

## Solano County

### Local Plan PY2017-21 Modification – Attachments

#### CalFresh

##### *Partnerships to Serve CalFresh Participants*

The Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County will work with the Solano County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as well as local stakeholders to better serve CalFresh participants in Solano County. H&SS recently developed new contracts with Goodwill of the Greater East Bay and with the Solano County Office of Probation to implement CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) programs. The WDB will partner with Goodwill and Probation to leverage WIOA service delivery with their E&T clients. Goodwill provides transitional jobs to E&T participants, and Probation provides expanded employment and training services to individuals on probation that receive CalFresh assistance. The WDB will partner with HHS and other partners working with CalFresh recipients to provide AJCC services, such as increased Road to Employment community sites, and ensuring CalFresh recipients receive priority of services for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I services under the Adult program.

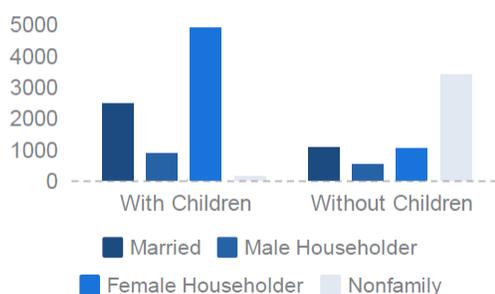
##### *CalFresh Population Overview<sup>1</sup>*

At the end of Quarter 3 Fiscal Year 2019, H&SS provided CalFresh assistance to 38,019 individuals in Solano County. This constitutes 9.5% of the total county population, and shows a 116% increase in recipients over the last 10 years. The majority of recipients (21,145 individuals) are female, and the most common household type is female head of household, or single mothers. The majority of recipients (16,495 individuals) are under the age of 18, leaving 57% or 19,491 in the predominant working age group of 18-64.

The race/ethnicity makeup of Solano’s caseload is diverse, with the largest race being Black or African American at 30% of the population (11,227 individuals), followed by Hispanic at 25% (9,324 individuals) and White at 22% (8,455 individuals). Despite the diversity, 88% of the caseload cites English as their Language spoken (33,274 individuals), with 10% of the population speaking Spanish and 1% of the population speaking Tagalog. Compared to the general population, CalFresh households have a significantly higher rate of having an individual in the household with a disability at 46%. This provides significant opportunities to increase service alignment between CalFresh and disability employment services. No

Characteristic	Percentage
<b>Female</b>	56%
<b>Spanish Speaking</b>	10.3%
<b>African-American</b>	29.5%
<b>Unemployed</b>	13.4%
<b>Recipients Under Age 18</b>	43%
<b>Households with Disability</b>	46%

#### Household Types



<sup>1</sup> Statistics compiled from data provided from H&SS caseload records dated 10.31.2018 and from the U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2017.

data is currently available on foreign-born or formerly incarcerated subsets of CalFresh participants, nor on specific characteristics of the CalFresh E&T population; increasing tracking of these data points is a future goal of H&SS.

### *Needs Assessment for People Receiving CalFresh*

CalFresh participants often face multiple barriers to employment that can seem insurmountable to the individual. Many CalFresh participants are either unemployed, or more frequently, underemployed. Some CalFresh participants are also eligible for General Assistance from HHS, but the majority are not. Currently, the majority of the CalFresh population served by HHS do not have access to the E&T 50% federal reimbursement opportunities in the county, due to eligibility requirements for those services. Additional service delivery options are needed for CalFresh recipients.

At the WDB's stakeholder engagement session for individuals receiving CalFresh assistance in Solano County, a number of barriers were identified. Many CalFresh recipients struggle with making the transition to work, either due to lack of wrap-around services or difficulty making the mindset shift to employment. The county has a number of resources available to individuals, but awareness of these resources are lacking among the population that could most benefit from them. In addition, accessibility of these resources may be difficult due to geographic distribution, transportation challenges, or other barriers. The community-based organizations and agencies that do offer wrap-around resources often do not have the capacity or funding to fully address the volume of need in the county.

Underemployment is also a struggle for CalFresh recipients. Although many CalFresh recipients are working, the economic landscape in Solano County creates barriers to livable wage jobs for many in the county. Four of out the top five occupations in Solano County have wages below the self-sufficiency standard. This is indicative of our county's economy that either has a significant volume of low-wage/entry-level jobs or highly-skilled opportunities that many of our CalFresh recipients do not have the technical skills to qualify for. Therefore, access to technical skills attainment is imperative for our county's CalFresh population, coupled with wrap-around supports to help recipients address basic needs as they increase their earning potential.

