

# Putting the East Bay to Work

*Sustainable Jobs for the Underemployed*

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East Bay Community Foundation



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for the East Bay Community Foundation



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# Table of Contents

Letter from Nicole Taylor . . . . .	5
Executive Summary . . . . .	6
<b>1</b> Introduction & Background . . . . .	10
<b>2</b> Economic Context . . . . .	14
<b>3</b> Target Populations & Regions . . . . .	16
<b>4</b> Target Industries . . . . .	24
Construction and Green Technology . . . . .	25
Health Care . . . . .	29
Logistics and International Trade . . . . .	31
Custom Manufacturing . . . . .	33
<b>5</b> Labor Unions . . . . .	36
<b>6</b> Training & Support . . . . .	38
<b>7</b> Asset Building . . . . .	46
<b>8</b> Recommendations . . . . .	50
<b>9</b> Conclusion . . . . .	62
References . . . . .	64
Appendix A. Stakeholder Roundtable Members . . . . .	65
Appendix B. Survey Respondents. . . . .	66
Appendix C. Employer Survey Instrument . . . . .	67

To Readers of This Study —

As President and CEO of the East Bay Community Foundation, I am very pleased to introduce this important and unique study on urban workforce development for East Bay residents who face extraordinary barriers to employment.

We are committed to providing leadership and leveraging assets to speed the transformation of low-income, disadvantaged, impoverished, underserved, and underrepresented people in the East Bay. We are honored to serve as the catalyst for the project, bringing together stakeholders to address this vital issue.

Those targeted in this study — adults who have been incarcerated, individuals with limited English skills, and young people recently aged out of the foster care system — all face challenges in securing high-quality, sustainable employment. They also present important strengths and assets as employees, and their successful participation as long-term employees is important not only for their own well-being and that of their families, but also for the well-being of our communities.

The study identified best practices for employers, training institutions, community-based service providers, and policymakers to support employment success among the targeted groups. It has an emphasis on industries in urban settings — industries with capacity to provide sustainable and accessible jobs for these particular populations.

As a collaborative project, the study was made possible by the efforts of a diverse collective of individuals and organizations. We are grateful to the Ford Foundation for its generous financial support, which enabled us to conduct and publish this research. We are also thankful to community leaders who participated in the Stakeholder Roundtable and partnered with us in directing the research, shaping and implementing the data collection process, and synthesizing the results.

These diverse stakeholders included employers, labor representatives, community college directors and deans, adult school directors, Workforce Investment Board leaders, and nonprofit executive directors. It also included members of the target populations who generously agreed to participate in focus groups. We are especially appreciative of the nearly 40 employers and 39 unions for the data they contributed to the study, for their willingness to share their perspectives, and for their active participation in the work to connect disadvantaged East Bay residents with quality jobs.

Finally, we at the East Bay Community Foundation hope this research inspires and informs actionable solutions. By focusing efforts of the many stakeholders involved — from employers to trainers to service providers to community investors — we believe the project will result in the creation of effective and impactful programs that enable target populations to secure and maintain meaningful employment over the long term.

Kindest regards,



Nicole Taylor  
President & CEO  
East Bay Community Foundation



Nicole Taylor, President & CEO,  
East Bay Community Foundation

# Executive Summary

***“We must advance career opportunities for those who face multiple barriers to economic security. And these opportunities must be developed and implemented collaboratively by employers, training institutions, and nonprofit service providers to succeed. Working together, we can ensure meaningful employment for all members of our community.” — Nicole Taylor, President & CEO, East Bay Community Foundation***

## Study Overview

Achieving quality employment that allows for economic security in the high-cost Bay Area is a challenge for a significant proportion of inner city East Bay residents. Certain populations face particularly daunting barriers to securing meaningful jobs at living wages. In the East Bay, three specific groups of individuals have been identified as facing particularly significant challenges, namely 1) formerly incarcerated individuals, 2) adults with limited proficiency in English, and 3) young adults who have recently aged out of the foster care system. Due to legal status issues, limited work experience, lack of English skills, and/or multiple support service needs, members of these three groups are often excluded from meaningful job opportunities. This is particularly true in the current difficult economic context of high general unemployment and limited business growth expected over the short term. Within the East Bay, a high concentration of target population members live in the urban centers of Oakland in Alameda County and Richmond in Contra Costa County.

With the generous support of the Ford Foundation, the East Bay Community Foundation launched the Urban Workforce Development Study in Fall 2008 to research the employment barriers faced by members of the three target populations, and to identify strategies that will improve their access to opportunities for quality employment and asset building over the long-term. To guide the research process, staff from the foundation’s Department of Public & Private Partnerships reached out to key individuals and organizations and recruited a diverse Stakeholder Roundtable, with representatives from employers in the East Bay; service delivery organizations that work with the target populations; community colleges and adult education schools; job training providers; business assistance organizations and chambers of commerce; labor unions; and Workforce Investment Boards. Leaders and organizations from the cities of Oakland and Richmond were specifically targeted.

The East Bay Community Foundation convened and facilitated four meetings of the roundtable over nine months. After lively discussion, the stakeholders identified four industry clusters most likely to provide sustainable employment opportunities for the target populations: 1) construction and green technology, 2) health care, 3) logistics and international trade, and 4) custom manufacturing of food and other products. Next, survey instruments were developed to collect data from businesses, labor unions, service delivery organizations, and sustainable training providers, specifically community colleges and adult schools. A total of 76 comprehensive surveys were completed for the study, including 37 employers, 39 labor unions (representing 250 additional employers), seven training institutions, and 23 service providers. The large number of employers participating in this study makes the research unique in terms of the quantity and diversity of data gathered from East Bay businesses in the target industry clusters. Client focus groups were also conducted to collect information directly from members of the target populations regarding their barriers to employment, strengths as employees, support needs, and interest in specific industry cluster jobs. Information was gathered about best practices in employer-based asset-building support for employees as well.

The Stakeholder Roundtable met multiple times during the research process to develop, present, and review survey findings, refine the research focus, and prioritize resulting recommendations. The end product of this collaborative effort is this report, which describes the employment-related challenges faced by the three target populations in the East Bay; identifies several local business clusters expected to have meaningful entry-level job opportunities over the long term; outlines recommendations and best practices for maximizing job readiness and establishing effective outreach and partnerships; and highlights incentives to connect target populations with employers, promote job retention, and increase career paths.



Apprentices at Cypress  
Mandela Training Center  
learning solar panel  
installation techniques

## Key Findings

Key findings of this study include:

- **Formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth face significant barriers to employment.** Formerly incarcerated individuals are most impacted by the fact that many jobs categorically exclude anyone with a felony criminal record. For adults with limited English proficiency, lack of language skills limits many aspects of employment, from applying for jobs through securing promotions. Aged-out foster youth typically lack work experience and also need significant support to meet their basic needs in addition to support to succeed in the workplace.
- **Target population members also bring important strengths as employees.** Many members of the target populations are exceptionally motivated to work. Moreover, their specific skills and characteristics can contribute to workforce quality in a variety of ways, ranging from increasing cultural diversity, to fostering employee dedication and enthusiasm, to promoting community well-being. In addition, employers can benefit from tax credits and other concrete incentives for hiring from the target populations.
- **Entry-level jobs appropriate for target population members are available in the industries of construction and green technology, health care, logistics and international trade, and custom manufacturing.** These four industry clusters are expected to be strong prospects for sustainable employment in the East Bay over the long term. Desired employee qualifications vary by position and industry, but all four industries offer employment opportunities that match the skills, experience, and interests of members of the target populations. Many of these jobs include strong potential for further training and promotion.
- **Employers in the target industry clusters are willing to hire members of the target populations.** Nearly all employers surveyed were open to the idea of hiring members of the target populations, and many noted that doing so could benefit their businesses and communities.
- **Employers need information, support, and incentives to ensure that target population members can succeed as employees.** Many employers have limited experience or information about the target populations, and most expressed a need for additional support or incentives in order to fully support target population members as employees. Most employers were willing to work with outside training institutions and service providers in order to provide additional support to employees.
- **A variety of job training opportunities are available to qualify target population members for employment and promotions in the target industries.** Community colleges and adult schools offer a diverse array of job-related training, ranging from job readiness and basic skills, to English as a Second Language and citizenship classes, to industry-specific certificate programs. Most of these training opportunities are affordable and accessible to members of the target populations. Labor unions also offer training opportunities in some industries.
- **A variety of support services are available to help target population members succeed in employment and meet their basic needs.** Community-based service providers offer support for members of the target populations in a wide variety of areas, including case management, basic needs assistance, child care, and transportation, as well as employment-specific support such as assistance with applying for jobs and job coaching. Additional support is available through some employers, training institutions, and labor unions.
- **Asset building is another important component of long-term economic stability for target population members.** Programs to help employees manage finances and build assets can promote long-term employment success and economic stability.

# Executive Summary *continued*

## Best Practices

Building on these findings, a number of recommendations for best practices related to employment for the target populations were identified. These recommendations were compiled and then reviewed and discussed by the members of the Stakeholder Roundtable. The final slate of recommendations included detailed suggestions for partnerships, changes to practices, and specific support strategies, including suggestions specific to particular target populations. The recommendations are broadly summarized as follows:



Xuan Mai, medical assistant graduate of the Allied Healthcare Sector program (The Unity Council, Merritt College and Community Health Clinic Partnership), is now employed at Native American Health Center

- **Best Practices for Employers** addressed desired hiring incentives, including tax credits and related financial incentives; job coaching and other types of outside support; and community recognition. Information about the target populations was identified as necessary to help employers support target population members as employees. Partnerships with training institutions and service providers were also identified as tools to enhance target population employment success. In addition, changes to business practices were suggested that could increase accessibility of the application, training, and promotion processes for target population members.
- **Best Practices for Training Institutions** included a variety of effective approaches for meeting the training needs of target population members, including incorporating basic skills into industry-specific job training, developing soft skills, creating opportunities to earn formal certificates and obtain structured work experience, and increasing the affordability and accessibility of training opportunities.
- **Best Practices for Service Providers** focused on supporting members of the target populations in both their employment-related needs as well as their basic needs. Areas of focus included introducing different job opportunities and industries to clients; developing job contacts; providing ongoing job coaching for individuals who have obtained employment; and educating employers about concrete incentives and more intangible benefits of hiring from the target populations.
- **Best Practices for Policymakers** emphasized prioritizing support for the employment of target population members in outreach activities, policy development, and system reform.

*“The Stakeholder Roundtable provided a critical forum for dialogue between service providers, employers, and community colleges. It helped us to understand one another’s vantage point and consider new ways of working together that will benefit both the employers and potential employees.” — Sam Cobbs, Executive Director, First Place for Youth*



The Stakeholders Roundtable included leaders from the private industry, labor union, social service, community college, adult education, and public policy sectors

## Importance of Partnership

Partnerships between employers, training institutions, and service providers can facilitate the development of training programs that meet employers' needs and lead to job opportunities for target population members, and can create systems of on- and off-the-job support that enable employees to succeed in the workplace, achieve financial stability, and pursue long-term career development. In many cases, appropriate training programs, support services, and concrete incentives already exist, but the next step is to create sustainable connections between these supports and the employers and target populations who can benefit from them.

The objective of the Urban Workforce Development Study was to serve as a blueprint for prioritizing workforce development strategies in the East Bay, and to identify best practices to be implemented by a variety of

stakeholders that will enable individuals from the target populations to secure and succeed in sustainable and high-quality employment. The specific recommendations for employers, training institutions, service providers, and policymakers serve to outline important next steps needed to advance the employment opportunities for members of the target populations. The study can also be used by philanthropy, government, and other East Bay community partners to identify investment opportunities to promote sustainable target population employment. Perhaps most importantly, it is hoped that this study will serve as an impetus for increased communication and collaboration among the diverse community stakeholders that currently or potentially play a role in the employment of formerly incarcerated individuals, limited English-speaking adults, and aged-out foster youth.

