

**ADVANCING AMERICAN ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS
THROUGH LATINO IMMIGRANT WORKER SUCCESS**



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For more information on CSW visit our website at www.skilledwork.org.

The views expressed in this report are solely those of CSW and its partners representing The Partnership for America's Workforce.

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Note: The terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably in this report. Federal reporting sources often use the term Hispanic, while some people of Latin American origin prefer the term Latino. This report uses the terms “Latino immigrants” to refer to individuals of Spanish-speaking nations that have immigrated to the United States. It is important to note that this study primarily focuses on documented Latino immigrants.



Executive Summary

From 2004 to 2014, the Hispanic workforce will account for nearly 50 percent of the nation's workforce growth.¹ Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of America's population, though many lack the necessary skills and education to meet the demands of industry and/or earn family sustaining wages. As a result, our national economy finds itself in a grand paradox. We have a growing, young, and eager-to-work workforce that cannot effectively access the labor market because they do not fully possess the skills necessary to advance in the current and future economy. This skills gap ultimately leaves industry without the needed talent to compete on a global scale. This current reality calls for urgent action by both public and private stakeholders to support policies and practices that move the agenda outlined in this report forward.

We must confront the challenge of tapping the talent of one of the fastest growing segments of the American workforce—Hispanic immigrants—to fuel the American economy!

In the fall of 2008, the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce and partners *Excelencia* in Education and the National Council for Workforce Education—known as the *Partnership for America's Workforce: Tapping Latino Immigrant Workers*—came together for a period of 24 months to develop a second phase of work building from the 2008 report, *Building Tomorrow's Workforce: Promoting the Education and Advancement of Hispanic Immigrant Workers in America*. This 2008 report promoted public-private partnerships between community colleges and employers that work together to build the skills of documented Latino immigrant² workers.

This second phase of research and engagement work was designed to:

1. Identify additional key public policies and private sector practices that support Latino immigrant worker access to and success in higher education, and advance them through high demand career pathways;
2. Identify the policy levers needed to take these models to scale; and
3. Create a national dialogue about the challenges and opportunities available to workers and industry in educating and advancing Latino immigrant workers.

¹ "Labor Force Projections to 2014: Retiring Boomers." Mitra Toossi, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Monthly Labor Review. November 2005.

² *Note:* The terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably in this report. Federal reporting sources often use the term Hispanic, while some people of Latin American origin prefer the term Latino. This report uses the terms "Latino immigrants" to refer to individuals of Spanish-speaking nations that have immigrated to the United States. It is important to note that this study primarily focuses on documented Latino immigrants.

For this project, we gathered primary quantitative and qualitative data from stakeholder interviews, group forums, and surveys comprised of 203 stakeholders representing business, education, policy, and advocacy organizations across the nation.

We also reviewed Census data and other public documents pertaining to Latino educational attainment, and workforce and economic development at a national level. Through our research, five key themes and related policy recommendations have emerged as critical levers to advance this important work. One theme that was identified in the first phase has been strongly confirmed in this second phase—that work is an asset to learning, and the workplace presents a tremendous opportunity for increasing access to postsecondary education and training for working Latino adults. We must do away with the traditional notion held by many immigrants and educators that employment is a barrier to higher education; and instead transform the view to employment as a vehicle to higher education, credential attainment, and career advancement. This report goes beyond the earlier findings in breadth and depth and presents new findings not previously reported. **Specifically, the research discusses the following five key principles for shaping policy:**

Five Key Principles for Shaping Policy

1. **Create a Sense of Urgency.** Educating and advancing Latino workers is an economic and workforce competitiveness issue. Investment in the preparation of these workers is critical for economic recovery and sustainability.
2. **Advance the Transformation of K-20 Education.** The skilled jobs of today require additional education beyond a diploma. Innovative approaches and models are needed to better serve students and increase Latino worker credential attainment.
3. **Treat Work as an Asset to Learning and Education.** Effective partnerships and programs view employment as an asset to higher education and career advancement, not a barrier.
4. **Encourage and Incent Collaboration.** In our complex and fast-changing world, individuals, organizations, communities and systems can no longer reach their goals or face their challenges in isolation.
5. **Promote Progressive Employer Practices.** Adoption and implementation of socially responsible workplace policies and practices help build an environment that promotes Latino worker advancement and success.

Note on data: Due to limitations on data related specifically to Latino immigrants, some of the data, charts and tables used in this document refer to the Latino population in general. Where data refers specifically to the Latino immigrant population, this is clearly specified.

Latino Immigrant Workers and the Skills Gap

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the future U.S. workforce will be defined by two factors: the large number of baby boomers leaving the workforce and the growth of a rapidly emerging Hispanic workforce. Over the next 15 years, the United States will experience a profound demographic shift as the 75 million-strong baby boomer generation retires. This wholesale exodus from the workforce will create critical labor gaps that need to be filled.³ These workers are being replaced with younger workers, of which an increasing number are Latino. In 2007, 48 percent of the foreign-born population in the U.S. reported Latino origins.⁴

“We can’t get to a place of a productive economy without addressing the needs of Latino workers.”

Emma Oppenheim, Manager of Workforce Development and Policy Initiatives, National Council of La Raza

Based on current trends, by 2030, one-third to one-half of the national labor force will consist of immigrants.

The Migration Policy Institute, 2007

From 2004 to 2014, the Hispanic workforce will account for nearly 50 percent of the nation’s workforce growth.

“Labor Force Projections to 2014: Retiring Boomers.” Mitra Toossi, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Monthly Labor Review, November 2005.

Growth in the native-born workforce (25–54) in the last 20 years: 44 percent. In the next 20 years: 0 percent.

“Grow Faster Together, Or Grow Slowly Apart.” The Aspen Institute, 1998

For some employers the “next 15 years” is happening right now. Hispanics currently represent nearly 15 percent of the workforce or 22 million workers, of which 15.7 million (71 percent) are U.S. born or naturalized citizens.⁵ These workers are young and have the highest labor force participation rate of any major race and ethnic group—at 68.5 percent in 2008.⁶ In 2007, The Migration Policy Institute reported that immigrants are expected to be a critical driver of labor force growth, and without the contribution of immigrant labor, the output of American goods and services would be at least \$1 trillion smaller than it is today.⁷

The vast majority of Latino immigrants are working, and will be for quite some time. However, fewer than seven percent of the adult immigrants who come to the U.S. from Latin America arrive with any postsecondary education. More specifically, in 2005, 10 percent of foreign-born Hispanics were college graduates, 14 percent had some college, close to 25 percent were high school graduates, and just over 50 percent had less than a high school education.⁸

³ National Association of Manufacturers, Center for Workforce Success. *Closing the Immigrant Skills Gap: A Report on Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Manufacturing Sector*, 2005.

⁴ Migration Policy Institute. Factsheet on U.S. Immigration, 2007.

⁵ Pew Hispanic Center, 2008.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2008.