Many CalFresh recipients and other low-income individuals that the WDB serves are discouraged and believe that employers are not interested in hiring them. They feel a disincentive to take low-wage job opportunities, because it can negatively affect their eligibility for public assistance, yet the wages they can gain will not meet their basic living needs. In addition, entry-level jobs tend to be less forgiving when parents need to take off for childcare, medical, or personal reasons. Per the stakeholders engaged in the local planning process, the WDB and partners need to address the fear of losing benefits through strategies such as financial planning, planning with participants around balancing work and life responsibilities, and longer-term supports to aid in retention.

Individuals with disabilities particularly struggle with the fear of losing benefits. For many, disability and public assistance payments are seen as sustainable income, whereas employment is not. Many individuals with disabilities fear an increase in medical costs that they will not be able to afford. Benefits counseling is needed for individuals with disabilities so they can better understand how working will affect their disability and public assistance benefits, and how to become financially stable once employed. The Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) employs benefits counselors and will partner with the WDB and other stakeholders to provide benefits counseling to individuals with disabilities who need assistance in transitioning to work.

Mental health is another significant need for CalFresh recipients and other low-income individuals. First 5 Solano has conducted research and awareness in Solano County around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are experiences that create trauma for individuals that can have long-term consequences. Individuals in poverty, including many CalFresh recipients, have higher rates of ACEs, trauma, and mental illness. To effectively serve CalFresh recipients and other low-income individuals, the WDB and partners must develop strategies around mental health resources. The WDB has recently engaged HHS's behavioral health unit and will explore ways to connect individuals to mental health resources through the county as needed.

### *Prospective Partnerships*

The WDB currently partners with HHS around services for CalWORKS participants. The WDB and HHS will leverage this partnership to expand service delivery capabilities to CalFresh recipients as well. In FY2018, 107 individuals (or 25%) received WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth services. HHS and the WDB will look at the current caseload of CalFresh recipients to identify ways to better support these individuals in their career path. In addition, the WDB will work with HHS to deliver AJCC services through Road to Employment onsite at HHS during CalFresh orientations to build awareness and connection to services.

The WDB currently partners with Goodwill and Probation to align and coordinate service delivery, including outreach. The WDB will identify co-enrollment and/or employer engagement opportunities with these two contracts of CalFresh E&T services to increase the intensity of services provided to CalFresh recipients.

The WDB will work with HHS and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to successfully connect CalFresh recipients to these resources and provide a more holistic service delivery. The WDB will utilize its CommunityPro referral system to build a network of resources that CalFresh recipients can take advantage of. The CommunityPro system will be utilized to increase the accessibility and awareness of supportive services, additional resources, and programs that can aid in the success of CalFresh recipients in obtaining and retaining quality employment opportunities.

In addition, the WDB will facilitate continuing conversations among stakeholders to build county-wide partnerships around employment and training services for CalFresh recipients and other low-income residents. At the engagement sessions, stakeholders appreciated the discussion and called for more open and authentic conversations around increase access and opportunities for this population. The WDB will ensure these conversations continue, and will work with partners to address issues such as research to gain a better understanding of the population, wrap-around service provision, cross-training of staff, cross-referrals and co-enrollment, and ways to track outcomes.

HHS currently has a waiver to delay implementation of Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirements until 2020. The WDB has agreed to support development of strategies for employment and services that meet the ABAWD work requirements. This strategizing will uncover additional potential partnerships to improve service delivery for CalFresh recipients.

## **Department of Child Support Services**

### *Partnerships to Serve Parents Ordered to Pay Child Support*

The WDB will continue its growing partnership with the Solano County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) to provide services for non-custodial parents (hitherto referred to as "parents ordered

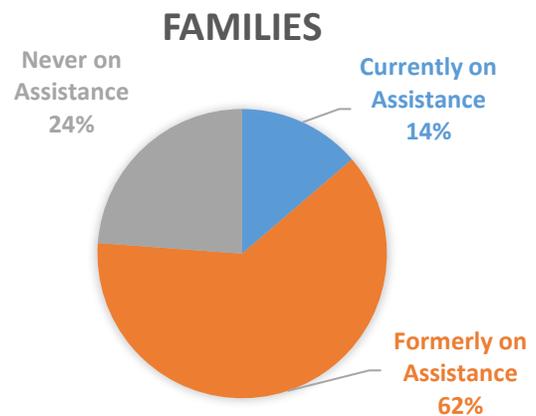
to pay child support”). As part of these services, WDB and DCSS will continue its referral system, augment AJCC services, and build enrolled WIOA services into the partnership. Additional tools and incentives will be created to better serve Solano’s parents ordered to pay child support.