***An overarching finding from this Urban Workforce Development Study, reflected in the recommendations and best practices for all groups, was that communication and partnership among all stakeholders are vital to successfully connecting formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth to sustainable long-term employment.***

# 1

## Introduction & Background

*“The job market in the United States has shifted dramatically over the past three decades, leaving growing numbers of Americans chronically unemployed or trapped in low-wage jobs with no future. Youth, immigrants, and ex-offenders are among the most vulnerable. Expanding the employment opportunities of low-wage workers in the United States requires effective workforce development strategies that are responsive to their needs, and provide access to quality training and jobs that increase their earning potential.”* — Economic Fairness and Opportunity Program, Ford Foundation

### Impetus for the Study

Acquiring quality employment that leads to economic security in the high-cost Bay Area continues to be a challenge for nearly 25% of Alameda County residents and 21% of Contra Costa County residents. According to the East Bay Economic Development Alliance’s *2007 East Bay Indicators Report*, a single individual in Alameda County needs to earn a full \$23,240 annually or wages of \$11 per hour to meet basic needs. For a single-parent family of three, with one adult and two children, annual earnings of \$50,907 — equivalent to \$37 per hour — are needed to meet basic needs.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, a large proportion of East Bay residents earn far less than the minimum required for self-sufficiency. In 2006, over 588,000 East Bay residents, comprising nearly 25% of the total population, lived in households with annual incomes less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Line.<sup>2</sup> The recent economic downturn has exacerbated this problem, pushing even more East Bay residents below the poverty line.

Certain populations face particularly daunting barriers to finding meaningful jobs at living wages. Individuals with limited education or literacy, people of color, and those who lack work experience all face systematic barriers to securing sustainable employment. Among these disadvantaged groups, certain subgroups face even greater challenges to finding meaningful work. In the East Bay, three specific groups have been identified: 1) formerly incarcerated individuals, 2) adults with limited proficiency in English, and 3) young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. The East Bay has substantial and growing populations of these three groups, particularly in the cities of Oakland and Richmond. Ex-offenders, immigrants, and youth are often excluded

from meaningful job opportunities because of legal status issues, limited work experience, limited English skills, and/or multiple support service needs. Identifying resources, partnerships, and strategies that can facilitate sustainable living wage employment with career path opportunities for members of these three groups is vital to ensuring both their own self-sufficiency and a healthy and economically vibrant East Bay community. This task has become even more pressing in the current economic climate, as high general unemployment makes it even more difficult for individuals with multiple barriers to employment to find and retain jobs.

With the generous support of the Ford Foundation, the East Bay Community Foundation launched the Urban Workforce Development Study in Fall 2008 in order to research the employment barriers faced by members of the three target populations, and to identify strategies that will expand their livelihood options and improve access to opportunities for quality employment and asset building. Best practices in the workforce development field indicate that sector-based strategies are most effective, where job training is designed and implemented at the local level in close collaboration with employers from targeted industries that have strong employment opportunities for disadvantaged populations. These sector-based approaches promote efficiencies and facilitate the training of large numbers of individuals, while ensuring that trainees gain skills that closely match employers’ current needs, thus facilitating successful job placement and retention. Consequently, the East Bay Community Foundation utilized a sector-based approach to seeking workforce development opportunities for the target populations.



**The Stakeholders**  
**Roundtable guided study**  
**design, data collection,**  
**and development of best**  
**practices recommendations**

clusters about effective approaches, benefits, and available support and incentives related to hiring and promoting members of the target populations. Finally, it is hoped that this study will clarify

This study builds on prior workforce development studies undertaken in the East Bay, particularly *Taking Stock of Oakland's Economy*, a study by McKinsey & Company that was published by the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce in April 2007. *Taking Stock* identified several key employment sectors in the East Bay with promise for job growth and long-term economic benefit to the community. Working from the findings of that study, the Urban Workforce Development Study looks at several of the business clusters identified by the McKinsey & Company report through the specific lens of identifying opportunities for members of the target populations of formerly incarcerated individuals, limited English proficient adults, and aged-out foster youth. The current study also focuses on employment opportunities in the cities of Oakland and Richmond, two large urban centers in the East Bay with significant representation from the target populations and high poverty rates in general.

Specifically, the Urban Workforce Development Study examines what barriers members of the target populations face in accessing quality employment in the priority industry clusters; how partners in job training, social service, business assistance, and education can support business owners or employers to hire from the target populations; and how business owners and employers can partner with support service providers and training institutions to help employees from the target groups maintain employment and position themselves for promotions.

The purpose of this study is to serve as a blueprint for prioritizing workforce development strategies and model programs to be implemented by nonprofit service providers, training institutions, business groups, and government that will enable individuals from the target populations to secure and retain quality employment that leads to sustainable economic security. In addition, this report is intended to inform employers in identified industry

funding opportunities for philanthropy and other community investment partners that will result in successful, sustainable employment and asset building for formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth in the East Bay.

### Research Process

The East Bay Community Foundation served as an ideal convener for the Urban Workforce Development Study, due to its unique community leadership role and ability to bring together disparate stakeholders from the business, labor, nonprofit, government, and philanthropic communities. To guide the research process, staff from the foundation's Department of Public & Private Partnerships reached out to key individuals and organizations and recruited a Stakeholder Roundtable comprising representatives from a variety of key groups, specifically targeting leaders and organizations from the cities of Oakland and Richmond. Participating stakeholders included representatives from: employers from industry clusters identified in the *Taking Stock* report; service delivery organizations that work with the target populations; community colleges and adult education schools; job training providers; business assistance organizations and chambers of commerce; labor unions; and the Oakland and Richmond Workforce Investment Boards. Please see Appendix A for the Stakeholder Roundtable Membership.

The East Bay Community Foundation convened and facilitated four meetings of the roundtable over nine months. At the first convening, stakeholders identified industry clusters most likely to provide strong employment opportunities over the long term for members of the target populations, and agreed to facilitate and participate in data collection for the study. Subsequently, three survey instruments were developed to collect data from businesses, service delivery organizations, and training providers — specifically community colleges and adult schools.

# 1 Introduction & Background *continued*

For businesses, the survey explored a variety of areas related to employment of target population members, including:

- A current snapshot of projected business growth and entry-level job opportunities;
- Wages, benefits, and promotional opportunities for entry-level jobs;
- Level of English required in entry-level jobs;
- Level of education and experience required in entry-level jobs;
- On-site support provided by the employer for employees;
- Outside resources used by the employer to support employees;
- Training needs identified by the employer;
- Willingness to hire from the targeted populations;
- Challenges to hiring from the targeted populations; and
- Incentives that would motivate the employer to hire from the target populations.

Appropriate businesses in the target industries with potential for entry-level employment opportunities in or near Oakland and Richmond were then identified and surveyed by members of the roundtable. Labor unions were also surveyed to provide additional insight into barriers and avenues to employment for the target population in the identified sectors.

For service providers, the survey included questions about the employment needs of target population members, including:

- Barriers to being hired, retaining jobs, and obtaining promotions among members of the target populations;
- Their strengths as employees;
- Their employment support needs;
- Services currently available;
- Best practices in employment support; and
- Interest among the target populations in employment in the identified industries.

Appropriate service providers were identified and surveyed by members of the roundtable. In addition, several focus groups were conducted to collect information directly from members of the target populations regarding their barriers to employment, strengths as employees, support needs, and interest in specific industry cluster jobs.

For training providers, the survey explored general and specific employment training, including:

- Currently available training in general job readiness and soft skills;
- Training specific to the identified industry sectors;
- Specific training provided for employment in other industry sectors;
- Training-related and general support available to students; and
- Best practices in job training for the target populations and targeted industries.

The study specifically targeted training institutions funded through an ongoing system of attendance-based compensation, rather than those dependent on one-time grant funding likely to be less sustainable over the long term. Thus community colleges and adult schools were identified as the priority training institutions due to their established infrastructure; long-term financial sustainability; affordability to trainee; flexibility to update curriculum with changes in job skill needs; and quality control via the accreditation process. Surveys were



Students receiving on-the-job training in repairing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems

collected from both community college districts and adult schools that serve residents of Alameda and Contra Costa counties, where Oakland and Richmond are located, respectively.

In addition to the surveys of employers, labor unions, service providers, target population members, and training institutions, information was also collected about best practices in employer-based asset-building support for employees.

The Stakeholder Roundtable met multiple times during the research process to develop, present, and review survey findings, refine the research focus, and prioritize resulting recommendations. Roundtable members identified the key focus areas for research, coordinated and conducted data collection, shared and discussed their findings, and worked to develop and refine recommendations for improving the employment prospects of members of the target groups.

The end product of this collaborative effort is this report, which describes the employment-related challenges faced by the three target populations (formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited proficiency in English, and aged-out foster youth) in the East Bay; identifies

***“This report is particularly informative because we were able to secure candid and comprehensive data from a diverse and large number of employers. The ability of our stakeholders to procure this data was invaluable.”***

**— Darien Louie,  
Director of Public &  
Private Partnerships,  
East Bay Community  
Foundation**

several local business clusters (construction and green technology, health care, logistics and trade, and custom manufacturing) expected to have meaningful entry-level job opportunities for members of the target populations over the long term; and outlines recommendations for maximizing job readiness, establishing effective outreach, partnerships, and incentives to connect target populations with employers, and

promoting job retention and promotion among the target populations. This report and these recommendations can serve as a blueprint for effective workforce development efforts targeting the priority populations of formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth in the East Bay.



Individual tutoring to improve math skills

# 2

## Economic Context

***“In tough economic times like these, where quality jobs are hard to find, it is more important than ever to identify effective strategies for helping individuals with barriers to employment find and keep jobs.”*** — Jean Ross, Executive Director, California Budget Project

When this study was launched in Fall 2008, the United States had recently entered an unprecedented period of economic turmoil and uncertainty. The subprime mortgage crisis, followed by the large-scale collapse of the global finance industry, plunged the country into its deepest recession since World War II. Across the country, business growth stagnated, unemployment rose, and personal and corporate bankruptcies grew.

Locally, the East Bay has seen increasing layoffs and rising unemployment as a result of the ongoing recession. In Alameda County, the unemployment rate in February 2009 was an estimated 9.7%, compared to an annual average unemployment rate of 6.2% for the county in 2008 and only 4.7% in 2007. Similarly, in Contra Costa County, the February 2009 estimated unemployment rate was a high 9.3%, compared to a 6.2% annual average in 2008 and 4.7% in 2007.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the East Bay region continues to experience significant job losses. During the fourth quarter of 2008, a total of 5,700 jobs were eliminated in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties combined. From a longer-term perspective, the two counties lost a total of 42,400 jobs between December 2007 and December 2008.<sup>4</sup> A number of important East Bay employers have implemented significant layoffs in 2008 and 2009, including financial services companies such as JPMorgan Chase and E-Loan, tech and biotech manufacturers such as Logitech and Lam Research, and various others such as DHL and the Claremont Hotel. In addition, national companies with a substantial East Bay presence have declared bankruptcy, including Mervyns and Circuit City, while others have merged or consolidated causing significant local job loss.

