications as needed, and provided information and resources as the partnerships navigated collaboration and implementation of their programs. Many partners also reported that the individualized coaching added accountability to the project and induced them to carve out time to focus on it.

Peer learning meetings were opportunities for knowledge sharing. They also served as retreats, helping participants escape the daily grind, learn new things, think in new ways, and deepen professional and social relationships with local partners and with peers from across the country. Participants described the meetings as "reenergizing" and "inspiring," helping them regain or maintain the energy and drive to continue the hard work of program- and relationship-building. Partners noted that knowing that others were doing similar work reinforced the importance of pushing forward and helped them feel less isolated as pioneers.

Partnership representatives also reported that building relationships across the national network took time and more than one peer learning meeting to solidify. As one partner stakeholder described the third BCPIW peer learning meeting, "This was the best go-around; the more we do it [meet and share], the more we bring to the table."

Finally, many partner representatives emphasized that being part of a national initiative gave them clout within their own organizations. Internal recognition helped build buy-in and support for the partnership. In some cases, it also helped the project gain additional internal as well as external funding.

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## Funding the Early Development of Partnerships

BCPIW partners indicated that new partnerships need significant resources for start-up activities, such as staff time to forge new relationships and to be intentional about research and assessment of potential partners and opportunities. Many interviewees added that these activities may require professional development to help staff develop “partnership skills” for such tasks as building coalitions, working with partners to assess each other’s assets and to define roles, and creating memoranda of understanding. Interviewees also indicated that new partnerships need resources to research and develop curricula, connect with employers to ensure that programs respond to industry demand, and connect with additional partners that can provide support or other services.

Partners stressed the importance of flexible funding. They noted that new partnerships can use flexible funding in a variety of ways depending on where staff need to spend their time. Among many other possible activities, staff may need to attend meetings to deepen their understanding of a complex organization like a community college; they may need to visit a day labor center to get to know and build the trust of partner staff and day laborers; or they may need to explore new funding sources.

General support grants, unrestricted funds, and capacity-building grants for new staffing, programs, and services are common funding vehicles for these types of activities. However, funders have been moving away from flexible support and toward performance-based funding. According to BCPIW partners, this trend reduces support for partnership-building, making it difficult to undertake — even though partnering can expand and improve services to constituents. Thus, the partners have used limited unrestricted funding and general operating funds to support initial investments in partnering.

It should be noted that the interviewees were highly motivated to partner, which in turn motivated them to seek funding and use it creatively. Additionally, most of the partners had worked closely together for several months at the time of the research for this paper, and they had built enough trust to dedicate valued resources to joint efforts.

BCPIW interviewees noted the following funding sources that supported their partnerships:

- ▶ **Foundations and other private funders can offer flexible funding to support a variety of necessary partnership activities.**

Philanthropic support for early BCPIW partnership development included flexible funds from the Ford and Annie E. Casey foundations. In addition, several immigrant-serving partners reported receiving support from local private donors and family foundations. For example, Neighbors Link in Westchester County, New York, tapped into unrestricted funding from local philanthropic sources to cover some expenses associated with partnership and program development. Centro Laboral de Graton in Sonoma County, California, received funding for its partnership with Santa Rosa Junior College from a local family foundation’s initiative to increase immigrant-integration efforts in the North Bay Area.

BCPIW partners noted the importance of the flexible funding provided through the initiative. It helped some sites fill resource gaps to cover staff time for building and deepening relationships. Others used it to enhance skills training by covering the costs of other types of training, such as CPR certification courses or employability workshops.

The BCPIW partnership in Aurora, Colorado, includes the Community Campus Partnership, supported by the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Its purpose is to build relationships between the Medical Campus and the surrounding community. This link with the

Medical Campus has enabled the Aurora BCPIW partnership to access funding and resources from the hospital system.

► **Public funding can help support partnerships between community colleges and immigrant-serving organizations.**

BCPIW partners used a variety of public funds to support their partnership and program activities. The partnership representatives specifically mentioned tapping adult education funding, state sector and career pathway grants, and federal and state funding for special populations.

**Adult Education Funding:** The most commonly mentioned public funding source was adult basic education funding, which combines state and federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II funds. Partners in California, New York, and Minnesota used adult education funding to support their partnerships and programs.