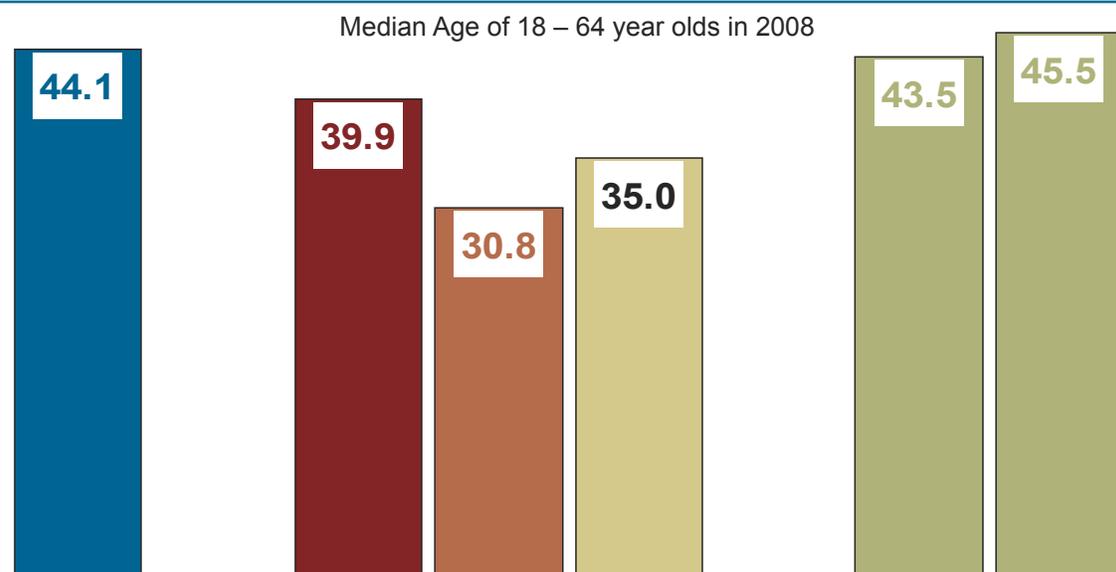
⁷ Migration Policy Institute. *Securing the Future: U.S. Immigrant Integration policy*, A reader, 2007.

⁸ Pew Hispanic Center, *Hispanics at Mid-Decade*, 2006.

According to the American Council on Education, among all racial/ethnic groups in the U.S., Hispanics continue to exhibit the lowest educational attainment levels, though African Americans also face an achievement gap that additionally calls for attention and action.⁹

Like other low-skilled working adults, Latino immigrants face a host of barriers if they want to earn the credentials they need to compete in today's labor market. These barriers can become magnified when coupled with issues related to interrupted schooling prior to immigration, lack of English fluency, and immigration at an older age. Without a significant shift in current policies and practices, the U.S. runs the risk of creating a significant underclass of low-skill Latino residents vying for the shrinking number of low-skill jobs, while industry faces increasing skill shortages.

Hispanic Workers are Younger than Other Workers



Source: Pew Hispanic Center, Passel and Cohn (2009), vintage 2008 estimates.

⁹ American Council on Education. Minorities in Higher Education 2010, Twenty-Fourth Status Report, 2010.



Sustaining U.S. Economic Competitiveness

The U.S. economy is increasingly knowledge-centered, technology-based, and innovation-driven. These changes present new challenges and opportunities for industry leaders, workers and communities. All must find new ways to stay competitive in today's global economy. For industry, this means employing workers with the skills that allow their companies to grow and prosper. Yet nationwide, even in our struggling economy, the pool of skilled labor is not growing at the pace needed for economic vitality. A troubling number of prime working age adults are finding it increasingly difficult to acquire higher wage jobs, or to access the college courses or job training that will help them advance. **We must confront the challenge of tapping the talent of one of the fastest growing segments of the American workforce—Latino immigrants—to fuel the American economy!**

In designing a policy framework that supports educating and advancing documented Latino immigrant workers, this report offers five key principles and related recommendations that have emerged from extensive dialogue, interviews, and surveys of national experts and practitioners representing business, education, public policy, and advocacy organizations.

Five Key Principles for Shaping Policy

- 1. Create a Sense of Urgency.** Educating and advancing Latino workers is an economic and workforce competitiveness issue. Investment in the preparation of these workers is critical for economic recovery and sustainability.
- 2. Advance the Transformation of K-20 Education.** The skilled jobs of today require additional education beyond a diploma. Innovative approaches and models are needed to better serve students and increase Latino worker credential attainment.
- 3. Treat Work as an Asset to Learning and Education.** Effective partnerships and programs view employment as an asset to higher education and career advancement, not a barrier.
- 4. Encourage and Incent Collaboration.** In our complex and fast-changing world, individuals, organizations, communities and systems can no longer reach their goals or face their challenges in isolation.
- 5. Promote Progressive Employer Practices.** Adoption and implementation of socially responsible workplace policies and practices help build an environment that promotes Latino worker advancement and success.

Moving forward in each of these areas requires deliberate and coordinated attention at three levels of change:

Policy, Program, and Practice:

- **Policy** – The most formal in nature and generally originating from legislative action, regulatory language, Board of Director action, strategic budgeting, etc. Policy is established at all levels—federal, state, community, “system,” organizational, and institutional.
- **Program** – Most often associated with educational institutions, organizations, or public agencies—programs are structured and developed to meet the needs of a given constituency. This could include such things as: the grouping of educational courses leading to a certificate, diploma or degree; a structured combination of services that supports a target population to reach identified goals; and a series of professional development or technical assistance activities organized toward a given outcome.
- **Practice** – The least formal in nature and generally the “way an entity or individual does its work.” Practice has the potential to become “institutionalized” over time; be perceived as more formal and entrenched than it actually is; and be deeply intertwined with organizational culture, values and historical precedent.

Because this work is too complex and important to be accomplished by any individual entity or organization working alone, public and private sector partners must work together to identify the core challenges and develop strategic and innovative solutions focused around policy, program, and practice levers. Individual “boutique” programs—no matter how effective—will not be enough to reach our goal of building a competitive workforce. Strategic partnerships at each level are critical, and coordination across the policy, program and practice levels is also needed to bring this work to scale. It is this type of “big collaboration” that results in systemic and sustainable change. We cite a recent report about the automotive industry¹⁰ by the National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices, as a model of an effective “big collaboration.” We believe it can provide a framework for bringing successful programs to scale at a national level.

¹⁰ National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices. A Sharper Focus on Technical Workers: How to Educate and Train for the Global Economy, 2010.