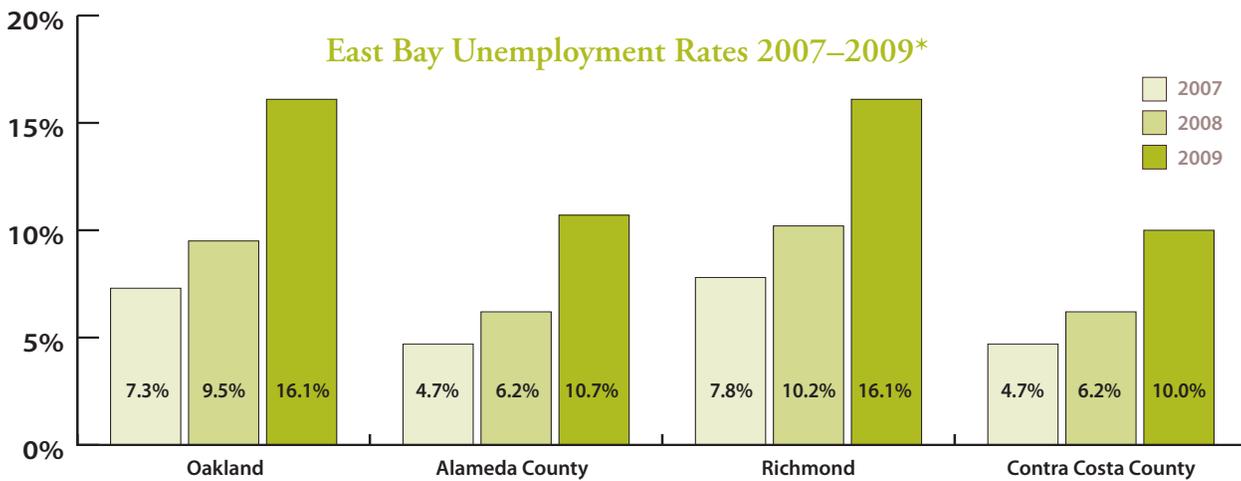
Exacerbating the problems of the recent layoffs and high unemployment rates, the East Bay has also been particularly hard-hit by the subprime mortgage crisis, with the highest numbers of notices of default and foreclosures

in the Bay Area. Approximately 20 to 25% of all homes in Contra Costa County and 15 to 20% of homes in Alameda County are currently financed with high-risk mortgage products. Up to a third of these homeowners may ultimately lose their homes, with devastating impacts for both owner-occupants and renters.<sup>5</sup>

While the East Bay region as a whole has struggled in the current economic crisis, the cities of Oakland and Richmond have experienced particularly severe impacts. The January 2009 unemployment rate in Oakland was a staggering 14.1%, more than one-and-a-half times the already high 9.3% rate for Alameda County as a whole. Similarly, the City of Richmond had an unemployment rate over 15% in January 2009, compared to 9.3% for all of Contra Costa County.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, both Oakland and Richmond have high concentrations of lower-income residents, including formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth — all populations with limited savings and support available to weather a sustained economic downturn.

This extremely challenging economic climate is expected to persist for at least the next year, and likely longer, with obvious detrimental consequences for employment across all segments of the East Bay community. Members of the three target populations for this study, who already face substantial employment barriers during good economic times, are likely to be disproportionately affected by the loss of employment opportunities resulting from this economic downturn.

***“The economy is affecting my ability to get and maintain a job, now more than ever... Who would want to hire a felon when there are 100 other non-felons applying for the same job?”*** — Formerly incarcerated individual



\* Annual unemployment rates are provided for 2007 and 2008. The annual rate as of May 31 is provided for 2009.

Further clouding the economic outlook, California continues to struggle with overwhelming state budget deficits. The budget agreement finally passed by the State Legislature and signed by the Governor in February 2009 included \$14.9 billion in spending cuts, \$12.5 billion in revenue increases, and \$5.4 billion in new borrowing. Significant funding reductions were imposed on K-14 education, with potentially serious impacts for community colleges and adult schools that provide job training. Funding for MediCal, child care, and public transit — all public resources on which many members of the target populations depend — was also cut. Moreover, the tax increases included to balance the state budget, particularly the increase in sales tax, will disproportionately impact low-income Californians, including members of the target populations. Further deep cuts crossing all areas of state services are expected in the next few months as well. Due to structural imbalances between state revenues and expenditures, exacerbated by the recent drop in property values and the ongoing recession, California's major budget problems are expected to continue in upcoming years.<sup>7,8</sup>

The one positive note in terms of the current economic context is the federal economic stimulus package passed by Congress and signed by President Obama in February 2009. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) is expected to provide California and Californians with an estimated \$50.7 billion in increased funding for state programs and individual benefits over the short term.<sup>9</sup> Several elements relate directly to workforce development, including substantially increased funding for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training and employment services for adult job training, youth job training and summer jobs (up to age 24), and training for growth and emerging employment sectors. An expanded Work Opportunity Tax Credit for employers who hire unemployed veterans and disconnected youth is included as well. The ARRA also includes increased funding for

K-12 and higher education and increases in federal college financial aid, both of benefit to community college job training programs and students.

Other components of the stimulus package will benefit members of the target populations individually or through support services that facilitate employment, such as increases to the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, a new refundable Making Work Pay tax credit, increased federal Medicaid funding, larger community services block grants, and expanded child care and development block grants as well as increased funding for Head Start and Early Head Start. Finally, the ARRA includes significant funding for infrastructure projects that are designed to boost employment activity in the green technology, construction, and logistics industry sectors. Particular areas of infrastructure investment include: energy conservation, renewable energy, and weatherization projects; highway, road, rail, and port infrastructure upgrades; capital investments in public transit; and upgrades to wastewater and drinking water systems.<sup>10,11,12</sup>

Overall, the complexity of the current local, state, and national economic situation introduces significant uncertainty into workforce development planning for the immediate future. The ongoing recession and state budget crisis will continue to dampen the employment activities of businesses and reduce job opportunities for members of the target populations. At the same time, the new federal stimulus package promises to mitigate some of the problems created by the state budget cuts and recession, while also expanding jobs in certain sectors related to infrastructure development. Workforce development efforts will need to account for these short- to mid-term complicating factors, while simultaneously retaining a focus on the priority objective of developing partnerships and best practices to improve the employment prospects of members of the target populations over the long term.

# 3

## Target Populations & Regions

*“Creating pathways to high-quality jobs for people with significant barriers to employment will help us all to become and remain economically secure, and help our communities to be more competitive in today’s regional and global marketplaces.”*

— Roger Clay, President, Insight Center for Community Economic Development

### Target Populations

Three target populations for this study were selected because of the special challenges they face in finding meaningful employment, particularly jobs that offer living wages, benefits, and opportunities for promotion. These target groups include: 1) formerly incarcerated individuals, 2) adults with limited proficiency in English, and 3) young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. These three groups have substantial and growing representation in the East Bay, particularly in the cities of Oakland and Richmond.

The key focus of the current study, in contrast to prior East Bay workforce studies, was to hone in on job opportunities specifically for these disadvantaged groups, and to identify strategies to encourage employers to hire and promote members of these populations. For each target group, data were collected from local service providers about the key employment issues affecting the populations they served. In addition, focus groups were conducted with members of the target groups to directly solicit their perspectives on employment challenges. The findings from these surveys and focus groups follow.

### Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

#### *Demographics*

In Alameda County there were 3,721 adult parolees and 17,663 adults on probation as of June 2005, as well as 259 youth parolees and 1,859 juveniles on probation, according to the East Bay Community Foundation’s *East Bay Community Assessment: 2008 Update*. In Contra Costa County, there were 1,547 adult parolees.<sup>13</sup> Many of these individuals lived in Oakland or Richmond before incarceration and are therefore released back to these areas upon reentry, leading to an ongoing influx of formerly incarcerated individuals to Richmond and Oakland. In fact, as of March 2009, 52% of Alameda County parolees and probationers were living in Oakland.

The formerly incarcerated population in the East Bay is overwhelmingly male, and predominantly African-American, with substantial white and Latino representation as well. In Alameda County, parolees and probationers were 56% black, 20% white, 17% Hispanic, and 2% Asian or Pacific Islander as of March 2009.<sup>14</sup> Most are 18 to 35 years old. Nearly all are very low-income, and many struggle to obtain and maintain stable housing. Finding meaningful employment is particularly vital for this re-entry population, as most return from jail or prison to their former neighborhoods where they are at high risk of returning to criminal activities if legal work and positive alternatives are unavailable.

#### *Barriers to Employment*

By far the greatest barrier to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals, regardless of specific job requirements, is that many employers categorically will not hire anyone with a felony criminal record. In some cases, state law or accreditation guidelines prohibit businesses from employing individuals with felony convictions for certain positions; in other cases, businesses choose to exclude those with a criminal record from jobs because of concerns about liability and employee and customer safety. Many individuals with criminal records state that when they list a felony conviction on a job application, they never get called in for an interview. Sometimes individuals with criminal convictions are able to qualify for temporary jobs without being required to disclose their criminal record, but when they become eligible for conversion to permanent positions, a background check is required and they lose their jobs, regardless of whether they have received very positive performance

*“If I put the conviction on an application, they won’t call back; it’s that simple.” — Formerly incarcerated individual*



Formerly incarcerated individual celebrating his son's promotion to seventh grade

which complicates efforts to establish economic self-sufficiency. Conditions and restrictions of parole can also make it difficult to meet employers' expectations in terms of shift hours and other job requirements. Some individuals have had their driver's licenses suspended, limiting their eligibility for certain types of jobs.

Formerly incarcerated individuals also face barriers to employment due to their struggles to meet their basic needs. Few have financial savings or strong social support

reviews. Even when employers do not have a strict policy against hiring individuals with criminal records, many will choose to hire other candidates first, particularly in a down economy when they can choose from many job applicants. Furthermore, individuals with criminal records are often less likely to be promoted than other workers.

Adding to the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals, some employers are not aware of the legal restrictions on what they are allowed to ask about the criminal records of job applicants. For example, applicants are not legally required to disclose felony convictions that are more than seven years old, but some employers will ask regardless. Also, sometimes information provided to employers through commercial background check companies is not legally allowed to be considered in employment decisions. Job applicants with criminal records are also often unclear about their legal rights regarding disclosure of past involvement with the criminal justice system.

Other factors related to incarceration create additional barriers to employment. Re-entering individuals often have gaps in their employment records due to periods of incarceration. Those who are parents have often accumulated child support debt during incarceration, leading to garnishment of their wages upon re-entry,

networks, and many lack education and job skills. As a result, many re-entering individuals struggle with unstable housing or homelessness, lack of transportation, and lack of child care. Due to their criminal records, they are ineligible for some public benefit programs related to subsidized housing, income supplementation, and other supports. Some face mental health problems or are in recovery from substance addiction, creating additional challenges to securing and maintaining employment if appropriate outside support is not available.

In recognition of the importance of employment for individuals with criminal records, several governmental programs exist to encourage employers to hire from this population. The most popular of these are tax credits for hiring individuals with convictions, and bonds to insure employers for the wages paid to individuals with criminal records in order to reduce the risk to businesses if employees must be terminated for dishonesty. Tax credits and bonds could mitigate some employers' concerns about hiring formerly incarcerated individuals, but many employers are unfamiliar with these programs.

*"I get hired as a temp, but fired [if they offer to] convert me to regular employment because of the background check. That's how it works." — Formerly incarcerated individual*

### 3 Target Populations & Regions *continued*

#### *Strengths as Employees*

Re-entering individuals present a number of strengths as employees. Many are highly motivated to work, at almost any type of job, viewing employment as the opportunity for a second chance to establish a positive and self-sufficient life. Most are able-bodied and well-

qualified for jobs that are physically demanding, and many have obtained skills during incarceration such as carpentry or mechanics. Tax incentives

can subsidize employers' costs of hiring individuals with criminal records, and bonding can often insure nearly the entire cost of wages paid to these individuals. Finally, the community benefits of employment for re-entering individuals are numerous, including increased economic productivity, reduced dependence on public benefits, and improved public safety through lower recidivism rates.