All three BCPIW sites in California benefitted from new state Adult Education Block Grant funds, authorized by Assembly Bill 104 (AB 104) in 2015. That legislation revamped the way the state distributes adult education funds. Instead of grants to individual educational institutions, the state now awards grants to regional consortia.<sup>19</sup> The change provided significant incentives for adult education providers, such as community colleges and “adult schools,” to partner with other organizations, such as immigrant-serving CBOs and day labor centers. The BCPIW partnerships used these funds to support collaborative staff time, curriculum development, the purchase of books and classroom supplies, staff outreach to potential students, and support services such as transportation and child care assistance.

**State Grants for Sector Strategies and Career Pathways:** A number of BCPIW partnerships tapped state funds to support industry-sector strategies and career pathway and “bridge” programs. One California partnership leveraged the state’s Community College Deputy Sector Navigator funds designed to support sector-based partnerships and training. This grant partially funded the community college faculty coordinator for health care programs, who was integrally involved in the BCPIW partnership. Funding for this position also came from a grant from California Career Advancement Academies, which supports the development and programming of career pathways for community college students.

The Aurora, Colorado, partnership received state funds that support adult education “bridge” programs. The Minnesota partnership used similar funding (see Box 2).

**Federal and State Funding for Special Populations:** Some BCPIW partnerships utilized federal or state funding to support specific populations in education, including disadvantaged students and immigrants. For example, Santa Rosa Junior College in the Sonoma County partnership received a California Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) grant to support its work. This program aims to “encourage the enrollment, retention, and transfer of students disadvantaged by language, social, economic, and educational circumstances, and to facilitate the successful completion of their goals and objectives in college.”<sup>20</sup> EOPS funding can be used to finance academic and support counseling, financial aid, and other support services. This college also leveraged the federal Migrant Education — High School Equivalency Program to support its BCPIW partnership work. The college enrolls students in a Spanish GED preparation course funded by the program.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on California Adult Education Block Grants, see “About AEBG,” *AEBG, California’s Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, and California Department of Education*, 2016, accessed August 17, 2016,

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the EOPS program, see “Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS),” *California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office*, 2016, accessed August 17, 2016,

The Westchester partnership in New York identified a variety of state funds to support its activities. In addition to Neighbors Link leveraging resources as one of 27 state Opportunity Centers mentioned above, its partner, Westchester Community College, received reimbursement from the state for its noncredit-bearing ESL courses.

**Common Education and Training Funding Not Used:** Federal workforce funds and state college reimbursement funds are common funding sources for education and training — but not for the BCPIW projects. No BCPIW partnership reported using federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funds for their project. To our knowledge, no partnership was connected to Workforce Development Boards that administer these funds or to job centers that implement this type of funding. Although these funds can be used to provide employment and training services to authorized immigrants, BCPIW program coordinators reported the difficulties many partnerships experienced in trying to access such support.<sup>21</sup>

It is our understanding that few of the courses developed by the BCPIW partnerships were eligible for state funding to community colleges for “full-time equivalency reimbursement.” In general, community colleges receive these funds for providing for-credit education (although some states also provide reimbursement for noncredit education<sup>22</sup>). Many of the courses provided by BCPIW partnerships were noncredit. Some for-credit courses were developed through BCPIW partnerships, but for some the state curriculum review process to approve the courses for state funding had not been completed during our study period. In one case, the state has shifted to a common curriculum model across all community colleges, making it even more difficult for colleges to receive approval for courses tailored to serve immigrant workers or other special populations.

**The time partners spent on braiding funds might be better spent building, strengthening, and growing partnerships and programs that expand immigrant workers’ access to better opportunities.**



► **Braiding private and public funds is integral to all BCPIW partnerships, but it is a resource-intensive and time-consuming activity.**

The BCPIW partnerships have leveraged a variety of private and public funds to support their work. However, partner representatives noted that “braiding” multiple, diverse funding sources to cover program and partnership activities is complicated and time-consuming. Furthermore, they noted, staff must understand each funding source’s eligibility criteria and allowed uses, report on differing accountability measures, and accommodate different timeframes and management information systems. These complex tasks require significant staff time. Many partner representatives

noted that the time partners spent on braiding funds might be better spent building, strengthening, and growing partnerships and programs that expand immigrant workers’ access to better opportunities.