In addition, the WDB will support new partnerships between DCSS and justice-involved stakeholders in the county (such as the Sheriff’s Office, community-based organization Leaders in Community Alternatives, and the Solano County Probation Department) to coordinate workforce service delivery and mitigate barriers to employment associated with child support payments. The WDB will explore a closer partnership with disability partners, such as community-based organization Dreamcatchers, to coordinate workforce service delivery for parents ordered to pay child support who also have a disability. No community-based organizations exist in Solano County that focus on serving parents ordered to pay child support. However, the WDB will leverage its partnerships with general community-based organizations, H&SS, Solano Community College, training providers, and other stakeholders in the area to identify any parents ordered to pay child support within their clientele base and will explore opportunities to connect services for participants. The WDB will also leverage its internet-based referral system, Community Pro, to create linkages in service delivery around the individual.

### Population Overview

In Federal Fiscal Year 2018, Solano County’s DCSS caseload was 15,954, which represented 14,467 children. 3,801 families have never been on public assistance, 2,187 families are currently on assistance, and 9,966 families were formerly on assistance. Of Solano DCSS’s caseload, 71% of parents live in California. Only 36%, or 5,709 of Solano’s caseload reside in Solano County. Within Solano County, the highest concentrations of parents ordered to pay child support are in the following three cities:

- Vallejo (2,035 families)
- Fairfield (1,660 families)
- Vacaville (1,166 families)



The majority of parents are male (90%). Solano’s parents ordered to pay child support are a diverse group of individuals by race and ethnicity. Of Solano parents on DCSS’s caseload, 33% are Black/African-American, 24% are White, 21% are Hispanic, 5% are Asian, and 17% other. The majority of parents’ primary language is English, but over 500 (8%) speak a primary language other than English.

In FY2018, DCSS collected \$38,239,437 in child support. Out of the 15,954 on the caseload, 12,810 of the cases had past-due child support (80%), yet collections were received on 71% of cases with past-due child support. In addition, 43% of parents paying child support pay less than 25% of their monthly child support obligation, while an additional 7% pay between 25-75% of the monthly child support obligation. Families who were formerly on assistance accounted for 70.2% of arrears owed. This shows that a number of our parents ordered to pay child support struggle to keep up with their child support payments, yet the majority are making payments.

For parents ordered to pay child support in Solano County, 2,426 of parents do not have an active employer listed; another 437 are considered underemployed. Together, the number of unemployed and underemployed equal 45% of Solano's local DCSS population. Among Solano's parents ordered to pay child support, 259 receive Social Security Benefits, and 818 were formerly incarcerated (13% of local population). Of those, 221 (or 27%) have no employer and currently owe child support. This creates difficulties not only for the parent, but also the children supported, as the average arrears for formerly incarcerated parents ordered to pay child support is \$21,014. Family-sustaining employment opportunities for our parents ordered to pay child support is crucial to ensuring our families are being taken care of.

### *Assessment of Need and Barriers*

Low wage employment and underemployment was a significant need identified by DCSS and child support stakeholders during the planning process. Often parents will obtain employment where a wage garnishment order takes about half of their gross income. This can be a discouragement to parents ordered to pay child support, who may quit their jobs or work under the table due to an inability to support themselves and make child support payments. There is also a general fear among parents ordered to pay child support that they will not be able to afford their payments or fear of the consequences to custody or wage enforcements for not paying.

Other parents are unable to work, which creates difficulties in meeting child support obligations. They may be unable to work due to incarceration, disability, or engagement in mental health or substance abuse treatment. Oftentimes, these individuals are unaware that they can receive a modification to their child support payments due to their situation. Better awareness and promotion of child support modifications is needed.

Parents ordered to pay child support who have a disability face unique barriers. Many are low income and struggle to balance social security benefits, ability to support themselves, and work capabilities. Many are fearful not only of their child support obligation, but of how it will affect their social security benefits. Disability partners during the planning process identified parents particularly with intellectual disabilities may not understand the dynamic of the child support process and requirements. Benefits counseling and advocacy for individuals with disabilities who owe child support payments is needed.