***"If you give me a job, I will work. I will be a strong performer. All I want is for an employer to give me a chance."*** — Formerly incarcerated individual

#### **Adults with Limited English Proficiency**

##### *Demographics*

The East Bay has a large and diverse population of immigrants, many of whom have limited proficiency in English. According to the East Bay Community Foundation's *East Bay Community Assessment: 2008 Update*, the East Bay Latino and Asian immigrant population has increased dramatically in recent years, with an average of 9,819 legal immigrants coming to Alameda County and 4,038 legal immigrants coming to Contra Costa County each year from 1990 to 1999.<sup>15</sup> Because immigrant populations are typically undercounted in official population statistics, there are likely even larger numbers of immigrants in the East Bay than reflected in official data. Both Oakland and Richmond have experienced growth in their immigrant populations, particularly as "second-wave" immigrants have come to join their U.S.-based relatives, choosing to settle in areas where they can access existing familial and cultural support networks as well as immigrant social service and employment infrastructure. Oakland is considered to be one of the most diverse cities in the nation, with over 150 distinct languages spoken by its residents.

Most adults with limited English proficiency (LEP) in the East Bay are Latino or Asian.<sup>16</sup> Community-based agencies that serve East Bay immigrants note that Latino immigrants are primarily from Mexico and Central America (including Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua), with some from South America as well. Asian immigrants are primarily from Southeast Asia (including Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand), with some from China as well.

Many East Bay adults with limited English abilities are primary breadwinners, often supporting multigenerational households that include both children and seniors.

#### *Barriers to Employment*

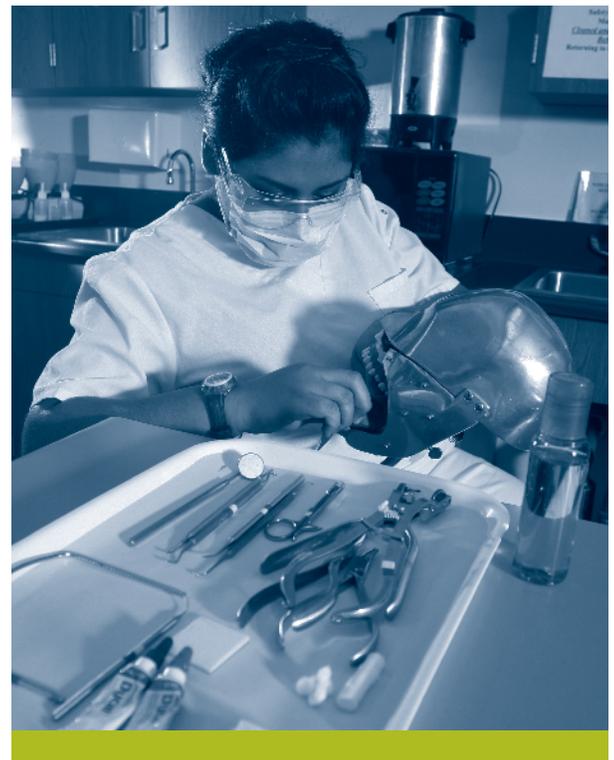
The primary barrier to employment for LEP adults is their limited ability to speak, understand, read, and write in English. Lack of English proficiency can be a barrier to finding out about job opportunities, successfully completing job applications and interviews, being selected for hiring, and receiving promotions.

Hiring processes often rely on forms and interviews that are only available in English.

Inability to communicate with supervisors and co-workers can lead to work

performance issues, and most promotions beyond entry-level jobs require English proficiency for communication with higher-level supervisors and customers. Furthermore, many adults with limited English proficiency are unable to successfully access training opportunities that would qualify them for initial employment or career advancement, because the training is conducted in English and/or requires English literacy.

***"A barrier I've faced is that certificates and degrees from Burma, my country of origin, are mostly not acceptable to employers here."*** — LEP adult



**Participant in a dental assistant training course at Contra Costa College**

Legal work status issues also create barriers to employment for some LEP adults. Some lack the documents needed to comply with tax and immigration regulations, severely limiting the jobs they are able to secure. For undocumented immigrants, fear of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) often leads to preference for low-wage, low-job-security, under-the-table employment because it allows reduced public visibility for themselves and their families. For similar reasons, many undocumented immigrants are reluctant to receive pay in the form of checks and are unwilling to use banks and other mainstream institutions that require identification or tax documents.

Many adults with limited English proficiency also face more general barriers to employment. Many do not have formal education. Some are certified for skilled work in their home countries, but lack the required certification for work in the same field in the U.S. Family matters may require immigrants to return to their home countries periodically, leading to large gaps in work history. Unfamiliarity with the U.S. education system often results in reluctance or failure to access available job training opportunities. Cultural differences can also create employment barriers, due to differences in social norms (such as avoidance of eye contact), values based in experiences in their countries of origin (such as strong preference for cash over check-based payment), or employer stereotypes about individuals from certain cultural backgrounds. Finally, the low incomes and limited savings of many immigrants create struggles with lack of transportation and lack of financial resources for items such as work clothing or training fees.

#### *Strengths as Employees*

LEP adults offer many strengths as employees. Most are very motivated to work and willing to learn on the job, and are open to working at almost any type of job, including jobs requiring long hours and difficult circumstances

***“We bring a lot of strengths as employees. We are motivated, honest, punctual, willing to work in any industry, and flexible about pay scale.”***  
— LEP adult

that are unappealing to other potential workers. Many adults with limited English skills have years of work experience in their home countries. Some are highly skilled at manual labor. Immigrant employees also benefit employers and the larger community by

bringing cultural and linguistic diversity to the workforce. Their skills in languages other than English can benefit employers by enabling improved communication with



First Place participant studying for his GED at the library

customers. In fact, bilingual and bicultural employees can be valuable assets for employers with diverse customer bases. LEP adults typically present few job performance problems; they are frequently hard-working and loyal employees who are appreciative to have employment to support their families.

#### **Aged-Out Foster Youth**

##### *Demographics*

The foster care system was designed to provide temporary care for children who have been abused and neglected by their birth families. Unfortunately, for many maltreated children, foster care becomes a more permanent care situation, as many children end up spending multiple years in foster care, often moving frequently between foster care placements. When those in foster care as teenagers turn 18 and reach the legal age of adulthood, they are generally required to exit the foster care system and find a way to support themselves independently. Unfortunately, many former foster youth are unprepared to take the initiative and become self-reliant, having spent many years in the foster care system where they had limited opportunity and capacity to make decisions and exercise independence. With limited education, skills, and social support, most of these young adults who have “aged-out” or “emancipated” from foster care struggle to achieve self-sufficiency.

In Alameda and Contra Costa Counties combined, approximately 400 young adults exited the foster care system each year between 2005 and 2008.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, there is currently a large demographic “bubble” of East Bay foster youth preparing to age out of care, with nearly 350 youth age 17 or older currently supervised by the Alameda County foster care system alone. In Alameda County, there are currently 1,750 former foster youth under age 24 who exited the system at age 18.<sup>18</sup> The cities

### 3 Target Populations & Regions *continued*

of Oakland and Richmond have particularly substantial populations of aged-out former foster youth. The young men and women who have recently aged out of foster care in the East Bay range in age from 18 to 24, with the majority 18 to 20 years old. Over 80% are African-American, and approximately 10% are Latino. Up to one third are parents, often young women supporting a young child as a single parent. Half have not completed high school, and few have any college experience. Employment for these young people is vital, as nearly all are supporting themselves independently with no assistance from family. Moreover, aged out foster youth typically have minimal or no savings or other assets to help them meet their day-to-day needs or to pay for longer-term human capital investments like higher education or job training.

strong employer references or significant job skills. Many lack the “soft” skills that are particularly important for maintaining employment, including knowing how to communicate with supervisors and how to resolve conflicts on the job.

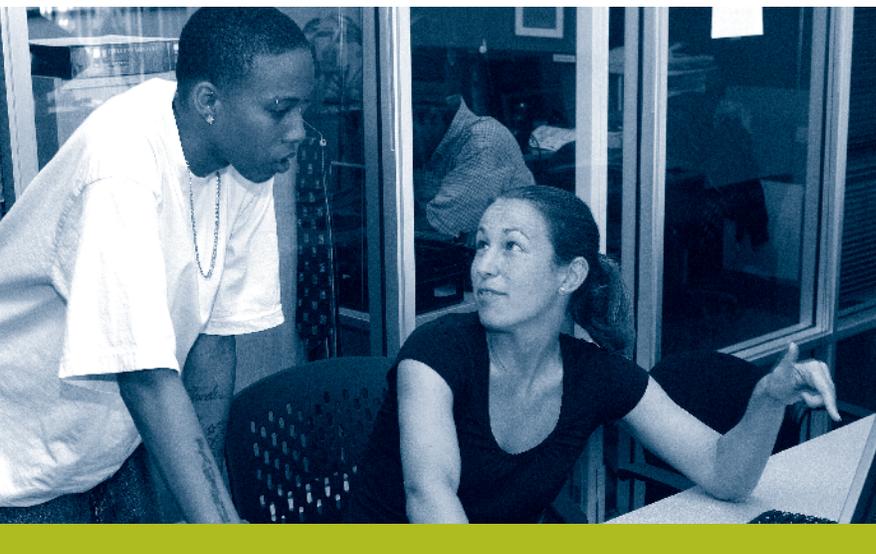
*“Transportation is a big barrier. Bus stipends help a lot, especially if the job is far away. If we don’t have jobs now, we don’t have income so we can’t pay for transportation to GET a job.”*  
— Aged-out foster youth

Former foster youths also have high rates of pregnancy and child bearing compared to young adults in the general population; by age 21, 71% of female former foster youths have been pregnant

at least once, and they choose to bear and raise children at twice the rate of other young adults.<sup>20</sup> The added responsibilities of parenthood, combined with inadequate child care, create an additional barrier to employment for former foster youth who are parents. Young mothers are often eligible for subsidized child care assistance, but frequently are required to have a job before they can apply for assistance, thus complicating the job search process.

Young adults who have aged out of foster care frequently lack strong social support networks, creating another barrier to employment. Many have few working role models and no job contacts. While many young adults in the general population rely on their families to provide housing, pay for college, or provide financial support, most aged-out foster youth have no choice but to be fully self-reliant. As a result, many struggle to meet their basic needs. These young adults often struggle with unstable housing or homelessness and lack of stable phone access. Most of these young people rely on public transit for transportation, which may be unreliable or limit employment locations. They often have little experience with saving and budgeting, though these skills are vital for independent economic survival. Finally, as survivors of abuse and neglect, some former foster youth have mental health issues that require ongoing support.

Typical of many young adults, many aged-out foster youths are attracted to jobs that offer immediate high wages, preferring these jobs to others that have lower starting wages but better long-term career earning potential. Jobs that require minimal up-front training are most appealing to these young adults, partly because most must work to support their immediate basic needs, so that few can afford to participate in unpaid training even if it would ultimately qualify them for better employment.



First Place participant working with his case manager on a job search

#### *Barriers to Employment*

As a group, former foster youth are less likely to be employed, and they earn very little compared to both other disadvantaged youth and youth of the same age in the general population.<sup>19</sup> A major barrier to employment for aged-out foster youth is their lack of education and experience, both specifically due to foster care and because of their young age. Many do not have a high school diploma at age 18, often because frequent moves in foster care disrupted their educational progress. The resulting lack of basic literacy and math skills makes it challenging for some aged-out young adults to successfully access training that would improve their employment or advancement potential. Though some former foster youth have part-time work experience, their prior jobs have often been low-skill and sporadic, frequently disrupted by foster care placement moves. Few have



City and Port of Oakland

### *Strengths as Employees:*

Aged-out foster youth present a variety of strengths as employees. Having survived difficult childhoods, many exhibit strong resilience and persistence. They are often

***“Coming from foster care, I’ve learned how to be able to adapt to different situations and deal with a lot of people and personalities.” — Aged-out foster youth***

mature, resourceful, and comfortable self-advocating, and they are used to handling stress. Many have completed basic job readiness training through the Independent Living Program offered to teens in foster care. As young adults, they are often

focused on the future, and become loyal employees if treated well. They are also more motivated workers than many young people, because they are usually working to pay their rent and other basic living expenses, not just to earn extra spending money.