<sup>21</sup> These difficulties are described in a previous report by AspenWSI. For more information, see Marcela Montes and Vickie Choitz, *Improving Immigrant Access to Workforce Services: Partnerships, Practices, and Policies*, (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2016),

<sup>22</sup> For more information on state FTE funding of noncredit program hours, see Michelle Van Noy, et al., *Noncredit Enrollment in Workforce Education: State Policies and Community College Practices*, (Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges, 2008), accessed August 17, 2016,

## BOX 2. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA AND SAINT PAUL COLLEGE: FUNDING FOR PARTNERSHIP AND PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The International Institute of Minnesota and Saint Paul College together developed a preparatory course for the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS), the entrance exam for the college's Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program. Scoring well on the TEAS is an early step along the health care career pathway the partners have built. Through the pathway, new Americans can progress from a noncredit Certified Nursing Assistant program at the International Institute of Minnesota to Saint Paul College's credit-bearing health care programs, including the LPN program. The partners were motivated to create the TEAS preparation course because too many students were failing the test, blocking their progress on the career pathway.

The partners leveraged a variety of funding sources to expand their partnership and create the TEAS preparation course, including:

- **International Institute of Minnesota unrestricted funds**, which paid for the initial design of the TEAS prep course and filled in gaps remaining after braiding together other funding.
- **State Pathways to Prosperity funds** from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the state workforce agency, which funded the instructor in the first year.
- **Adult Basic Education state reimbursement funds** generated in the first year of the program (\$5 per student per contact hour), which paid for instruction in the second year of the program. During the second cohort, the International Institute of Minnesota expanded the number of weeks of the program.
- **BCPIW support** through NCWE, which funded the program manager to develop and maintain relationships with community college staff, coordinate development and delivery of the program, reach out to and communicate with students, and proctor the TEAS exam.
- **A local family foundation**, which paid for the position of Medical Career Advancement Navigator to assist students with academic advising, supports, and navigating Saint Paul College.
- **A private donor**, who provided scholarships to students to help offset the opportunity costs of attending school versus working for income to support their families.
- **State funds through the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership program**, administered by the Department of Employment and Economic Development, which provided low-income workers with financial support while in the program.
- **International Institute of Minnesota donations**, which provided food, clothing, household items, and modest gift certificates to help support students.

Additionally, students in the TEAS Prep course can participate in the International Institute of Minnesota's College Readiness Academy, which is supported with funds from a regional funding collaborative.

In early 2016, the International Institute of Minnesota took advantage of media coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis to pivot public attention in Minnesota to focus on immigrants more broadly. It leveraged this opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of college preparatory programs for all vulnerable students, including immigrants. Working with other workforce stakeholders, the institute encouraged the state legislature to fund the College Readiness Academy for an additional year. According to the institute director, the success of that effort has inspired her to develop a broader legislative strategy for pursuing state funding for immigrant workers and their families.

## Areas for Further Consideration and Research

Our study focused on a new type of collaboration, and partnerships were in early stages. More research is needed to better understand how immigrant-serving and workforce organizations maintain and grow partnerships to address the skill and career-advancement needs of immigrants. A number of areas merit further consideration and investment in inquiry and research.

- ▶ **Financial investments in technical assistance to build and deepen partnerships are worthwhile, as are investments in research to better understand the most effective technical assistance.**

Dedicated resources to promote partnership-building and planning have been key in the early stages of this work in the BCPIW initiative. Interviewees described elements that were integral to creating the space to plan and strengthen relationships between partners:

- **Targeted technical assistance during planning and early implementation** helped partners better understand new types of programming and provided a level of accountability that maintained momentum.
- **Peer-to-peer learning meetings** enabled partnership staff to learn from others doing similar work and provided neutral, dedicated space for partners to deepen collaboration.
- **Site visits to more experienced partnerships** gave participating organizations practical understanding of different strategies for building strong partnerships that together provide education, training, and employment opportunities to immigrants.

It would be valuable to invest in both the provision of technical assistance to partners, as well as in research to learn more about effective technical assistance methods.

- ▶ **Different approaches to grant-making may provide better support for partnerships.**

BCPIW partnerships appreciated receiving resources to support planning and learning together. But they also noted that this work is both intensive and outside the range of their traditional ways of operating, and they have been prompted to reassess their organizations' systems, staffing and operating culture. Traditional program-focused grant funding opportunities typically do not cover organizational capacity-building needs. And the timeframes for applying for grants are often too short for newer partnerships to collaborate on plans and proposals. Moreover, many program-focused grants are short-term and do not take into account the length of time required to build strong partnerships and to change the processes and attitudes within an organization that might be required to jointly deliver a quality program.