Better communication between organizations and agencies serving parents ordered to pay child support is needed. Child support obligations can be a complicated process with many case-by-case scenarios. Organizations need a better understanding of the process and requirements in order to better support their participants in navigating support around child support payments.

Solano has a number of resources that can be utilized to assist with overcoming these barriers. Better communication between organizations and DCSS is a foundational step in this process, so that those serving parents ordered to pay child support can connect with the resources provided by DSCC and vice versa. The WDB and partners are currently exploring ways to improve education and awareness of child support within Solano's workforce system.

### *Baseline Services Currently Provided and Services Planned*

The WDB and DCSS currently have a partnership to provide AJCC services and referrals for parents ordered to pay child support. The partnership includes a work order from Superior Court for any parent without employment to visit the AJCC for employment services. Other community-based organizations

and agencies currently serve parents ordered to pay child support but have not targeted this population nor provide specific services to this population.

The WDB and DCSS will enhance their direct partnership by expanding partnering service delivery throughout Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. IN addition, DCSS will work with the WDB to provide child support information sessions for those who may need information on the child support process. The WDB will provide specific information via handout, website, and orientations around child support, the resources available, and how to balance child support payments with employment. In addition, the WDB and DCSS will explore creation of a milestone-based compromise of arears program for WIOA clients.

The WDB and DCSS will also work together to enhance the knowledge and connection within the network of partners in the county around serving parents ordered to pay child support. DCSS and justice-involved partners will explore strategies and services available for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. The WDB will work with disability partners to explore strategies and services to support individuals with disabilities who may be struggling with their child support obligation.

#### *Partner Information Sharing*

Linking DCSS with Solano’s workforce service partners and different community organizations will help participants seeking various services to understand the child support process. The WDB and DCSS will strengthen the collaboration between organizations to build a trustworthy communication system. The WDB will leverage its CommunityPro referral system to make linkages between the partners and increase partner information sharing. The system will help with the timeliness of referrals between partners, support client document sharing, and track outcomes of success.

### **Competitive Integrative Employment (CIE)**

#### *Partnerships to Increase CIE*

The WDB and local disability partners are strengthening their partnerships to support individuals with disabilities and increase Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) opportunities in Solano County. The partners have come together as part of a Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) grant through the California Employment Development Department (EDD), and will use this as a foundation to infuse CIE and engagement with individuals with Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) into WIOA services.

One goal of the WDB through the DEA grant and the local planning process is to improve access to the WIOA system for individuals with disabilities and to increase the capacity of staff to engage individuals with disabilities. In FY2018, 612 of the 10,321 individuals (6%) accessing AJCC services had a disability. Of the 433 individuals served through the Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth programs in FY2018, 18 had a disability. The WDB is currently working with its partners to make the AJCC a more disability-friendly environment and build staff capacity through technical assistance and professional development.

Together, WDB and its disability partners will develop strategies around employer engagement, earn and learn strategies, educational transition services, disability benefits counseling, and improved service coordination. The WDB and disability partners are making great progress to understand the needs of individuals with disabilities, connect services, and better understand each other’s systems. During the next two years, the WDB and disability partners will continue this work.

### CIE Partners

Division of Rehabilitation (DOR) is a significant partner in implementing the local plan for CIE for individuals with disabilities, especially for those with intellectual or developmental disabilities. In addition, other core partners are Solano County Office of Education (SCOE), who operates WorkAbility I programs and a number of other county-wide disabilities programs, and North Bay Regional Center (NBRC), located in Napa County. Other education partners include Vallejo SELPA for transitioning students, the Solano Adult Education Consortium members of adult schools, and Solano Community College and their Disability Student Program. Community partners include Caminar, Dungarvin, Pride Technologies, Connections 4 Live, and Dreamcatchers, most of whom work directly with individuals with disabilities as contractors to DOR or the NBRC.