### **Target Geographic Areas**

In addition to targeting three special populations, the current study focused on two specific geographic areas: the cities of Oakland and Richmond. These two areas are the largest low-income urban centers in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

Oakland and Richmond face many similar challenges. Both cities have high rates of poverty and unemployment compared to other areas of the East Bay, with joblessness rates over one-and-a-half times those of Alameda and Contra Costa counties as a whole. Nearly one third of Oakland children and 16% of Richmond children lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty line in 2006, and over one quarter of Oakland adults and more than 40% of Richmond adults had completed less than a high school education.<sup>21</sup> Oakland has the highest violent crime rate in Alameda County,<sup>22</sup> and both Oakland and Richmond face the challenges of lack of affordable housing, environmental hazards such as poor air quality, and low-performing schools.

The cities of Oakland and Richmond are home to a large proportion of the East Bay’s formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth, and are thus particularly important geographic areas of focus for the current study.

### 3 Target Populations & Regions *continued*



City of Oakland

#### Oakland

The City of Oakland is the largest city and county seat of Alameda County, and the eighth-largest city in California. U.S. Census estimates for 2005–2007 show that Oakland has a population of about 372,000 people. Oakland is very ethnically diverse; it was noted as the most diverse city in the United States in the 2000 Census (tied with Long Beach, California). Over 150 languages are spoken by residents of Oakland.<sup>23</sup> As of 2006, about 30% of Oakland residents were African-American, 26% were Hispanic or Latino, 24% were white, 16% were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 4% were of other races.<sup>24</sup>

Oakland's median household income was about \$47,000 in 2005–2007. Nearly 30% of households had incomes under \$25,000 per year. About 18% of individuals, including 22% of families with children, had incomes below the federal poverty line.<sup>25</sup>

An important port and home of a major airport, Oakland is a vital cargo and transportation hub for the Bay Area and the West Coast. Several major corporations have their headquarters in Oakland, including Kaiser Permanente and Clorox. Compared to other parts of the East Bay, Oakland has been particularly hard-hit by the current economic recession. In January 2009, Oakland's unemployment rate was 14.1%, substantially higher

than the 9.3% rate for Alameda County overall during the same month. Similarly, Oakland's average annual unemployment rate for 2008 was 9.5%, compared to 6.2% for Alameda County as a whole.<sup>26</sup>

Compared to the rest of Alameda County, Oakland has high and growing concentrations of members of the three target populations. Over 50% of Alameda County parolees reside in Oakland, concentrated in the lower-income neighborhoods of East Oakland, Downtown, West Oakland, and the San Antonio district.<sup>27</sup> Oakland also has a growing immigrant population, including a large population of residents whose first language is not English; 40% of residents speak a language other than English at home.<sup>28</sup> A full 89% of the students enrolled in English as a Second Language through Alameda County's adult school are residents of Oakland.<sup>29</sup> A substantial proportion of Alameda County's aged-out former foster youth reside in Oakland as well.



City of Richmond

## Richmond

Richmond is a second major city in the East Bay, with a population of about 98,000 residents according to U.S. Census estimates for 2005–2007.<sup>30</sup> Like Oakland, Richmond has a very ethnically diverse population. As of 2006, about 35% of Richmond residents were Hispanic or Latino, 28% were African-American, 21% were white, 13% were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2% were of other races.<sup>31</sup>

Richmond had a median household income of about \$50,000 in 2005–2007. More than one in five households had incomes of less than \$25,000 per year. Approximately 16% of individuals, including 22% of families with children, had incomes below the federal poverty line.<sup>32</sup>

During World War II, Richmond was a key shipyard center, employing thousands of individuals from diverse backgrounds, many of whom relocated to Richmond to access job opportunities. After the war ended, the shipyards were no longer needed, and Richmond began a decades-long decline in population and economic prosperity. The city is still a major industrial center, home to the Chevron Richmond Refinery among other industrial businesses. Kaiser Permanente's Richmond Medical Center is another major employer. Like Oakland, Richmond has been especially hard-hit by the economic

recession in comparison to other parts of the East Bay. Richmond's estimated unemployment rate in February 2009 was an extremely high 15.1%, compared to 9.3% for Contra Costa County overall.<sup>33</sup> For calendar year 2008, Richmond's average annual unemployment rate was 10.2%, compared to 6.2% for the county as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

Richmond has substantial and growing populations of members of the three target populations compared to the rest of Contra Costa County. Richmond has the highest concentration of parolees in Contra Costa County, with a ratio of 4.63 parolees per 1,000 residents.<sup>35</sup> For a large number of Richmond residents, English is a second or third language — in fact, 44% of residents speak a language other than English at home. Richmond has a substantially higher proportion of limited English speakers than Contra Costa County as a whole, where 31.3% of residents speak a language other than English at home.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, over half of the students enrolled in English as a Second Language classes through Contra Costa County's adult school are Richmond residents.<sup>37</sup> A significant number of Contra Costa County's children in foster care are from Richmond, and a substantial proportion of the county's aged-out former foster youth are Richmond residents.

# 4

## Target Industries

***“This study will have significant outcomes for our region. It is essential that people from all sectors have the opportunity to obtain living wage jobs in industries that will benefit our communities well into the future.”*** — Keith Carson, Board Chair, East Bay Economic Development Alliance and Alameda County Supervisor

### Prior Workforce Development Studies

Multiple previous East Bay workforce development task forces and reports have focused on key industry sectors that represent important large-scale local employment bases and/or areas with strong potential for long-term employment growth. In 2006, the City of Oakland sponsored the Oakland Moving Forward community-based task force process, initiated by then-Mayor-Elect Ron Dellums, to identify strategies for addressing priority needs in Oakland. The task force recommendations for economic development included focusing workforce development efforts on both supporting growth sectors that would create living-wage jobs and training residents so that they could obtain those jobs. Specific business sectors identified as high priorities included transportation and warehousing, multimedia, and green industry.<sup>38</sup>

Next, the *2007 East Bay Indicators Report*, produced by the East Bay Economic Development Alliance and United Way of the Bay Area, identified trade, transportation and utilities; professional and business services; educational and health services; and manufacturing as the four largest East Bay business employment sectors (excluding government) in 2006.<sup>39</sup> In 2007, the largest non-government employment sectors had shifted somewhat to comprise professional and business services, educational and health services, retail trade, and manufacturing.<sup>40</sup>

The most comprehensive recent study of workforce development in the East Bay was commissioned by the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and completed by McKinsey & Company in April 2007. The study assessed all aspects of Oakland’s economy, including analysis of the state of employment, benchmarking of Oakland’s current economy against other Bay Area and national cities, and identification of opportunities and constraints to business growth in particular industry clusters.

The resulting report, *Taking Stock of Oakland’s Economy*, noted that Oakland faced an opportunity to take advantage of emerging industries and revitalize industries that had historically served as the economic foundation of the city and the East Bay region more broadly. The report recommended a strategic and collaborative approach, centering on four core initiatives: 1) Strengthening the health care industry and attracting biotechnology; 2) Enhancing the Port and logistics business sector; 3) Revitalizing downtown retail businesses; and 4) Encouraging growth in emerging niche sectors such as green industry; arts, design and digital media; and specialty food manufacturing.<sup>41</sup>

As a result of the report, the mayor and the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce launched the Oakland Partnership initiative, a collaborative public-private approach to generating business growth. Four of the industry clusters highlighted in the McKinsey report were selected for focus by the partnership: 1) international trade and logistics, 2) health care and life sciences, 3) green technology, and 4) creative arts. Task forces were created for each of the four clusters to work on job creation, development of employment training, and support for specific business growth projects.<sup>42</sup>

These important business growth and job creation efforts are focused on Oakland, but will benefit residents of the larger East Bay region, including members of the three target populations. However, because of the special employment challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English skills, and aged-out foster youth, there is a need to identify job creation and employment training opportunities specifically matched to these target populations. The City of Richmond was also included due to its similar employment and demographic challenges and in order to provide a more regional approach.



Mary Vanek participating in an Oakland Green Jobs Corps solar installation training

Thus the purpose of the current study is to build on the analysis reflected in the *Taking Stock* report and the efforts underway through the Oakland Partnership in order to specifically focus on industry clusters that offer appropriate entry-level employment with strong career path opportunities in Oakland and Richmond for the three target populations over the long term. Identifying pathways to these employment opportunities is also essential, whether through training, mentoring, counseling, and/or provision of support services.

The members of the Stakeholder Roundtable examined the industry clusters identified as strategic priorities in the McKinsey report, as well as those selected as focus areas by the Oakland Partnership, in order to identify business sectors that would be likely to provide the best match for employment of the three target populations. From an initial set of three industries — health care, custom food manufacturing, and green industry — the stakeholders expanded the clusters to include logistics, a major industry particularly in the port area of Oakland, and construction, a primary focus of the federal economic stimulus package. Because many of the green industry jobs in the East Bay are related to green construction, such as solar panel installation, the roundtable decided to combine green industry and construction into a single category. Based on their knowledge of the manufacturing sector in the East Bay, roundtable members also expanded the custom food manufacturing category to encompass custom manufacturing of products beyond just food.

Ultimately, four industry clusters were identified that had the highest potential for long-term target population employment because they offered entry-level jobs that could be performed successfully with limited English skills, limited prior work experience, and/or a criminal conviction.

### Target Industry Clusters

The current study is unique in terms of the quantity and diversity of data gathered from East Bay employers regarding entry-level employment in the four key industry clusters of construction and green technology, health care, logistics and international trade, and custom manufacturing. In addition to the direct employer data described below, data were collected from twelve labor unions working in the target industries, representing more than 250 additional employers, and are reported in the next section.

A total of 39 employers representing the four sectors completed comprehensive surveys regarding the types, qualifications, hiring processes, and promotion opportunities for their entry-level jobs. They were also asked about their experience with, concerns about, and desired incentives for hiring members of the three target populations of formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth for entry-level employment. The findings from the employer surveys for each sector follow.

### Construction and Green Technology

A total of 11 employers from this sector were surveyed, including three green technology and eight construction businesses. Several of the construction businesses have a green or sustainable building focus. The green technology companies included two solar power businesses and one sustainable landscaping business, with work locations in Richmond, Berkeley, and throughout the Bay Area. All three companies have 101–1,000 employees, including a combined 240 current entry-level positions. Over the next five years, all expect strong business growth of 20 to 75%, and they anticipate a combined 218 entry-level hires during the next year.

## 4 Target Industries *continued*

The construction companies included six located in Oakland, one in Richmond, and several that operate throughout the Bay Area. Of the eight companies surveyed, four have 1–50 employees, two have 51–100 employees, and one has over 1,000 employees. Combined, they have about 240 current entry-level positions (though a few anticipate layoffs in the short term). The construction companies overall were uncertain about growth prospects for the next five years, but most expected 5 to 10% growth, with the current year showing little growth. In the next year, they expected to hire about 43 entry-level employees combined, though many were uncertain about hires in the immediate future due to the uncertain economic climate. Note that at the time of the survey, details about the federal economic stimulus package were not yet available. Because the stimulus package includes multiple funding streams related to construction, such as the rehabilitation of properties, weatherization, and development of transportation infrastructure, the construction industry may experience a boost in activity, resulting in the creation of more entry-level jobs over the short-term.