There is potential value in exploring changes to grant-making practices to encourage collaboration and partnership between organizations. For example, more capacity-building grants could provide much-needed resources to pay for leadership and staff time needed to help organizations build partnerships. Longer timeframes for preparing applications in response to solicitations and grant funding periods would help partnerships. More time would improve partners' ability to explore potential collaborators and find the strongest organizational fit, build meaningful relationships, create memoranda of understanding and other tools necessary for partnering, plan how to braid funding sources of the various partners and from various sources, and contribute to building the types of partnerships described in this report.

- ▶ **Various types of performance measures for service provision may be needed to track the progress and success of immigrants in workforce development programs implemented by partnerships.**

During the timeframe of our research, partners were beginning to track participant outcomes for their BCPIW programs. As the partner organizations braided funding, developed curricula, and

delivered trainings, they took note of progress made by the participants with whom they were engaged — particularly in English language acquisition and improvements in job quality. But representatives of both community colleges and immigrant-serving organizations noted that the traditional workforce and education performance measures to which they are accountable cannot account for some of the types of progress they observed. For example, when a day laborer secures more consistent work hours, even if the work is still contingent and pays minimum wage, this can represent a significant success for an immigrant and her family.

Partner organizations discussed a need to develop performance measures that better capture immigrant worker successes, including quantitative measures, such as wage gains or increases in hours worked, and qualitative examples of progress, such as ones that demonstrate skill gain. An example might be a program developing capacity to systematically collect and record anecdotes from participants. These could illustrate ways in which they have benefited at work by improving their English skills, for example, being able to negotiate paid time off or a schedule change.

► **More research to identify, document, and map partnerships between immigrant-serving organizations and workforce development organizations is needed to encourage development of this nascent field of practice.**

Much of the work profiled in this paper is new. Immigrant-serving and workforce organizations are just beginning to partner or consider partnering. There is much to learn about which types of organizations are partnering now, which are better prepared or suited for partnering, and the goals and practices of partnerships. This paper provides a glimpse into a small set of specific types of partnerships and what seems to make them work. However, as this field of practice grows, it would be helpful to understand the factors that drive success and the challenges that impede it that are faced by different types of partnerships in different parts of the country with different demographic, economic and political environments. It would be useful to have a sense of what internal and external supports help partnerships form and support their success. Research to identify, document, and map these partnerships would provide valuable information to the field and to funders on factors related to building and maintaining various kinds of partnerships and to expanding workforce services to immigrant workers.

► **An open and supportive state and local policy environment is helpful for the development and growth of partnerships between community colleges and immigrant-serving organizations; more research is needed on the impact of different policy environments and policy advocacy work by partners.**

Most of the partnerships covered in our research are located in states in which systems reform — to better integrate immigrants and address needs of vulnerable populations through policy changes — is politically feasible. As a result, many of the partners have been able to leverage policy conditions and public resources to support their work with each other. But even in relatively receptive environments, partner organizations were cognizant of the need to become savvy advocates for immigrant needs and better connected to state and local policy developments.

Large questions remain about the ability to develop these types of partnerships in political environments that are less open to immigrant integration. There is a need to explore how partnerships could develop in more restrictive environments — or how different organizations might work together to influence policy affecting immigrant workers. This will require conducting additional research with practitioners on the ground in a variety of political environments.

## Conclusion

Immigrant workers are an important part of our workforce and economy. They need better access to education, skill-building, and improved employment opportunities. A promising approach to providing these opportunities is to create partnerships between immigrant-serving organizations knowledgeable and trusted by immigrants and workforce development organizations able to provide services and connections to employers.

In documenting BCPIW partnerships, we sought to better understand what it takes to build such collaborations between immigrant-serving organizations and workforce organizations, with a special focus on community colleges. Our interviews showed that partnership-building requires the investment of significant time and other resources. As discussed in the funding section of this paper, BCPIW partners tapped a variety of funding streams to identify the needs of immigrants and collaborate on designing programs that would address those needs.