Principle 1—Create A Sense Of Urgency

Eighty percent of jobs in today's economy require some education beyond a high school diploma. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that nearly half of all job openings between 2004 and 2014 will be in middle-skill occupations. Yet there are eighty-eight million adults in the workforce who have low literacy, limited English proficiency, or lack an educational credential beyond high school. Two-thirds of those who will be in the workforce of 2020, and about 45 percent of the workforce of 2030, are already in the workforce today, beyond the reach of K-12 or traditional college access reform efforts. Federal adult education, training, and English language programs reach only about three million adults a year, and only about one in four adults with less than a high school education participate in any kind of education or training.¹¹

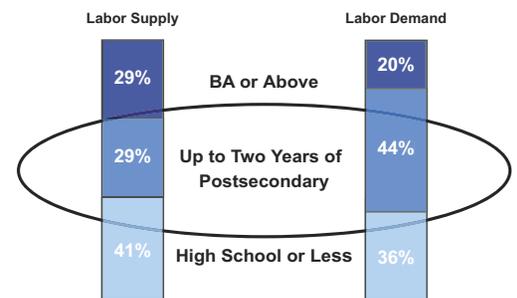
“Colleges and communities need to understand their demographics. Almost all states have a growing Latino population and many do not understand their demographics or have the sense of urgency for the focus on this population.”

Jim McKenney, Vice President, Center for Workforce and Economic Development, American Association of Community Colleges

Further, while the U.S. scores among the top countries in the numbers of well educated people, we also score near the top in the largest number of people at the lowest education levels—a form of inequality that affects all Americans. Some minority groups, including Latinos, whose numbers are increasing as a percentage of overall population growth are also disproportionately at the low end of educational attainment.¹² Given demographic trends and credential and skill attainment rates among young adults, it is highly unlikely that the nation can meet its growing need for skilled workers by continuing to focus largely on recent high school graduates. Not enough attention is paid to the large number of adult workers—including a significant number of Latino immigrants—who are already in the workforce and need to improve their skills and access to education and training.

Educating and advancing Latino workers is an economic and workforce competitiveness issue. Investment in the preparation of these workers is critical for economic recovery and sustainability.

THE FORGOTTEN MIDDLE



Source: Census 2004 (Supply);
Bureau of Labor Statistics 2004 (Demand)

¹¹ National Skills Coalition. Factsheet on Adult Basic Education, 2009.

¹² National Commission on Adult Literacy. Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce, 2008.

Recommendations

Practice

Use the right numbers. Demographic trends and data can be used to create and disseminate succinct and compelling messages that point to the critical role that Latino workers will play in our current and future workforce, but it is important to emphasize the right data. For Latino workers and job seekers, specifically disseminate information that links credential attainment with earning value. In focus group testing by Complete College America, the strongest messages for increasing postsecondary completion highlight the growing number of jobs that require education beyond high school, followed by individual workforce benefit messaging such as “the more you learn, the more you earn” and that credentials matter. A worker with an associate’s degree earns about 33 percent more than a worker with a high school degree, and a worker with a bachelor’s degree earns 62 percent more. Credentials improve individual labor market experience in the form of higher earnings, greater mobility, and enhanced job security. On the other hand, negative messaging around such things as low completion rates —“completion rates for African-American and Hispanic students in two-year colleges are significantly lower than for whites”—can have a negative impact on motivating students and workers to pursue post-secondary education.¹³

Know your audience—focus your message. Creating the right message is critical in convincing industry leaders about the importance of hiring, educating, and advancing Latino workers. According to industry leaders who participated in our national webinars, many businesses respond more positively to a message related to marketplace competitiveness and “cultural competency,” rather than messages about the importance of hiring a diverse workforce. Brad Wiscons, an experienced Hospital Administrator and Chair of the San Diego County Workforce Investment Board, cited hospitals as an example of a business that responds positively to the issue of “cultural competency.” Mr. Wiscons suggests that it is very difficult for a hospital whose demographics include 90 percent Latino patients to provide culturally competent care if only three percent of the nursing staff are Latino or Spanish speaking.

According to the 2008 National Sample of Nurses, while Hispanics accounted for more than 15 percent of the U.S. population in 2008, they represented only 3.6 percent of registered nurses.¹⁴ Research by the Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce and other experts indicates that lack of staff diversity in healthcare is translating into higher rates of illness, disability, and premature death among minorities and a loss of productivity, avoidable absenteeism, and increased healthcare costs for businesses employing minorities.¹⁵

Engage multiple stakeholders at all levels. Visioning, goal setting, and messaging about this sense of urgency needs to be done at all levels—from those in business and community leadership positions to line workers. This sense of urgency must be built using both a bottom-up and top-down approach. Get employers who are taking action to tell their stories to others. Enlist a network of influential leaders, including those in the Latino business community, to spread messages related to a shared vision of economic success for all, and the need for credential attainment to fulfill job requirements. And, importantly, Latino workers should be engaged in the messaging development and dissemination process. This inclusive approach was reinforced by Guillermo Aguilar, General Manager of CAMANA Logistics: “If we give our Hispanic workforce a picture of what is happening as well as the national and global ramifications, they themselves will adopt a sense of urgency and purpose. If we give them a firm goal and vision, they themselves might be our greatest asset.”

¹³ Complete College America. Alliance of the States, 2010.

¹⁴ US Department of Health and Human Services. The Registered Nurse Population: Findings from the 2008 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, 2010.

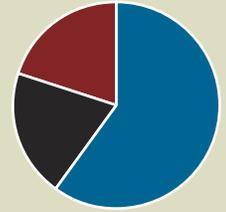
¹⁵ Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce. Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions, 2004.

Our Workforce Has Changed

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

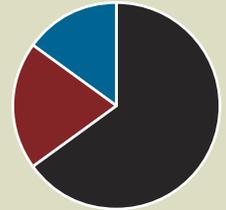
1960

20% Skilled
20% Professional
60% Unskilled



2000

65% Skilled
20% Professional
15% Unskilled

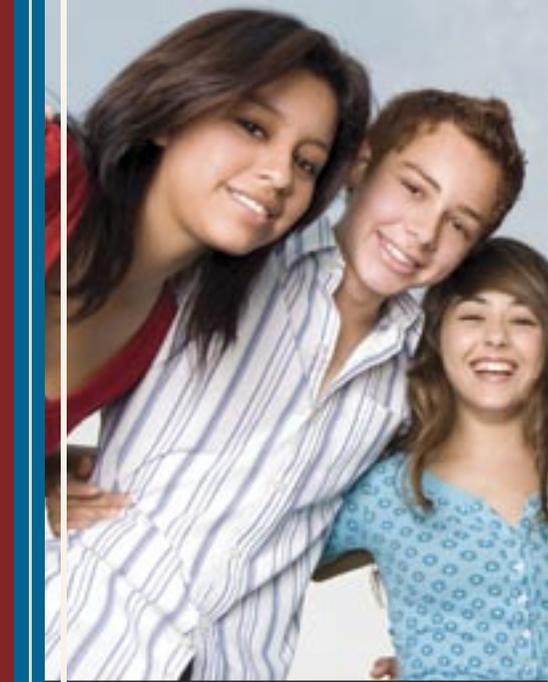


Principle 2—Advance the Transformation of K-20 Education

Global competitiveness and rapid changes in America's workforce require higher levels of skills than ever before and will require a dramatic increase in skills and credential attainment in the United States. The increasing diversity in our workforce, the pending retirement of many of our skilled workers, and the need to upgrade the basic skills and technical competencies of millions of Americans will call for significant transformation in our educational systems. Our current educational systems have not served our students or workers well in preparing them for the 21st century workplace.