Information about the entry-level jobs potentially available in the green technology and construction industry cluster is summarized in *Table 4-1* and *Table 4-2*.

Members of the target populations and organizations serving them were asked about their knowledge, interest, and potential fit in the construction and green technology industries. Employers in construction and green technology were also surveyed about their experiences and concerns about employing members of the three target populations, as well as what incentives would encourage them to hire from these groups. Their responses follow.

### *Formerly Incarcerated Individuals*

Individuals who had been formerly incarcerated have high interest in employment in the green technology and construction fields. Green technology is viewed as a growth industry with good pay, where lack of experience might be less of a barrier because of the newness of the field. Concerns for formerly incarcerated individuals include having to compete with more educated and experienced applicants for jobs in this area, and the problem that a felony background usually excludes them from working in private residences. Construction was also viewed as a highly desirable field for employment among formerly incarcerated individuals because of good pay and the ability to qualify for jobs through specific training. It was noted, however, that good union jobs in construction were sometimes closed to individuals with criminal records, and that the cost of tools and union dues could be prohibitive.

*Table 4-1 Green Technology: Entry-Level Jobs*

<i>Positions Available</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions include solar installers, solar advisors, and gardeners.</li> <li>• Wages are \$10–\$17/hour, with benefits.</li> </ul>
<i>Required Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Education:</b> High school diploma, community college desired.</li> <li>• <b>Experience:</b> None required (will train), but construction, roofing, or electrical experience desired.</li> <li>• <b>English proficiency:</b> Basic speaking and reading required for solar companies, none required for landscaping company (but basic proficiency desired).</li> <li>• <b>Certifications:</b> SolarWorks or NABCEP and C-10 desired for solar, none for landscaping.</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> Drug test, physical examination, criminal background check, reference check, driver's license and clean driving record (for positions that require driving).</li> <li>• Job applicants are excluded from employment if they have felony convictions or fail the drug test. These policies are not flexible.</li> </ul>
<i>Hiring Process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positions advertised:</b> Through job fairs, online listings, outreach to public agencies/community colleges/job training providers.</li> <li>• <b>Application form:</b> Required. Conducted in English. Can be completed off-site.</li> <li>• <b>Interview:</b> Required. Conducted in English (and/or Spanish for landscaping company).</li> <li>• <b>Skills or written tests:</b> None.</li> </ul>
<i>Promotion Opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion opportunities are available for all entry-level jobs.</li> <li>• Promotions are based on performance reviews and completion of additional training (provided on-site with testing at the landscaping company).</li> </ul>

**Table 4-2 Construction: Entry-Level Jobs**

<p><i>Positions Available</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions include laborers, construction apprentices, carpenters, and administrative/clerical.</li> <li>• Non-union positions pay \$10–\$20/hr., clerical wages are \$15/hr. Union apprentice positions pay \$25–\$28/hr. All positions include benefits.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Required Qualifications</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Education:</b> Some positions require a high school diploma or GED, some require union apprenticeship training, others require on-the-job training.</li> <li>• <b>Experience:</b> Experience is desired, but on-the-job training is provided.</li> <li>• <b>English proficiency:</b> Basic speaking and reading desired but not required.</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> Drug test, proof of legal work status, criminal background check, reference check, driver's license required for some jobs.</li> <li>• Job applicants are excluded from employment if they have a violent criminal record, fail the drug test, lack documentation of legal work status, lack a high school diploma or GED, or have negative employer references. These policies are not flexible, especially the drug test and legal work status.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Hiring Process</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positions advertised:</b> Through unions, word of mouth, training providers, and online listings.</li> <li>• <b>Application form:</b> Required. In English (some provide it in Spanish). Usually can be completed off-site.</li> <li>• <b>Interview:</b> Required. Conducted in English (some conduct in Spanish).</li> <li>• <b>Skills or written tests:</b> Sometimes required by union.</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> Many of the construction companies surveyed hire primarily through trade unions (except for clerical positions, which are usually hired through temporary employment agencies).</li> </ul>
<p><i>Promotion Opportunities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are designated career promotion paths for all trade positions, and most companies promote internally.</li> <li>• Promotions are based on performance reviews, completion of additional training, and supervisor recommendation.</li> <li>• English proficiency is generally required for promotions.</li> </ul>

The green technology companies surveyed had some experience with hiring individuals with criminal records, while the construction companies had some or no experience. Several construction companies coordinated all of their hiring through unions, and therefore had no information about the conviction status of their employees.

Both construction and green technology employers noted that there were strong community benefits associated with employment for formerly incarcerated individuals and that it was important for these individuals to have opportunities for honest work. Some noted that re-entering individuals might be more appreciative of a job opportunity than the typical employee.

Concerns about formerly incarcerated individuals as employees were similar among green technology and construction employers. Many of these businesses conduct their work at private residences, and they were concerned about the liability involved in employing individuals with criminal records to work in customers' homes. They also expressed concerns about crime and violence on the job and the safety of other employees. Some were concerned about reliability, ability to work well with co-workers, and drug use. A few noted that their employment policies categorically excluded individuals with felony convictions from employment.

*“As California’s leading advocate for Green Jobs Not Jails, we know that green-collar jobs provide formerly incarcerated people an opportunity to simultaneously heal their communities and their environment.” — Emily Kirsch, Bay Area Organizer, Ella Baker Center*

Both construction and green technology employers were asked what types of support could help formerly incarcerated individuals succeed in jobs at their businesses. The responses were similar, with employers mentioning job coaching, mentoring, and extra training. Some businesses already provide or were willing to provide mentoring and training directly, and most were willing to work with outside organizations that could provide extra employment support for this target population.

In terms of incentives to hire individuals with criminal records, both green technology and construction employers cited tax incentives and any other programs that would reduce employer cost and/or risk associated with employing these individuals. Outside job coaches were also mentioned as a desired incentive, as well as community recognition.

## 4 Target Industries *continued*

### *Adults with Limited English Proficiency*

LEP adults, particularly men, have high interest in working in both construction and green technology, although the green technology field is unfamiliar to many in this population. Both types of jobs rely on skills that can often be learned with limited language skills and may build on work experiences from immigrants' home countries. Limitations of these jobs for adults with limited English proficiency included competition from other applicants for green jobs, and the exclusion of undocumented workers from union construction jobs. Lack of transportation to job locations and lack of language skills were also cited as barriers to employment in these fields.

In terms of employers' experience with hiring LEP adults, the construction companies had extensive and mostly very positive experience with this population as employees. The green technology companies working in solar power had less experience with LEP employees, but the landscaping company employs many LEP individuals.

Both construction and green companies noted that adults with limited English proficiency often had a strong work ethic, and were reliable and experienced employees who were appreciative of the opportunity to work. Employers also noted that their companies benefited from the cultural diversity brought by LEP employees, and that the community benefited when such individuals had opportunities to work to support their families.

The primary concern about employing adults with limited English skills related to communication with supervisors. Employers noted that LEP individuals required more training and coaching because of language barriers; they had to be shown how to do tasks rather than simply told.

In some cases communication barriers could lead to concerns about safety on the job.

Both types of employers

also noted that proficiency in English was necessary for promotions, as higher-level positions typically involved communication with customers and senior staff in English.

The main type of support that employers believed would help adults with limited English skills succeed at their companies was English as a Second Language classes. Only one company currently provides on-site ESL classes, but others would consider providing on-site classes if it could be shown to be cost-effective. Some employers were also willing to consider providing tuition reimbursement

**“Cultural diversity is good for the workplace and the community” — Construction employer**



**Oakland Green Jobs Corps trainees working with GRID Alternatives to install a solar system for a low-income family in Oakland**

to employees for off-site ESL classes. Most were open to working with outside service providers to facilitate ESL training for their employees.

In terms of incentives for hiring LEP individuals, employers cited tax breaks and other financial incentives. Outside job coaches were also suggested, as well as community recognition.

### *Aged-Out Foster Youth*

There is moderate to high interest in construction work among former foster youth (particularly among young men), and high interest in green technology among those young adults who are familiar with the field (but many are not). Construction is appealing because of good pay, particularly for union jobs, and tangible results of the work. Lack of reliable transportation, lack of certification, and lack of math skills are seen as barriers to working in this field for aged-out foster youth. Green technology is attractive for former foster youth as a growing field with good wages. However, many positions are perceived to require completion of unpaid training, which is unattractive or not financially viable for many aged-out young adults.

The employers in construction and green technology had almost no experience with aged-out foster youth or even young adults as employees. They speculated, however, that aged-out youth could contribute to a young and

enthusiastic work crew, and that the community would benefit if young people had strong career opportunities. In terms of concerns about hiring former foster youth, employers cited concerns about young employees in general, including level of maturity, reliability, and responsibility, as well as lack of experience. Several noted

*“Long-term employees are vital. Hiring a young person, who is at the start of their whole career, can be great for everyone involved.” — Construction employer*

that aged-out youth would probably require extra training and mentoring.

Support that could help former foster youth succeed in construction and green jobs included job coaching, mentoring, and training,

and the employers were open to providing both mentoring and training. They were also willing to work with outside organizations that provide employment support for young people. In terms of incentives to hire former foster youth, employers cited tax breaks, outside job coaches, and community recognition as potential enticements.

### Health Care

A total of nine health care employers were surveyed, of which seven have employment locations in Oakland, one in Richmond, and several have multiple East Bay locations. Of these companies, six have 101–1,000 employees and three have more than 1,000 employees, including a combined total of 450 entry-level employees currently. The health care employers surveyed expect to see approximately 5% business growth over the next five years, though they are uncertain about short-term growth due to the current economic climate. Combined, they expect to hire 180–200 entry-level employees in the next year.

Members of the target populations and organizations serving them were asked about their knowledge, interest, and potential fit for work in the health care industry. Health care employers were also surveyed about their experiences and concerns about employing members of the three target populations, as well as what incentives would encourage them to hire from these groups. Their responses follow.

### Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Members of this target population are moderately interested in employment in the health care sector, with more interest among the small number of women than among men. The industry is viewed as recession-proof, with good wages. However, special certifications are often required, and a criminal record usually excludes formerly incarcerated individuals from employment in health care jobs.

**Table 4-3 Health Care: Entry-Level Jobs**

<i>Positions Available</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varied positions include medical assistants, equipment technicians, housekeeping, administrative (receptionist, data entry, etc.), and lab assistants.</li> <li>• Wages range from \$12–\$20/hr., with most around \$15/hr., generally with benefits.</li> </ul>
<i>Required Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Education:</b> High school diploma or GED (community college certification can substitute).</li> <li>• <b>Experience:</b> Some health care job experience usually required (typically 6 months to 2 years).</li> <li>• <b>English proficiency:</b> Spoken and written proficiency is generally required, including familiarity with medical terminology. Some positions require bilingual language skills.</li> <li>• <b>Certification:</b> Required for some positions (e.g. phlebotomist).</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> Drug test, criminal background check, TB test and proof of current immunizations, positive employer references, driver’s license for some positions.</li> <li>• Job applicants are excluded from employment if they have a criminal record (though some employers only exclude applicants if the conviction directly relates to the job), a failed drug test, a failed TB test, lack a high school diploma or GED, have negative employer references, or have large gaps in work experience. Some of these policies are flexible on a case-by-case basis. Accreditation guidelines prohibit some employers from hiring individuals with felony convictions for certain positions.</li> </ul>
<i>Hiring Process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positions advertised:</b> On employer websites, through online listings, One-Stop Centers, word of mouth.</li> <li>• <b>Application form:</b> Required. In English. Generally can be completed off-site. Resume and cover letter are also desired but not required.</li> <li>• <b>Interview:</b> Required. Conducted in English (plus other languages for bilingual positions).</li> <li>• <b>Skills or written tests:</b> Sometimes required (especially for administrative positions).</li> </ul>
<i>Promotion Opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion path for most positions, often promote internally.</li> <li>• Pay increases based on seniority and union agreements.</li> <li>• Promotions based on supervisor recommendations and completion of additional training.</li> </ul>

## 4 Target Industries *continued*

Of the health care employers surveyed, none had significant experience with formerly incarcerated individuals as employees. Most will not or cannot hire felons, though some will hire individuals with misdemeanor convictions for certain positions.