Representatives of immigrant-serving organizations reported that they gained better access to community college resources, such as credentials for their students and expertise in curriculum development, as well as a better grasp of the structures and relationships necessary to leverage resources within the more institutionally complex community colleges. Community college representatives highlighted acquiring a deeper understanding of the diverse language, cultural, and academic needs of immigrants and discussed a shift to a more intentional approach when designing programs for immigrant students.

Partners we interviewed outlined a range of success factors that help with partnering, including selecting “good-fit” partners, taking the time and investing resources in building relationships, and cultivating committed and talented leadership and staff for the partnership. Intentional programming and employer engagement are critical. Supportive state policies and national peer capacity-building networks can help partners strengthen their partnerships, as well as improve and expand workforce opportunities for immigrant workers.

Many questions, and areas for further consideration and research, remain. As partnerships between immigrant-serving and workforce organizations emerge, we can begin to build a field of practice to strengthen these partnerships, improve and expand workforce opportunities for immigrants, and contribute to thriving communities.

# Appendix: Snapshots of BCPIW Partnerships

The brief snapshots below provide background information on BCPIW partner organizations and their specific projects. Information for these profiles was collected in June 2016.

## Pasadena Community Job Center and Pasadena City College

Location: Pasadena, California

### PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS

#### **PASADENA COMMUNITY JOB CENTER**

- Worker center established in 2000 to serve Greater Pasadena
- Affiliate of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network
- Links employers with day laborers; supports day laborers to find full-time work and set up small businesses; provides skills training and English language classes

#### **PASADENA CITY COLLEGE**

- Founded in 1924; one of California's 112 community colleges
- Annual Enrollment: 23,246 for-credit students and 3,717 noncredit students
- 117 associate degree programs, 70 certificate programs, 39 noncredit certificate programs

### PARTNERSHIP DETAILS

**Population Served:** Focus on the region's Latino and Asian immigrant population

**Industry Focus:** Construction, domestic work

**Goals:** Strengthen educational pathways to better serve immigrants; formalize an educational pathway for adult learners to transition from noncredit ESL and Immigrant Education programs to noncredit workforce education programs

**Programs/Services:** Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL), green construction, green housekeeping, and ESL conversation trainings; citizenship and AB60 driver's license courses; OSHA 10 certification training

**Launch:** Early 2015 as part of California's AB 86 Adult Learner Initiative (the planning grant precursor to California's AB 104 Adult Education Block Grant); first cohort in fall 2015; second cohort in fall 2016

**Early Outcomes:** Green Construction – 13 of 18 registered students received state certificates; ESL conversation – 16 of 22 registered students received state certificates

**Next Steps:** Develop career pathways, including pre-apprenticeship programs in construction, housecleaning, and landscaping; fund a full-time career and education navigator; create an educational committee for day laborers

## International Institute of Minnesota and Saint Paul College

Location: Saint Paul, Minnesota

### PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS

#### INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA

- Established in 1919 for resettling refugees and immigrants
- Affiliated with the United Way and the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- Provides educational and workforce readiness programs, food and shelter, and citizenship services; Medical Careers Pathway program offers academic and technical skills training with wraparound support

#### SAINT PAUL COLLEGE

- Established in 1910; serves diverse populations of students from the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan region
- Annual Enrollment: 9,600 for-credit students and 1,637 noncredit students
- 43 associate degree programs, 79 career certificate and diploma programs

### PARTNERSHIP DETAILS

**Population Served:** Saint Paul metropolitan area's resettled refugee and immigrant population, which includes large numbers of Somali, Karen, urban Hmong, Ethiopian, and Liberian immigrants

**Industry Focus:** Health care

**Goal:** Provide a pathway and support structure for immigrant students to enter and succeed in credit-bearing health care programs at Saint Paul College, emphasizing the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) pathway

**Programs/Services:** Preparation course for Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS); bridge and support classes for LPN prerequisite courses with focus on biology and English composition

**Launch:** First pilot TEAS program in fall 2015; second cohort in spring 2016

**Early Outcomes:** Fall 2015 cohort – 18 of 28 registered students completed, six admitted to LPN program (immigrants accounted for two-thirds of cohort); spring 2016 cohort – 14 of 32 students accepted to nursing programs, 13 at Saint Paul College

**Next Steps:** Pilot the English composition bridge and support class in fall 2016; pilot Human Body Systems (biology) bridge and support in fall 2016; offer third TEAS cohort in fall 2016