In a 2006 report from the National Conference of State Legislatures – *Transforming Higher Education: National Imperative-State Responsibility* – a Blue Ribbon Commission noted: “The American higher education system no longer is the best in the world. Other countries outrank and outperform us. Although the United States has some of the best institutions in the world, we do a poor job overall in our mass education production... The American higher education system is not preparing students for the 21st century global society... we're not taking globalization seriously. Globalization demands different priorities, different skills and different knowledge.” And as Bill Gates said at the National Education Summit on High Schools in 2005, “Our schools are obsolete... The idea behind the old design [of high schools] was that you could train an adequate workforce by sending only a third of your kids to college and that the other kids either couldn't do college work or didn't need to. The idea behind the new design is that all students can do rigorous work, and—for their sake and ours—they have to.”

Although our study primarily focuses on the important role that community and technical colleges play in reaching and educating low skill Latino workers, both secondary and baccalaureate education are integral partners in this discussion. In May of 2010 we convened a roundtable of stakeholders representing business, education, policy, and advocacy organizations. This group expressed particular concern about the alarming high school dropout rates of Latinos, and the implications of those dropout rates for the competitiveness of our future workforce. Jim McKenney with the American Association of Community Colleges summed up the serious implications for colleges, communities, and the country if community colleges do not respond to the education and training needs of the growing Latino population: “The real question is ‘What are the implications if we don't?’ We have too many jobs that require skills that go unfilled, and it will only get worse as the economy turns around. Jobs could go off shore because employers can't find enough skilled workers... and that leads to fewer jobs and declining communities because the business base has been lost.” Initiatives that have shown success in retaining youth in high school and transitioning them to postsecondary education include: sector-based career academies, effective academic counseling and career navigation services, dual enrollment and credit programs, dropout prevention initiatives, mentor programs, and career pathways initiatives.



“I started attending college because I wanted to have a better education, but at the same time I was receiving this opportunity from the company — it was a paid investment. Honestly, when I started in the Workplace Education Program it was not even in my dreams to attend college, I don't think I could get that opportunity any place else.”

*Elodia Lopez, ESL Instructor,
Morgan Community College and
former Cargill Meat Solutions
Employee*

Recommendations

Policy

Reform financial aid policy. Historically, financial aid (at the federal, state and institutional levels) has been targeted toward students on the basis of attendance, with students attending full-time receiving the most dollars, part-time students receiving fewer dollars and, in many cases, lower priority. Financial aid for students attending less than full-time or taking non-credit occupational or basic skills courses is limited, if available at all. A Future Works study indicated that only 7.7 percent of adults enrolled in postsecondary education less than full-time and meeting federal poverty standards received any federal, state or institutional aid. Latino students who are working full-time are largely attending postsecondary education on a part-time basis, and thus receive very limited financial aid. Additionally, students who receive federal Pell Grant assistance are hurt when they take courses irregularly, since Pell Grant recipients must show “satisfactory progress” over time.

A number of states, including West Virginia, have recognized the importance of providing increased financial aid to part-time students and have created state funded programs. The goal of West Virginia’s Higher Education Adult Part-Time Student (HEAPS) Grant Program is to encourage and enable West Virginia students who demonstrate financial need to continue their education on a part-time basis at the postsecondary level. Additionally, HEAPS has targeted funds for a workforce development component that are awarded to students who demonstrate financial need and enroll in a postsecondary certificate, industry recognized credential, or other skill development program in a demand occupation in West Virginia. Additional innovative and practical approaches to financial aid reform include providing federal and state loan forgiveness for associate degrees, providing for expanded work study programs with more access to working adults, and increasing funding for college bridge programs and ESL.

Increase credit availability to students: providing credit for prior learning opportunities and creating pathways between non-credit and credit work. Many students have acquired a wide range of competencies through training in the military or on the job, and this experience could be translated into credit which can then be applied toward a credential through a formal process of documenting the prior learning. While there exist a number of ways to document prior learning, not all institutions provide these opportunities or they may not accept a transfer of these credits into their programs from other institutions. Historically, community and technical colleges have offered many of their workforce and community education courses as non-credit, even if some of the coursework is rigorous enough to warrant credit. This has resulted in lost time and money for students, as they must often duplicate coursework in order to obtain credits toward a credential.

Kentucky’s Community and Technical College System provides college credit (including fractional credit) for previously non-credit business and industry offerings. These *Business Industry Training (BIT)* courses have been approved by the faculty to be offered for credit. A number of colleges such as Mott Community College in Flint, Michigan, provide for students to get “articulated” credit towards a degree program once they have completed their non-credit occupational program. Opportunities to articulate credit from adult basic education (ABE), college remedial bridge courses and business-sponsored non-credit occupational training and basic skills also need to be expanded.

Provide performance-based funding incentives. State funding models of postsecondary education have historically been based on student enrollment. A number of states have begun implementing performance incentive models that provide additional funding for increasing credential attainment or other key indicators of retention and persistence. Such models include the Washington State Student Achievement Initiative or Ohio’s outcomes-based funded formula implemented in 2010. We recommend that more states consider adopting policies and funding models that incent paying postsecondary educational institutions for results tied to student outcomes, not just student enrollment. Performance funding can also be designed to better align state spending on higher education with broader statewide goals for workforce development and economic growth.



Track immigration reform to understand implications for educating and advancing Latinos. Comprehensive federal immigration reform has gained momentum as part of the national dialogue, and is likely to be passed sometime within the next decade. No matter what one's politics are on immigration reform, it is critical to understand that this legislation will inevitably have significant impact on the importance of increasing access to ESL classes and citizenship education. In February 2009, we convened a policy forum that consisted of the original employer-community college partnerships highlighted in our first phase report. These participants called immigration reform the “big gorilla in the room” and argued that we must be prepared for the implications that reform efforts will have for this important work of educating and advancing Latino workers.

Program

Move from pilots and promising models to “institutionalization” and scale.

Forum participants discussed the importance of sustaining effective programs by moving from the pilot or “boutique” stage to programs that are integrated into the fabric of the institution. Some programs from the six sites in phase I of this work have been successful in this arena, while others have struggled with these sustainability challenges. One strategy is to move these programs from the workforce development or continuing education unit to credit-based, mainstream programming that is eligible for financial aid support. Another strategy is to build “big collaborations” such as the successful multi-state, multi-community college, multi-auto plant Automotive Manufacturing Technical Education Collaborative (AMTEC), whose mission is to create and sustain an innovative, responsive, standards-based workforce education development system that meets industry skill requirements.