Medical assistant in training at Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center

Health care employers noted few benefits to hiring formerly incarcerated individuals, though one mentioned that for very specific health projects — such as health-related outreach in prisons — these individuals could relate well to targeted patient populations. Concerns about employing individuals with criminal records included workplace safety and fraud.

When asked what types of support could help formerly incarcerated individuals succeed as employees in the health care field, employers mentioned mentoring, training, and working within a structured program. A few employers would consider working with outside

service providers that support this population. Most, however, had little interest in hiring from this group or were unable to consider hiring from this group due to strict employment policies prohibiting criminal records.

Incentives that could motivate health care employers to hire formerly incarcerated individuals included bonding and financial incentives.

### *Adults with Limited English Proficiency*

LEP adults have high interest in work in the health care field, which is viewed as having good career paths and particular employment opportunities for bilingual and bicultural individuals to work with patients from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The barrier to working in this field is that many LEP adults lack sufficient English skills to complete the required formal training and to secure employment. Most jobs are limited to bilingual individuals.

Most of the health care employers surveyed have some experience with employing adults with limited English proficiency. Employees with non-English language and diverse cultural skills — particularly bilingual staff — are viewed as valuable for communicating with and relating to diverse patients from immigrant backgrounds.

*“Cross-cultural competency in employees helps with our diverse patient base.” — Health care employer*

Concerns about employing adults with limited English skills center around communication with supervisors and understanding policies and procedures. In particular, proficiency in English is generally required for employees working in inpatient or outpatient services to ensure patient safety and avoid malpractice liability.

The primary support mentioned as needed to help LEP adults succeed in health care employment was vocational ESL classes, specifically classes with a focus on health care terminology and situations. Some of these employers offer ESL classes on-site, and most were open to working with outside providers to facilitate ESL training for employees.

Employers mentioned a few incentives that would encourage them to hire individuals with limited English proficiency, specifically job coaches and wage subsidies for entry-level work experience. Provision of ESL classes by outside organizations was another desired incentive.

### *Aged-Out Foster Youth*

Young adults who have aged out of the foster care system have high interest in employment in the health care sector. Interest is particularly high among young women, with most initially interested in Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) positions. Health care is viewed as a stable industry with many opportunities for promotion with additional training. CNA training is particularly attractive because it is short and leads to immediate employment, and on-the-job training is often available for advancement. The 24-hour shifts at most health care employers also can allow for accommodation of young adults' schooling or child care scheduling needs. Basic literacy skills are required for most entry-level health care jobs, which is a limitation for some former foster youth.

Of the health care employers surveyed, only one had experience with hiring former foster youth, through the company's youth internship program. Because most of the employers had very little familiarity with this population, they were unable to provide detailed information about the strengths or challenges of aged-out youth as health care employees. Employers noted that employment for these young adults would benefit the community, and mentioned that lack of experience and required training might limit the ability of aged-out foster youth to qualify for health care employment.

Some employers expressed willingness to work with outside providers that support this population. Most noted that they do not have sufficient internal resources to provide special employment support directly. Incentives that would encourage health care employers to hire former foster youth included job coaches and community recognition.

### Logistics and International Trade

Surveys were completed by a total of five companies involved in logistics and international trade (including shipping, port activities, goods delivery, etc.). Of these, two are located in Oakland, one in Richmond, and one has various East Bay locations. All work locations are accessible by public transit. The sizes of these companies ranged from three with 51–100 employees, one with 100–1,000 employees, and one with over 1,000 employees, including a combined current total of 170 entry-level employees. The logistics and trade companies were very uncertain about growth prospects over the next five years, and were unable to state how many entry-level hires they expect to make in the next year (some expect none in the short-term). Information about the entry-level jobs in logistics and international trade is summarized in *Table 4-4*.

Members of the target populations and organizations serving them were asked about their knowledge, interest, and potential fit for work in the trade and logistics sector. Employers in these industries were also surveyed about their experiences and concerns about employing members of the three target populations, as well as what incentives would encourage them to hire from these groups. Their responses follow.

**Table 4-4 Logistics and International Trade: Entry-Level Jobs**

<i>Positions Available</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions include loaders and unloaders, temporary plant workers, delivery drivers, and clerical.</li> <li>• Wages range from \$8.65–\$17/hr., some with benefits if full-time.</li> </ul>
<i>Required Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Education:</b> Some positions require high school diploma or GED (community college certification can substitute).</li> <li>• <b>Experience:</b> None required, but prefer forklift experience or warehouse experience.</li> <li>• <b>English proficiency:</b> At least eighth-grade proficiency in spoken and written English is required (high school level for clerical positions).</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> Drug test, legal work status documents, criminal background check, good recent work record, driver's license and DMV print-out for some positions.</li> <li>• Job applicants are excluded from employment if they have certain types of felonies, including armed robbery, forgery, felony violence/domestic violence, or theft. Other exclusions include a failed drug test, negative employer references, and large gaps in employment. These policies are generally not flexible (particularly for employment at the Port of Oakland), though some employers are flexible on a case-by-case basis depending on the position.</li> </ul>
<i>Hiring Process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positions advertised:</b> Through job fairs, training providers, word-of-mouth, online listings, staffing agencies, One-Stop Centers.</li> <li>• <b>Application form:</b> Required by about half of employers. In English. Usually must be completed on-site.</li> <li>• <b>Interview:</b> Required. In English.</li> <li>• <b>Skills or written test:</b> One company requires a math and reading test.</li> </ul>
<i>Promotion Opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion path from entry-level positions to lead or forklift driver, part-time employees can be promoted to full-time.</li> <li>• Promotions based on work performance, including attendance, and supervisor recommendations.</li> </ul>

## 4 Target Industries *continued*

### *Formerly Incarcerated Individuals*

Individuals re-entering society after incarceration have moderate to high interest in employment in logistics and international trade, as the field is viewed as providing good pay without requiring extensive job experience.

***“My experience with working with formerly incarcerated individuals has not been different than with other employees. They work just as hard, if not harder, and have been promoted based on their ability to do the job.”*** — Logistics and trade employer

Barriers cited include competition for these jobs, required certifications, and required driver’s licenses — a limitation for some formerly incarcerated individuals. Criminal records also prevent individuals from receiving

Hazardous Materials Transportation Certification, which is often required for truck driving positions. In addition, there is a perception that personal connections are usually required to get jobs in this field.

Most of the logistics and international trade employers surveyed had some experience, generally positive, with employing formerly incarcerated individuals. Some noted

that these individuals had been no different from their other employees; they had worked just as hard if not harder. Several employers also noted that the community benefited when formerly incarcerated individuals were given a second chance through employment. Tax incentives were also cited as an employer benefit of hiring individuals with criminal records.

The primary concern expressed by logistics and international trade employers was that some positions required a clean background check as a matter of employment policy. This was particularly true for jobs at the Port of Oakland.

Support that would help formerly incarcerated individuals succeed on the job included job coaching and mentoring. Most of these employers provide some mentoring, and most were willing to work with outside agencies that support formerly incarcerated individuals in employment. Desired incentives for hiring individuals with criminal records included tax credits, outside job coaches, and community recognition.

### *Adults with Limited English Proficiency*

LEP adults are largely unfamiliar with the jobs available in logistics and international trade, and lack contacts in these industries.

Employers in logistics and international trade, similarly, have very little experience with employing adults with limited English proficiency. Thus the employers surveyed were unable to offer detailed information about these individuals as employees. Employers expressed concerns that communication barriers could create safety problems, and noted that promotion opportunities would be limited for individuals with limited English skills.

When asked what support could help LEP individuals succeed in logistics and international trade jobs, employers cited extra training and especially English as a Second Language classes, particularly classes that included warehousing terminology. Most employers stated that they had very limited capacity to provide extra support for this population, but some were willing to work with outside organizations that support LEP workers in their employment. Suggestions for incentives to hire adults with limited English skills included stronger bridges to provide adequate training for LEP adults in terms of both language and job-specific skills.



Moving boxes of Numi Tea for shipment to local supermarkets

### Aged-Out Foster Youth

Former foster youth are largely unfamiliar with the logistics and international trade industry, though there is high interest in employment in this field among the few who are aware of these jobs. Union jobs in this field are viewed as paying well. Barriers to working in the field include lack of a driver's license, as most aged-out youth are unable to apply for a driver's license until they are 18 because there is no adult available to sign for them when they are younger. In addition, most of these jobs are full-time, which is difficult for young adults who are also attending school. There is also a perception that personal contacts are required to get these jobs.

The employers surveyed from logistics and international trade were unfamiliar with former foster youth as a population and had no experience or did not know if they had ever hired aged-out foster youth. They speculated that employment in this field could be a good match for aged-out youth, as lack of job experience was not a major barrier.

***"It's in line with our business model to hire from disadvantaged groups. The community benefits, and we also get tax benefits for doing so." — Logistics and trade employer***

Support that might help aged-out youth succeed in logistics and international trade included case management, as well as assistance with transportation and child care. Being less familiar with this population, employers were unsure whether it made sense to directly provide or facilitate this type of support, and did not note specific incentives that would encourage them to hire former foster youth.

### Custom Manufacturing

A total of 14 companies involved in custom manufacturing of food and other products were surveyed. Of these, seven are located in Oakland, one in Richmond, and one in another East Bay location. Some but not all of these work locations are accessible by public transit. The sizes of the companies ranged from five with 1–50 employees, three with 51–100 employees, and five with 101–1,000 employees, including a combined total of 500 current entry-level positions. The custom manufacturing companies generally expect fairly strong growth of 10 to 20% over the next five years, and anticipate hiring 450 entry-level employees next year (about half of them for seasonal positions). Information about entry-level employment in custom manufacturing is summarized in the *Table 4-5*.

**Table 4-5 Custom Manufacturing: Entry-Level Jobs**

<i>Positions Available</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions include food preparation, packaging, shipping, clerical, production line, and retail.</li> <li>• Wages range from \$9–\$18/hr. (most \$10–\$12/hr.), with benefits.</li> </ul>
<i>Required Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Education:</b> Some require high school diploma or GED (community college certification can substitute).</li> <li>• <b>Experience:</b> Most require none, some prefer related experience.</li> <li>• <b>English proficiency:</b> Some require none, while some require basic spoken and very basic reading.</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> Drug test, some (but not all) require background check, positive employer references, driver's license and DMV print-out required for positions that involve driving.</li> <li>• Job applicants are excluded from employment for a failed drug test, negative employer reference, or lack of driver's license if required for the job. Some employers exclude individuals with felony convictions, but others do not conduct background checks. Poor grooming will exclude applicants from some jobs.</li> </ul>
<i>Hiring Process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positions advertised:</b> Through word of mouth, online listings, employment agencies, some through unions, a few recruit through public and private partner agencies.</li> <li>• <b>Application form:</b> Required. About half of employers offer the form in English only, half in English and Spanish. About half of employers allow completion of the form off-site. Resume, cover letter, and employer recommendations are also helpful but not required.</li> <li>• <b>Interview:</b> Required. Conducted in English (about half will conduct in Spanish if needed, some in other languages too).</li> <li>• <b>Skills or written test:</b> Skills test required for some positions.</li> </ul>
<i>Promotion Opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion opportunity for most positions, though few middle management positions are available. Often promote internally.</li> <li>• Promotions based on performance reviews, good work ethic, completion of additional training.</li> <li>• English proficiency helps for promotion.</li> </ul>

## 4 Target Industries *continued*

Members of the target populations and organizations serving them were asked about their knowledge, interest, and potential fit for the custom manufacturing sector. These employers were also surveyed about their experiences and concerns about employing members of the three target populations, as well as what incentives would encourage them to hire from these groups. Their responses follow.