### Level of Participation in the Local Partnership Agreement

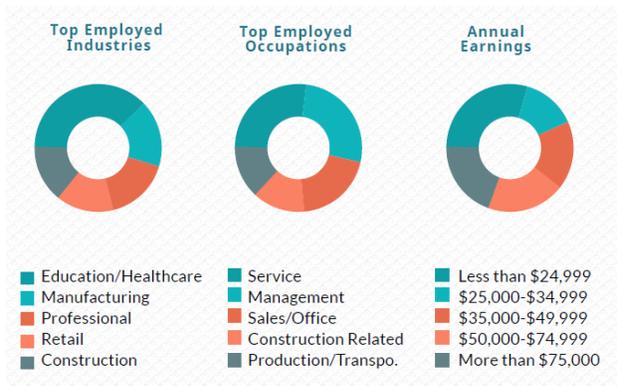
Through the WDB’s Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) grant, the WDB has become close partners with SCOE, DOR, and the North Bay Regional Center. Through the WDB’s work on the Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA), the WDB has been bringing together partners in Solano’s disability community in order to leverage and align services for individuals with disabilities. This work, coupled with the local planning process was found to have similar goals to the work of the Local Partnership Agreement (LPA). The WDB is now a core partner on Solano’s LPA. The county’s LPA is still in development. The WDB brings a focus on employment and employer engagement to the group and has been seen as a value-add to the process.

### ELL, Foreign Born, and Refugees

#### Demographics, Barriers to Employment, and Other Relevant Information

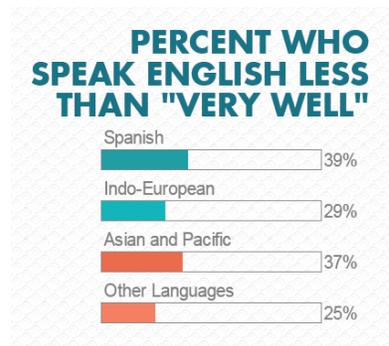
Although Solano County’s Limited English Proficiency (LEP) rate does not meet the threshold to require a section in the local plan about English Language Learners (ELL), foreign-born, and refugees; the WDB and its partners believe that this is an important target population to serve effectively. Due to a growing economy and the rise in cost-of-living throughout the Bay Area, the LEP population has been steadily growing in recent years and included over 500 ELL utilizing Title II and Adult Education services. The recent North Bay Fires and subsequent affordable housing shortage has also contributed to the LEP population rise in Solano County. This increase in LEP population has created a shortage of ELL adult school instructors and available space to serve the population, which already struggle more with LEP due to age and proficiency of learning a second language.

About 20% of the population in Solano are immigrants. Of those immigrants, approximately 21,000 are unauthorized immigrants, with the largest home country of Mexico (accounts for 16,000 of Solano’s estimated unauthorized immigrants). Foreign-born individuals have a higher rate of poverty than the general population at 11.9% vs. 9.7%. Yet, foreign-born individuals tend to seek post-secondary education at a higher rate. 57% of foreign-born individuals are enrolled in post-secondary education vs. 28% of the general population. Non-US citizen foreign-born individuals have a slightly higher rate of unemployment



than native individuals, while naturalized foreign-born individuals have a significantly lower rate of unemployment than either native or non-US citizen foreign-born individuals. Foreign-born individuals are employed in a variety of industries and occupations.

Barriers to employment include language differences with employers and the negative perceptions/stigmas associated with LEP job seekers. For those with a primary language other than English, approximately 30% speak English less than “very well.” This percentage is highest among individuals whose primary language is Spanish, followed by individuals whose primary language is within the Asian and Pacific languages. Due to a large Filipino population in Vallejo, Tagalog is the most common Asian language spoken in Solano County.



The LEP population in Solano has growing fears stemming from the current immigration political climate. This has created an environment where LEP individuals are not seeking and taking advantage of government programs that can assist them in addressing their barriers, as discussed by ELL stakeholders during the local planning process.

In addition, a number of foreign-born individuals in Solano County have advanced degrees in their home country, but are unable to utilize their licenses or degrees in the United States. Not being able to transfer their skill set to the United States creates additional employment barriers for our highly-skilled foreign-born population.

### *Gaps in Services*

More integrated LEP training and education workforce services are needed in Solano County, especially in the rural areas of the county. In FY2018, 600 individuals with a preferred language other than English access services through Solano’s AJCCs, over 500 of whom spoke Spanish. However, currently only Spanish-speaking individuals are available in the AJCCs to support LEP individuals, and that capability is limited. To enable increased accessibility, more translation service capabilities are needed in the AJCCs to allow staff to serve a wider variety of the ELL population.