Increase work-based learning opportunities. Integrating occupational education at the company or worksite reinforces classroom instruction and provides an opportunity to engage employers directly in the instructional process and student outcomes. This work-based learning also provides a meaningful setting for contextualizing learning. These opportunities may include on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships, e-learning, or e-learning combined with company on-site hands on training. Additional details about work-based learning are provided in Principle 3.

Develop comprehensive sector-based partnerships and related career pathways. Workforce development divisions in community colleges have largely approached their business and industry training on a company by company basis. Rather than using this resource-intensive one-on-one “retail” approach, progressive regions and colleges are using the more effective and efficient “wholesale” approach by building industry-specific sector partnerships.

A sector partnership is a regional, employer-driven partnership of industry, education and training, and other stakeholders that focus on the workforce needs of a key industry, including special population challenges, in a regional labor market. Sector initiatives are referred to by a variety of names—Industry Partnerships, Skills Councils, Skills Alliances, to name a few—but all rely on a workforce intermediary (or convener) to facilitate the uncovering and understanding of the common workforce challenges across employers in the industry, and to facilitate joint solutions to those challenges across diverse public and private partners.

One important component of successful sector partnerships is the identification and development of “career pathways” that are relevant to the industry. Career pathways are a systemic framework for developing and delivering a series of connected instructional strategies (at both the secondary and postsecondary levels), with integrated work experience and support services, that enables students and workers to combine work and school and advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education and training.

Integrate foundational skills with occupational training. According to a 2010 study by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University,¹⁶ there is strong evidence that the I-BEST (*Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training*) program, which integrates foundational skills (including language learning) with occupational skills, had positive impacts on six of seven educational outcomes studied. Although no impact on the two labor market outcomes (wages and number of hours worked) was found, the researchers believe that it is likely that I-BEST students did not fare better than the comparison group in the labor market because they were entering the market just as the economy was entering the recent major recession.

Washington’s I-BEST program provides an example of this integration and has received much national attention and is being considered for replication across the country. The I-BEST model challenges the traditional notion that students must first complete adult basic education or ESL before moving to college level course work. The I-BEST model pairs ESL or ABE instructors with vocational or content area instructors to co-teach college level vocational courses. Although I-BEST began with a focus on integrating ABE and ESL with technical training, it has since begun using this contextualized approach in developmental education. This focus on redesigning developmental education is critical since 40 to 60 percent (varies by study) of all community college students are required to take at least one remedial course before taking classes for credit, and fewer than half of all developmental students move on to for-credit classes.

Programs like I-BEST have the necessary elements to bring about a cultural shift in integrating basic skills and technical education. I-BEST has historically been tied to economic development, with I-BEST courses at individual colleges aligning with high-wage, high-demand jobs within their communities. Forum participants indicated that policy and funding barriers to implementing the I-BEST model must be addressed before the model can be brought to scale at a national level.

Accelerate programs and success. Since the road to a credential or degree can appear daunting, it is important to consider accelerating coursework so that students can earn credentials more expeditiously. Two program models that deserve particular attention for all students, including Latinos who are in the workplace, are delivering instruction in cohorts and offering stackable credentials. The cohort model—where a group of students goes through a series of courses together (leading to a credential)—has the potential for significant success with Latino workers, since they could gain motivation and support from their fellow students/workers, as well the cohort instructors. Cohort instruction also provides significant opportunity to provide student support services in an efficient way, either through college personnel or partnerships with community based organizations. Although “traditional” cohort models are often designed for full-time students (the Tennessee Tech system, for example), this model could also be utilized for part-time students who are working full-time.

¹⁶ Community College Research Center, Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST): New Evidence of Effectiveness, 2010.

¹⁷ Adapted from Complete College America materials - <http://www.completecollege.org>



Stacking credentials—awarding various certificates while on the path to degree attainment—can also provide motivation and success along the way to higher level credential attainment. Other program components that help to accelerate programs and success include structured schedules, reducing unnecessary courses, and improving transfer policies.¹⁷

Support innovative approaches to high school retention, graduation, and postsecondary transitions. Although this study has been focused on working Latino adults, the roundtable participants expressed serious concerns about the high school dropout rates of Latino youth, as well as the lack of employability and soft skills of these youth. They believe that we must think about comprehensive, long-term strategies to both reduce these dropout rates, as well as develop and implement strategies to advance Latino working adults. Initiatives that have shown success in retaining youth in high school and transitioning them to postsecondary education include: sector-based career academies, effective academic counseling and career navigation services, dual enrollment and credit programs, dropout prevention initiatives, mentor programs, and career pathways initiatives.

Practice

Transform Instructional Practice.

Instructional practices should reduce or eliminate traditional barriers to student persistence and success. Practices include delivery systems, scheduling and learning modalities which overcome limitations of time, space, and learning styles. These practices include, but are not limited to:

- Creating multiple entry/exit points (on and off ramps) for students in a career pathway and recognizing critical “momentum points” or transitions that facilitate progress towards credential attainment.
- Utilizing technology and e-learning models to maximize student accessibility and learning, including use of simulation-based learning to supplement classroom instruction.
- Modularizing or “chunking” curriculum to help students reach incremental goals and build on success. This would include providing “fractional” credit for attaining specified competencies.
- Providing 24/7 access, with open entry, self-paced modules.
- Eliminating silos, both external and internal to the college, in developing programs and services for Latino students.
- Coordinating around outcomes using cross-functional teams (academic, workforce, student support, developmental education, ESL) in serving students.
- Building competency-based curricula which clearly specify the learning outcomes the student is expected to achieve, along with built in assessment tools.

- Developing multi-layered credential systems within the P-20 framework, utilizing industry recognized certifications throughout the educational pipeline, either “stackable” and embedded in the curriculum or as exit credentials.

Build more effective student support services, including career navigation systems. Forum and roundtable participants indicated that Latino workers who are attending postsecondary education in order to advance in their careers face significant barriers to attaining a credential. As many roundtable participants agreed, the biggest challenge for students is helping to balance work, school, and family. These part-time students need language-appropriate enhanced counseling, mentoring, coaching and career navigation services, either through the college or through partnerships with community based organizations (CBOs). CBOs also provide linkages to community services such as transportation and childcare assistance.

Forum participants also identified the specific need for in-depth assessment and career navigation services for both working adults and high school students to assist them in finding their way through complex educational pathways and their work lives. Reports from the Breaking Through initiative¹⁸ note that many programs for low-skilled adults do little to help students with employment choices and are not aligned with local labor market demands or individual aptitudes, interests, and experiences. Essential services of a comprehensive career navigation system would include: accurate and localized career information; education and training information; assessment and self-assessment tools; counseling; career education programs; internships and job shadowing; work search assistance; and transitional support services. As a new national study from the Center for American Progress¹⁹ documents, there is currently no coherent, planned system of career navigation and most, if not all, programs are limited in scale and impact and insufficiently funded.