## Centro Laboral de Graton and Santa Rosa Junior College

Location: Sonoma County, California

### PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS

#### **CENTRO LABORAL DE GRATON**

- Worker-led day labor center established in 2001
- Registers about 500 worker members and 2,000 employers each year
- Social justice programming related to immigrant and worker rights, leadership development, and civic participation; provides access to workforce and occupational safety and health training, English language instruction, and community health services and resources

#### **SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE**

- Founded in 1918; two campuses in Santa Rosa and Petaluma
- Annual Enrollment: 23,090 credit and 3,625 noncredit students
- Operates training centers and a High School Equivalency program (HEP) in addition to general education programs

### PARTNERSHIP DETAILS

**Population Served:** Immigrant community in Sonoma County, including large populations of non-English speaking and undocumented workers, specifically day laborers and domestic workers

**Industry Focus:** Green landscaping (xeriscaping and hardscaping)

**Goal:** Build bridges for day laborers and domestic workers to access technical training and family-wage jobs

**Programs/Services:** Vocational training module for green landscaping with OSHA 10 certification; provides adult education coordinator and light meals before evening classes

**Launch:** First cohort in spring 2016

**Early Outcomes:** 22 of 28 participants completed the course; 21 received OSHA 10 and Forklift Operating certificates

**Next Steps:** Design and implement an intermediate level course (hardscaping) and an advanced green landscaping course (preparation for state licensing exam); provide courses on workforce preparation and basic computer skills; offer training modules for domestic workers on green housecleaning and personal homecare assistant

## Neighbors Link Northern Westchester and Westchester Community College

Location: Westchester County, New York

### PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS

#### NEIGHBORS LINK NORTHERN WESTCHESTER

- Community-based organization founded in 2001
- Serves more than 2,700 immigrant and low-income families each year
- Provides a worker center, English as a Second Language (ESL) education, employment training, health and legal referrals, parent education, early childhood programs, and academic support

#### WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- Founded in 1946, includes Valhalla campus, five extension centers, five school-based education sites, and community-based sites across the county
- 70,000-square-foot Gateway Center promotes workforce development through business, language, and international student programs
- Annual Enrollment: 13,000 full-time and part-time college credit students. In total, more than 24,000 including continuing education students

### PARTNERSHIP DETAILS

**Population Served:** Northern Westchester County's immigrant population, including large numbers of Latino immigrants

**Industry Focus:** Health care (pathway to Personal Care Aide/Home Health Aide certification)

**Goal:** Integrate contextualized ESL classes with a stackable pathway to health care professions

**Programs/Services:** Certified Home Companion training curriculum (students can continue on to complete additional health care certificate programs); provides learning facilitator, child care, and catered dinners for participants

**Launch:** First cohort in spring 2016

**Early Outcomes:** 21 of 22 students completed the program, one placed in full-time employment as a home companion (21 continuing work as home companions or in other fields)

**Next Steps:** Offer an updated home companion program in fall 2016 with enhancements to the curriculum and website

## Community Campus Partnership, The Learning Source, Community College of Aurora, and the Aurora Welcome Center Location: Aurora, Colorado

### PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS

#### COMMUNITY CAMPUS PARTNERSHIP

- Collaborative formed in 2013 by the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus to strengthen connections between the Anschutz Medical Campus and the surrounding community
- Composed of more than 30 organizations in and near Aurora, including city government offices, two hospitals, University of Colorado health science schools, community-based organizations, educational institutions, neighborhood associations, and community residents.

#### THE LEARNING SOURCE

- Community-based nonprofit founded in 1964 in Lakewood, Colorado
- Operates more than 30 programs and serves over 2,000 students annually through collaborative partnerships
- Provides family literacy, ESL, advanced English for college and career, and college and workplace transition programs

#### COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF AURORA

- Founded in 1983, campuses in Aurora and Denver
- Annual Enrollment: Over 11,000 students
- Offers 48 associate degree programs, four articulated degree programs, and 39 certificate programs including Nurse Aid, Patient Care Technician, and Phlebotomy

#### AURORA WELCOME CENTER

- Started as the Aurora Human Rights Center, formed in 2008 as a result of a collaboration between day laborers and nonprofits serving Original Aurora and East Denver
- Emerging multi-tenant facility offering a variety of services focused on the international/ immigrant community in Aurora