The current LEP staff resources and bi-lingual capacity amongst the WDB and other service providers is currently inadequate to meet the employment, education, and training needs of Solano County’s growing ELL population. In particular bi-lingual staff resources for languages other than Spanish (i.e. Tagalog, Maradarin, and Farsi) were identified as non-existent in most organizations, and subsequently the adult schools have started developing para-educator programs to address this shortage. However, more outreach is needed amongst the community to identify individuals who speak languages other than Spanish and English and encourage them to become educators and service providers. Ultimately, more coordination amongst the service providers is needed to meet the growing demand for these LEP employment and training programs.

There is also needed improvement for LEP business supports in the community that will encourage and expand small business ownership and economic development for LEP populations. The Solano Hispanic Chamber of Commerce will partner with the WDB to explore establishing a one-stop center / website to assist Hispanic small business owners with resources and information to grow their businesses.

### *Outreach and Recruitment Strategies*

Title II and Adult Education training providers in Solano County provided English Language classes to over 500 individuals in FY2018. Connecting more effectively with Solano’s Adult Education providers is an immediate outreach and recruitment strategy opportunity. WDB staff are currently working with Adult Schools in Vallejo and Fairfield to provide onsite basic job search support and recruitment for WIOA programs. The WDB and Adult Education partners see this as a way to effectively connect and co-enroll individuals who may need both English Language acquisition and employment services.

Due to the current political climate, the WDB will focus outreach and recruitment efforts for the ELL and foreign-born population through sanctuary locations. The Adult Schools are sanctuary locations than many ELL visit for services. In addition, the WDB will explore partnerships with local faith-based organizations to conduct outreach in a safe environment for the LEP population. This will also reduce transportation barriers to service accessibility.

Amongst the ELL stakeholders in Solano County, it has been identified that the most effective means of outreach and communication about employment support services is spread through word of mouth. Through the ELL stakeholder group and other ELL partners, the Solano WDB will establish a network of support services and distribute information amongst key LEP community members in order to build trust among the LEP population and increase word of mouth referrals.

Partners also identified a need for increased bi-lingual collateral, forms, and publications amongst the service providers. Additionally, stronger bi-lingual messaging is needed by service providers across social media and other traditional outreach platforms. Increased access to bi-lingual materials, and outreach efforts will ultimately build stronger and more accessible partnerships amongst the resource service providers. The WDB will work with stakeholders such as the adult schools, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and other community-based organizations to identify and translate appropriate information for the LEP population.

Finally, there is a growing need to survey participants of actual needs to better serve the ELL population. Organizations who have programs currently in place may not be addressing the specific needs of the students. More outreach to ELL students is needed to allow the community to voice their needs for resources. Relationship building within the ELL community has proven to be successful in gaining program participants for service providers. Bonds are formed with the ELL community and service providers when individuals receive the needed support services and help spread the information back into their communities.

### *Local WDB Partner Engagement and Strategic LEP Service Delivery*

The WDB and Solano Adult School Consortium will be coordinate service delivery for the ELL and foreign-born population. As host of the Solano Small Business Development Center, the WDB will also work with the Solano Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to explore delivery of bilingual business consulting and entrepreneurship opportunities to portions of the ELL community.

There is a need to help bi-lingual students perceive their second language as a strength not only in the workplace, but in the community as well to assist ELL programs. Supporting students within the ELL community will give these students an advantage as they advance to post-secondary education and enter the workforce. Highlighting specific bi-lingual skills and workforce resources would be beneficial to the ELL community, as this would give a different perspective to the value of being bi-lingual and the

subsequent job opportunities. Through the WDB's systemic work with the K-12 system, the WDB will encourage ways to increase pride in bilingualism and highlight the business need for bilingual employees.

There is particularly a growing need for more bi-lingual individuals in Solano's demand-driven occupations. The WDB and adult schools will develop an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model, where ELL classes blended with in-demand technical skills training will offer a co-teaching dual learning environment that will foster more technical skill development and bi-lingual capabilities for the student. This approach will assist with greater career pathway development for ELL students.

WDB staff have experience aiding foreign-born individuals in translating their home country licenses and degrees into credentials here in the United States. The WDB will work with its training partners to explore strategies for high-level credentialing transfer for Solano's highly-skilled foreign born population.

Data sharing amongst partners will help bring awareness to the ELL communities growing needs along with the needed credential obtainment resources that can navigate ELL and foreign born individuals back into their chosen career paths or occupations. The WDB will work with partners to share effective data on geographic concentrations of the ELL population, as well as labor market information and outcomes data to aid in increased opportunities for Solano's ELL population.