Strengthen business/employer engagement. Phase I of this work stressed the importance of strengthening the relationships between community colleges and the business community. In the various conversations and surveys from this phase II work described in the methodology, business/employer engagement was again identified as a critical ingredient to success in educating and advancing Latino workers. We asked community colleges across the nation to identify effective practices that help Latino immigrant workers or job seekers succeed in college and advance into higher demand occupational pathways. Results of this *Community Colleges Immigrant Population’s Effective Practices Survey* indicated that a key attribute of successful programs is having strong relationships with driver industries, including deep employer engagement in curriculum design. Successful programs also conduct labor market analyses and work with employer clusters that lead to educational opportunities and career advancement.

As previously discussed, both sector partnerships and business networks can play a key role in advancing this work. Additionally, these community college-business partnerships can lead to the development of industry valued and validated credentials which provide workers with meaningful, portable credentials, and provide employers with the skills necessary to remain competitive. On the instructional practice side, industry representatives can serve as adjunct faculty and bring real-life, real-time case examples into the classroom.

¹⁸ Jobs for the Future. The Breaking Through Practice Guide, 2010.

¹⁹ Center for American Progress. A New National Approach to Career Navigation for Working Learners, 2010.

Principle 3—Treat Work As An Asset To Learning And Education

Shifting the traditional notion held by many immigrants and educators that employment is a barrier to higher education and instead transforming the belief to employment as a vehicle to higher education, credential attainment, and career advancement remains one of the most fundamental findings that has carried over from our first phase report. This paradigm shift continues to underlie our national conversations—providing a strong foundation and context for these discussions. The workplace should be recognized and leveraged for its role in employee skill development and credential attainment. Additionally, we must recognize the powerful role that jobs and career advancement both play in driving behavioral and systemic change.

Recommendations

Increase educational access and success for *all* workers.

Policy

Policies that help advance Latino workers, help advance *all* workers. Providing policy supports to

access higher education and training programs for Latinos and other low-skilled workers is vital in the nation's ability to grow and retain an educated and skilled workforce. And viewing work as an integral part of this educational advancement process is critical to our success. If our nation is to remain economically competitive, all Americans must have access to skill development and workforce advancement opportunities.

Program / Practice

Support contextualized learning.

For many adults, learning is most effective when it takes place within the context of work or life experiences. The more relevant the learning is to one's job or personal life, the better. Integrating learning and work allows individuals to make connections between concepts and "real-life" experiences. Washington State's I-BEST program, as described in principle 2, has been touted nationally as an exemplary model for this contextualized learning. Responses to our community college survey were consistent with this thinking. When asked to identify their top three lessons learned in helping working Hispanic immigrant students, or those looking for work, to succeed in college, respondents frequently identified the need to offer job-relevant training. One respondent indicated, "The relevance of the training must be clear. Student retention is closely aligned to the extent to which the program is aligned to local employment opportunities."

Employer Best Practice Highlight Lancer Corporation

Headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, Lancer Corporation, is a leading manufacturer and marketer of beverage dispensing systems. At its U.S. operations, 57 percent of Lancer's workforce is Latino. To help keep Lancer at the cutting edge, the company provides a variety of educational opportunities for its workforce.

Employees are offered: tuition reimbursement; G.E.D., continuing education, and college-level courses; paid job-related certification and licensing fees; and work visa sponsorships.

Lancer partners with their local community college to create customized curriculum offered at the workplace, or training provider's site focused on English language proficiency, and computer and manufacturing skills.

"Those that begin changing their strategies to meet the demands of that workforce will remain competitive in regional, national, and global marketplaces."

Luis Alvarez, President and CEO

Sponsor workplace-based learning opportunities. Workplace-based learning models promote a joint learning effort by employer and employee where coursework is contextualized and the opportunity for credential attainment is brought to the worker in the workplace. Workplace education models must be a part of the future postsecondary education market if we are to keep college education accessible to the millions of adults that lack credentials. The businesses we engaged through surveys and conversations reinforced the value of entering into partnerships with postsecondary educational institutions and community based organizations in order to increase workplace-based learning opportunities and to reduce educational barriers of time, tradition, and place for workers. Businesses also noted how these kinds of partnerships provide greater opportunity to influence curriculum design to better meet their specific needs. Research has shown these models to give back great returns for both individuals and organizations.²⁰ Employees gain a lifelong learning mindset where they continue to expand their skill sets, job satisfaction, security, and better pay. Businesses improve performance and strengthen their financial bottom line.

A national study documenting the economic benefits of 45 workplace education projects conducted by The Conference Board shows:

- Improved capacity to cope with change in the workplace
- Improved labor-management relations
- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved employee morale
- Development of lifelong learning attitudes
- Increased employee retention
- Enhanced corporate image
- More employees participate in job-specific training
- Improved and faster results in job-specific training
- Higher success rate in promoting and transferring employees within the organization

²⁰ The Conference Board. Turning Skills into Profit: Economic Benefits of Workplace Education Programs, 1999.

Principle 4—Encourage and Incent Collaboration

Low success rates in adult basic and postsecondary education by low-skilled, low-income adults exist for at least two main reasons: 1) Low-income individuals face financial and personal challenges that do not allow them to find the time and resources to commit to the regular and long-term education needed to advance in the labor market; and 2) Education and training systems are disconnected from each other, and from agencies and organizations that can provide supports during participation.²¹ In our complex and fast-changing world, individuals, organizations, communities and systems can no longer reach their goals or face their challenges in isolation. Employers cannot do it alone, and neither can educational institutions nor community based organizations. Each has core strengths and roles to play, allowing each to focus on serving their employees, students, and clients most effectively. Partnerships spread costs, maximize resources for common needs, leverage promising practices and programs; and can result in innovative solutions that emphasize industry approved credentials, integrated basic and technical skills training models, and supportive workplace cultures that ensure worker success along the way.

Recommendations

Provide public policy incentives.

Many federal and state funding streams (Workforce Investment Act, TANF, Perkins Act, etc.) are structured with financial

Policy

disincentives and other barriers to developing and implementing collaborative initiatives. As legislation is written and grant programs are developed, stakeholders should strongly advocate for funding models and public policies that incent collaborative approaches to educating and advancing low-skilled workers, including Latino immigrants. As one roundtable participant stated: “Funding should be tied to successful outcomes based on collaborative models that can be brought to scale.” The Strengthening Employment Clusters to Organize Regional Success (SECTORS) Act has recently been reintroduced along with companion legislation and is focused on promoting the sectoral approach through U.S. Department of Labor grants. This Act would help ensure that grant recipients are building collaborative strategies to work closely with their regional employers so that training is aligned with employer needs.