### PARTNERSHIP DETAILS

**Population Served:** Region's refugee and immigrant population, including large numbers of Ethiopian immigrants

**Industry Focus:** Health care

**Goal:** Create a pathway for local immigrant community residents to access jobs on the Anschutz Medical Campus

**Programs/Services:** Adult Basic Education (ABE) Bridge Program for immigrant students with literacy and language skill needs (includes job readiness, health care-specific training); ESL bridge program prepares students with limited language skills to enroll in certificate programs (e.g. Certified Nursing Assistant( CNA), Phlebotomy)

**Launch:** In early 2014 created shared vision for Healthcare Bridge program at Community College of Aurora; ABE cohort in spring 2015; ESL cohort in spring 2016

**Early Outcomes:** ABE Bridge Program – three of three registered immigrant students completed program and are employed on the Anschutz Medical Campus; ESL Bridge Program – nine of nine registered students completed program, seven of nine enrolled in Community College of Aurora courses

**Next Steps:** Expand ABE recruitment efforts within the refugee and immigrant community; translate the bridge program model for new industries and career pathways; discontinue ESL bridge program due to enrollment and logistics challenges

## Jewish Vocational Service and Skyline College

**Location:** Jewish Vocational Service: San Francisco, California;

Skyline College: San Mateo County, California

### PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS

#### **JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICE**

- Nonprofit organization supporting workforce development in the Bay Area for more than 40 years
- Serves over 4,000 job seekers annually, from one-time workshops to intensive, multi-month pathway programs; provides job-specific training in technology, health care, banking, and other industries
- Leads the city of San Francisco's Healthcare Academy, which aligns health care training programs with industry demand

#### **SKYLINE COLLEGE**

- Established in 1960 in San Bruno, California
- Annual Enrollment: Over 17,000 full-time, part-time, and noncredit students annually
- Provides 37 associate degree programs, 18 associate degrees for transfer, and 62 certificate programs; offers Career Advancement Academies, including Allied Health

### PARTNERSHIP DETAILS

**Population Served:** Immigrants in San Mateo County, including large numbers of non-citizens and undocumented workers

**Industry Focus:** Health care (Allied Health)

**Additional Partners:** South San Francisco Adult School, Jefferson Adult School

**Goal:** Provide training and work-based learning opportunities within allied health professions

**Programs/Services:** Gateway to Health Careers – 12-week noncredit course in health careers and health care navigation (focus on health systems, health care occupations, patient communication, chronic diseases, basic life support, and first aid); offers workshops and volunteer/internship opportunities

**Launch:** Pilot cohort in spring 2016

**Outcomes:** 22 of 25 registered students completed course and also received health care provider-level CPR certification

**Next Steps:** Develop curriculum for advanced version of course; implement internship pilot program; work with employers to expand internship opportunities; explore additional certification areas, such as home health support

## Bluegrass Community and Technical College and Kentucky Dream Coalition

Location: Lexington, Kentucky

### PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS

#### KENTUCKY DREAM COALITION

- Broad-based youth network created in 2010 to help immigrant youth and their parents access higher education
- Provides mentoring and programming to help youth stay in school, connect adults to GED programs, and assist students in applying for college; advocates for the DREAM Act and immigration reform

#### BLUEGRASS COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

- Formed in 2005 by the consolidation of Lexington Community College and Central Kentucky Technical College
- Annual Enrollment: 11,000 students on six campuses
- Awards associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates in more than 40 areas of study
- Runs an office of Latino Outreach and Support

### PARTNERSHIP DETAILS

**Population Served:** Region's immigrant and Latino populations

**Industry Focus:** Biotechnology

**Goal:** Create a pathway for community's immigrant and Latino students to access training and employment in the field of biotechnology

**Programs/Services:** Entry-level certification program in the field of biotechnology (17 credit hours)

**Launch:** First cohort planned for fall 2016

**Early Outcomes:** Adapted its Accelerating Opportunity curriculum that had been developed but not put into practice; successfully advocated for ESL policy changes at the college; designed recruitment and marketing campaign for program outreach

**Next Steps:** Plans to expand outreach for a second cohort in spring 2017



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

ONE DUPONT CIRCLE, NW • SUITE 700  
WASHINGTON, DC 20036