²¹ Corporation for a Skilled Workforce. The Policy Intersection between Sector Strategies and Low-Income Workers: The State Responsibility to Make the Connection, 2008.



Employer Best Practice Highlight Hormel Foods Corporation

Osceola, Iowa is home to one of Hormel Foods’ divisions that manufactures high quality food and meat products for consumers throughout the world.

In a city where Hispanics are 6.2 percent of the population, at Hormel the Hispanic workforce totals 38 percent.

The company actively promotes diversity and inclusion and looks for ways to increase the educational levels and promotional opportunities of their workforce. To do this Hormel offers its employees:

- Tuition reimbursement for a degree in an area relevant to company;
- The Sed de Saber ESL learning program designed for the workplace; and
- Diversity and Inclusion program participation.

These practices have led to increased levels of Hispanic women entering their workforce, and a growing number of employees completing Bachelor’s degrees and being offered managerial positions within the company.

Program

Build partnership capacity of community Based Organizations (CBOs).

Community colleges face serious challenges dealing with tremendous student enrollment growth within the context of limited or diminishing resources. The adviser to student ratio is now one to 1,000 if not more at most community colleges.²² While community colleges have strong capacity in curriculum and instruction, the provision of support services, outreach to immigrant groups, and job placement services are often not their core strengths. CBOs often have inroads with communities that colleges do not; and have more knowledge on how to assist with a wide variety of support services such as transportation and housing assistance, counseling, childcare, and additional resources to pay for education or living expenses. Access to these services can be absolutely pivotal when it comes to academic and employment retention for low-income and low-skilled adults.

Providing technical assistance to CBOs helps build their capacity to be strong partners who can provide support to the many students who are unable to access supportive services at the college or workplace. It takes significant effort to have strong and clear communication between business, CBOs, and higher education, but it is essential.

Adopt a sector strategy approach. As discussed in Principle 2, sector partnerships can be a powerful tool for community collaboration. Sector partnerships can be particularly effective for low-skilled and low-income workers. According to a National Governor's Association issue brief, "sector strategies are more responsive to industry demand than traditional job-matching and training services because they are problem oriented, not program oriented; address needs inter-dependently, not independently; and work with employers in an industry collectively, not as individual firms."²³

A 2008 evaluation of the impact of sector initiatives on workers shows increased earnings and decreases in poverty from 64 percent to 35 percent; increases in higher quality jobs, indicated by an increase in employer-offered health insurance plans from 49 percent to 73 percent and an increase in paid sick leave from 35 percent to 58 percent.²⁴ Studies also indicate that sector initiatives are effective mechanisms for employers to stay competitive. A 2004 third party evaluation of sector initiatives in the State of Massachusetts showed that 41 percent of the employers surveyed reported that participating in the sector initiative led to a reduction in turnover; 19 percent reported a reduction in rework; 23 percent reported a reduction in customer complaints; and 100 percent of companies reported that partnerships with other companies and public institutions were valuable.²⁵

²² Thomas, Megan. Community Colleges Fighting to Cope: States Cutting School Budgets Even as Enrollment Soars. Retrieved on August 2, 2010 from msnbc.com, 2010.

²³ State Sector Strategies Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved on August 3, 2010 from <http://sectorstrategies.org/faq>, 2010.

²⁴ Public-Private Ventures. Targeting Industries, Training Workers and Improving Opportunities: Final Report from the Sectoral Employment Initiative, December 2008.

²⁵ State Sector Strategies Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved on August 3, 2010 from <http://sectorstrategies.org/faq>, 2010.

Practice

Promote business-education-CBO partnerships. Although the businesses we engaged recognized

the importance of creating public-private partnerships, few firms that participated in our *Survey of Partnerships, Programs, and Services* reported having partnered with their local community college on curriculum development or offering specialized training for Hispanic immigrant groups. For those partnerships that do exist between businesses and community colleges, they are generally focused on customized training that is relevant to all workers—immigrants and non-immigrants alike.

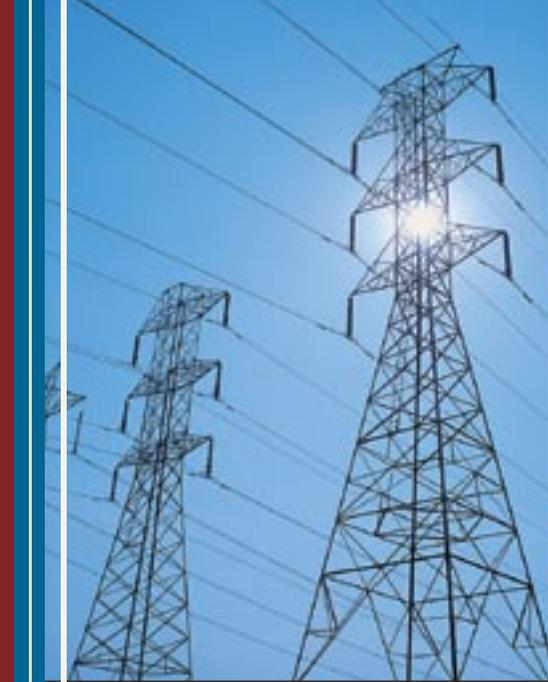
“CBOs are the glue for these partnerships. We must find ways to support them so they can better impact communities.”

Teresita Wisell, Associate Dean, The Gateway Center and Executive Director, Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, Westchester Community College

Most firms offered supports such as in-house training, tuition assistance and paid release time for training and education, and on average reported spending seven percent of their annual budgets on training resources for employees. However, few firms offered career counseling to create pathways for advancement, or Spanish for English speaking supervisors of Spanish-speaking workers, and less than half provided ESL classes on or off-site. Given our sample size, we cannot make wide generalizations, but find that these responses suggest opportunities for greater alignment with postsecondary institutions and community based training providers, as well as increased opportunity to collaborate and create industry recognized training and credentials.

Principle 5—Promote Progressive Employer Practices

The impact of the economic turndown has created buyers’ market conditions, with fewer jobs being created and thousands of dislocated skilled workers looking for jobs alongside new labor market entrants. However, change in this equilibrium is inevitable, as it will be driven by our demographics. Our workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, is aging, and large numbers of skilled baby boomers will be leaving the labor force over the next 15 years. These demographic shifts will swing the buyer’s market pendulum in the other direction, forcing employers, some of whom may already be grappling with skilled worker shortages, to re-evaluate their workplace practices. As one employer participant in our study stated, “We need to remain nimble as an employer in terms of talent retention. We can attract them to the door, but how do we keep them?” The approach businesses take to attract, optimize, and retain talent is a vital component to achieving business goals and to becoming a sustainable long term organization that can be self-renewing.



Employer Best Practice Highlight

Florida Power & Light

With the growing need to address the nationwide power generation workforce shortage, Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) partnered with Miami Dade College to create the Clean Energy Institute. This program trains students for future jobs in the nuclear power industry and, for many, jobs at FPL’s Turkey Point Power Plant in South Florida. The program “grows their own,” training the local, ethnically diverse population to fill jobs.

Through this partnership, FPL provides: funding, subject matter experts, adjunct professors and summer internship programs.

Since its inception in 2006, the program has served 116 students of which 87 percent have been minority (69 percent Hispanic). Of these, 61 students (also 69 percent Hispanic) have completed the program and received an Electrical Power Technology Associate in Science degree. Salaries for skilled workers start around \$55,000 and have the opportunity to earn considerably more.

Recommendations

Policy

Adopt Employer of Choice strategies and respect cultural traditions.

People want to work for a company where they can make a contribution, balance their work and personal life, and be happy. Companies that treat their employees well and provide them opportunities to make their fullest contribution experience higher retention rates, superior productivity, and a happier company culture. Effective employer of choice strategies offer flexible and supportive work and learning policies and practices that are built into the daily life of the organization. These strategies foster continual learning, and help adapt services on an ongoing basis to be more respectful, effective and appropriate for all employees. Establishing a supportive work culture starts with enlightened company leadership that creates trusting environments, listens to employees, is willing to be influenced by employee feedback, acts as role models, and creates a shared vision. This work culture also includes:

- Collaborative teamwork;
- Career and development opportunities;
- Competitive compensation and benefits;
- Meaningful work;
- Job security;
- Development opportunities; and
- Policies and procedures that reinforce the culture.²⁶

Respondents from our community colleges best practices survey indicated the critical importance of understanding and respecting language and cultural norms and traditions, as well as the value of building cross-cultural competencies (workplace and ethnic) on both the employer and employee sides. Likewise, our review of the literature found several industry journals that also discussed the value and importance of this understanding and respect, as well as teaching conversational Spanish to English speaking supervisors.

Establish employer networks. In addition to the sector partnership approach discussed previously, employers from different industries (often called employer networks) come together to develop solutions to their common talent challenges. Our experience with dozens of state initiatives and conversations with employers and business associations has shown that convening employers in industry partnerships and other forms of networks or collaborations can be a tremendously effective way to address workforce challenges and promote regional competitiveness.

Networks provide opportunities to catalyze shared learning and innovation; co-invest and maximize educational and training opportunities, resources, and employee supports. Guillermo Aguilar, General Manager at CAMANA Logistics noted the great value of networks, “Businesses need to continue to establish coalitions and reach across to non-traditional allies to achieve collective power. Be unselfish, if we develop a new breakthrough in teaching ESL, share it with your competition. If a grant is received, try to split it with one of your rivals. If they become better it will just force you to pick up your game. Just as importantly you’ll be respected among your peers for it. For our company the results have been immediate. We simply cannot afford to fail in this endeavor.”

²⁶ Cascade Engineering and Corporation for a Skilled Workforce. *Doing More with Less: Creating a Sustainable Workforce*, 2009.



Conclusion

The recommendations in this report detail the challenging road that we face in building a competitive workforce for the 21st century in general, and educating and advancing Latino workers in particular. It is obvious that this work is far too complex for any state, college system, educational institution or business to tackle by itself. Meaningful multi-stakeholder partnerships and deep employer engagement in education are both essential to meeting these challenges.

Additionally, the “targets” of workforce and economic competitiveness are constantly moving—requiring that policies, programs, and practices be modified to meet changing conditions. Flexibility, adaptability, agility and responsiveness must be our mantras as we go about developing and implementing solutions to these complex problems.

Although we do not have all the answers, and innovative solutions must continue to be identified on an ongoing basis, we do have a significant body of evidence on which models work and what promising practices exist. We must challenge ourselves to take these promising models and practices to scale—for only then will we as a nation be able to maintain our economic competitiveness and provide all workers, including Latino immigrants, with the skills and credentials they need to have careers that pay family sustaining wages.

Appendix: Methodology

For this project, we gathered primary quantitative and qualitative data from stakeholder interviews, group forums, and surveys comprised of 203 stakeholders representing business, education, policy, and advocacy organizations across the nation. We also reviewed Census data and other public documents pertaining to Latino educational attainment, and workforce and economic development at a national level over the duration of two years.

Our interviews and national forums were intended to capture qualitative responses related to the key public policy and private sector practices that support Latino immigrant worker advancement—and ultimately U.S. economic competitiveness. The dialogue also helped to identify opportunities for leveraging existing or building new communities of practice within and across the different sectors to continue to advance learning and innovation. These national discussions were held between February 2009 and May 2010 and included:

- A Policy Forum held in February 2009 where the original six employer partnerships came together for the first time to help us refine and expand upon the policy recommendations in the *Building Tomorrow's Workforce* report.
- A series of national webinar discussions held from January to March 2010 where 59 participants representing our targeted stakeholder groups participated in three industry-focused (manufacturing, healthcare, and cross-industry) webinars.
- A 23 person Policy Roundtable held in May 2010 with attendee representation from our targeted stakeholder groups.

We conducted two surveys over the duration of the project. The surveys were designed to capture qualitative and quantitative answers regarding the critical success factors, and the promising partnerships, programs, policies, and practices that support the economic and educational advancement of Latino immigrant workers. Although the surveys were distributed nationwide, they were targeted at the top 10 states with the highest geographic concentrations of Latinos in terms of percentage of the population by state. These states included New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, New Jersey, California, New York, Illinois, Florida, and Texas.

The *Community Colleges Immigrant Population's Effective Practices Survey* focused on identifying practices that enable documented working Latino immigrants, or those seeking employment, to succeed in community college and/or advance to higher demand occupational pathways. The survey was disseminated electronically and in paper form during the National Council of Workforce Education's²⁷ Annual Conference, electronically to its 15 member regions, and promoted on each project partner's website. Eighty-one respondents representing 67 community colleges from 21 states participated in this survey over a four month period across 2009 and 2010.

To gather data for our *Business Survey of Partnerships, Programs, and Services*, firms completed a web-based survey to identify programs or practices aiding in promoting, providing, and/or tracking Hispanic immigrant employee advancement. The surveys were administered during the promotion of each of the three industry webinars by project partners and industry champions. The surveys were also promoted on each project partner's website. Twenty employers completed the survey over a three month period in 2010.

We uncovered a number of exemplary policies and practices demonstrated within higher education institutions and employer sites, but given our sample size, we cannot make wide inferences about all these sectors. Rather, we find that these responses provide insight into the growing interest employers and institutions of higher learning have in regard to cultivating the skills and talent of these critical employees to meet the skill needs of industry. This report highlights conclusions from the national discussions, and results and analysis of survey responses. In addition, we have provided several brief case study examples of companies that illustrate key characteristics emphasized in the report.

²⁷ NCWE operates as an affiliate council of the American Association of Community College, and serves as the national leader providing resources and expertise to community colleges to enhance their efforts in preparing the current and future workforce in a global economy.



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