### *Formerly Incarcerated Individuals*

Formerly incarcerated individuals have varied interest in working in custom manufacturing. Some are less interested because the pay is perceived to be low, while others are attracted to the field because of the low requirements for skills and education.

The custom manufacturing employers surveyed had limited or no known experience with formerly incarcerated individuals as employees. They speculated that individuals with criminal records

might be particularly motivated and appreciative of a job opportunity, and that the community would benefit from their employment. Employers could also benefit through commu-

nity recognition. Concerns about employing individuals with criminal records included criminal activity on the job, reliability, and work attitude and discipline, particularly in terms of influence on team co-workers.

***“I am willing to hire any residents of my community who will positively contribute to the company. They just must be willing to work, have a good attitude, and be able to follow directions.”*** — Custom manufacturing employer

Support that would help formerly incarcerated individuals succeed in manufacturing jobs included job coaching, mentoring, and case management. While most employers were unable to provide this support, many were open to working with outside organizations that provide these types of support services.

Employers mentioned several incentives that would encourage them to hire formerly incarcerated individuals. The most frequently mentioned incentive was outside job coaches, specifically someone employers could call to help address employee performance problems. Tax breaks and business fee remissions were also cited as valuable incentives, as well as community recognition. One employer mentioned that information about other businesses’ experiences with employing formerly incarcerated individuals would be helpful too.

### *Adults with Limited English Proficiency*

Many LEP adults, particularly women, have high interest in employment in custom manufacturing because limited English skills are not as much of an impediment to employment in this field. Lack of transportation and language barriers can limit accessibility of these jobs, which can sometimes be seasonal. Perceived low pay also makes these jobs less desirable to some individuals with limited English skills.

Most of the custom manufacturing employers surveyed had extensive and positive experiences with employing adults with limited proficiency in English. Employers mentioned that LEP adults are often hard-working and eager to work, offer a good cost-to-skill ratio, and frequently provide good referrals to other employees. They also bring valuable diversity to the workforce. Concerns about LEP individuals as employees include communication barriers with supervisors and legal eligibility for employment, including validity of work status documentation.

***“Our experience with limited English-speaking adults has been that they are very hard workers, very loyal, and very happy to have employment. An older, more experienced workforce is available by hiring them.”*** — Custom manufacturing employer



English language learners participating in an evening ESL class at the Oakland Adult and Career Education Center

When asked what types of support would help adults with limited English skills succeed in custom manufacturing, employers mentioned English as a Second Language classes, job coaching, and mentoring. Child care was another support that would help these employees succeed. Computer training was cited as an opportunity to improve LEP adults' performance in their current jobs while also building skills for future employment. Some employers provide job coaching and some language training for employees with limited English skills, and most were willing to work with outside service providers that support LEP adults.

Custom manufacturing employers mentioned several incentives that would encourage them to hire adults with limited English proficiency. ESL classes and outside job coaches were frequently mentioned, as well as financial incentives such as tax breaks and business fee remission. Community recognition was another desired incentive. Some employers stated that no incentives were needed, as they already hire many individuals from this population. One employer noted that it would be helpful to have information about service organizations that provide support for families, in order to provide helpful referrals to their employees.

### *Aged-Out Foster Youth*

Former foster youth have limited information about employment in custom manufacturing. They would have high interest in positions with good wages, but there is a perception that the pay is often low in this field. Lack of math skills might be a barrier for some in mastering computerized manufacturing processes.

Only one custom manufacturing employer was familiar with the population of former foster youth, due to personal experience as a foster parent. Employers speculated that there would be strong community benefits to helping young people get work experience, and that aged-out youth might be energetic and easy to train. Possible concerns with former foster youth as employees included their attitude and work ethic, reliability, and experience in an adult work environment.

***"Helping young people get a start in the working world benefits the community." — Custom manufacturing employer***



**Workers sealing and packaging artisan organic nut butters for Premier Organics**

Types of support that would help aged-out youth succeed in custom manufacturing included job coaching and mentoring, as well as a stable living situation. Most employers were unable to provide support for this population directly, but were willing to work with outside organizations that support former foster youth.

Several incentives were mentioned that would encourage custom manufacturers to hire aged-out foster youth. Outside job coaches and pre-screening of potential employees by an outside organization would be helpful. Financial incentives, such as subsidized wages, were also cited, as well as community recognition. A few employers expressed interest in learning more about this population.

# 5

## Labor Unions

***“Unions not only improve workers’ lives, but also strengthen communities — that’s why we believe that partnering with training institutions and nonprofit organizations can help employers create work that leads to self-sufficiency, dignity and respect.”***

— Sharon Cornu, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Alameda Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Labor unions serve as key job trainers and employer partners for employee support in many industries, particularly in the target industries of construction and logistics and trade. Thus as part of the current study, local labor unions were surveyed about their industry roles and experience with the target populations of formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth. Surveys were completed by a total of 12 labor organizations, representing 39 separate unions and approximately 250 employers. Four organizations represented construction trades, two in custom manufacturing, one in logistics and international trade, and five representing other industries.

All of the unions reported that unemployment among their members was currently relatively high, largely due to the current economic downturn. However, most were optimistic about hiring prospects once the economy begins to recover, with unions in the construction industry expecting particularly strong longer-term job growth. Most union jobs start at \$14 to \$20 per hour with benefits for apprentices, increasing as workers gain experience and certification as required. Survey results are summarized in *Table 5-1*.

**Table 5-1 Survey Results of Union Jobs**

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Wage Range</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Training Opportunities</i>
<i>Construction (three unions)</i>	\$16–\$25/hr.	Hourly wage often includes health care and/or retirement benefit contribution.	Four-year carpentry and painting apprenticeship programs available.
<i>Trade and Logistics (three unions)</i>	\$14–\$35/hr.	Full benefits package through union contract.	Through partnership with Peralta College for warehouse work; driving school for transportation.
<i>Custom Manufacturing: Food (two unions)</i>	\$9–\$35/hr.	Full benefits package through union contract.	All employers offer on-the-job training; Safeway has a specific 60-day program.
<i>Other: Business Services, Clerical, Communications, &amp; Hospitality (four unions)</i>	\$10–\$35/hr.	Full benefits package through union contract.	On-the-job training; some provide tuition reimbursement.



Participants in a pre-apprenticeship program in the building and construction trades

The unions were also surveyed about their experiences and concerns about admitting and working with members of the three target populations. In general, they felt that members of all three target populations need to meet similar basic requirements for employment or apprenticeship in the types of positions represented by the surveyed unions:

- Nearly all of these jobs require a high level of physical fitness and strength.
- Most require a high school diploma or GED (community college certification can substitute).
- Many require a valid California driver's license.
- Some unions or employers administer basic skills tests in math and/or English as part of their hiring and apprenticeship admittance processes.
- Some require telephone, clerical, and basic computer skills.
- Some require specific safety or equipment training or credentialing.
- Reliable transportation to job sites is necessary for many construction jobs, and these jobs often require substantial travel to follow seasonal employment opportunities; public transit is available for most of the other industries' locations.
- A strong work ethic including punctuality, attendance, and general reliability is required for all of the jobs represented.

Specific feedback regarding the target populations was also provided as follows:

#### *Formerly Incarcerated Individuals*

Some trade unions involved in the construction industry noted that formerly incarcerated individuals may be particularly well suited to these types of jobs, as they have experience with the type of strong discipline required to be successful in construction. However, a number of

employers in construction and in other industries will not allow workers with criminal records, thus limiting job opportunities for these individuals.

#### *Adults with Limited English Proficiency*

Fluency in English is not explicitly required for most of the jobs that the surveyed unions represent. In fact, some construction trades are dominated by Spanish speakers, and other languages are becoming more common. However, apprenticeship classes in many trades are taught in English, making it difficult for LEP adults to successfully complete required training. Many employers require proof of citizenship or legal right to work as a condition of employment.

#### *Aged-Out Foster Youth*

Most unions saw few specific barriers to employment for former foster youth. However, due to the high physical demands of many of these jobs, many trades find that young adults aged 24 or older are more successful in their apprenticeship programs.

In terms of support for workers, a few of the unions operate hiring halls to place workers in jobs. Nearly all of the unions surveyed offer extensive job training programs and formal apprenticeships. Several offer six- to nine-week initial "boot camps," usually unpaid, where potential workers can receive intensive training and unions can determine whether the job is a good fit. Most work with employers to offer additional training as well. Primarily, construction unions rely on highly developed apprenticeship programs, while most industrial and service unions connect workers to on-the-job training, community colleges, or other training institutions. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and full medical and retirement benefits are also commonly provided by the unions surveyed.

# 6

## Training & Support

*“The opportunities for entry-level, well-paid jobs are changing with technology; by aligning more closely with local businesses, community colleges are ready to prepare people for these opportunities.” — Elihu Harris, Chancellor, Peralta Community College District*

### Job Training Providers

Job training is critical for creating pathways to quality employment, particularly for disadvantaged populations with limited prior work experience such as youth, immigrants, and formerly incarcerated individuals. Effective job training is designed to meet identified industry needs and requires strong collaboration with employers to develop training and facilitate job placement. Pre-employment job readiness training, such as soft skills, basic reading and math skills, and English as a Second Language, is also essential to the success of disadvantaged workers.

In addition to offering soft skills and industry-specific instruction, training institutions must be financially sustainable for the long term. Consequently, the current study focuses on community colleges and public adult schools as training partners, as these institutions have a base of ongoing state funding and are less reliant on one-time grant funds or other short-term funding sources than smaller nonprofit agencies. At the time of this report, community colleges and public adult schools were expected to be substantially negatively impacted by the unprecedented California state budget crisis, which is likely to result in deep funding cuts to public education. Despite this immediate financial challenge, the established infrastructure and comparatively broad funding base for these large-scale educational institutions makes them the most appropriate partners for job training over the long term. They also have the capacity to create specific training programs on a contract basis to meet changing employer needs.

Oakland and Richmond are served by two community college systems, the Peralta Community College District and the Contra Costa Community College District. The Peralta Community Colleges include Merritt College and Laney College in Oakland, the College of Alameda, and Berkeley City College, all of which are accessible by AC Transit and in some cases BART. Together they serve 27,000 students from diverse backgrounds, with particularly high numbers of African-American, Asian,

and Latino students. Contra Costa Community College District includes Contra Costa College in Richmond, Diablo Valley College in Concord, and Los Medanos College in Pittsburg, all accessible by AC transit. Contra Costa College, which is the primary college serving the City of Richmond, has 8,000 students, with particularly large proportions of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian or Pacific Islander students. Both community college systems serve large numbers of low-income students.

Costs for the community colleges are the same for both districts at \$26 per unit for California residents, totaling \$312–\$1,560 for 12- to 60-unit courses of study. To receive in-state tuition rates, students must have been physically present in California for one year and present a valid photo ID. Undocumented immigrant students who attended California public high schools are also allowed three years of enrollment at in-state tuition rates through state law (though the law is currently being challenged in the courts). Documented students can qualify for a wide variety of federal and state financial aid in the form of grants and loans, with online application through the college websites, to pay for tuition as well as living expenses. Also, under the federal economic stimulus package, funding was increased for federal Pell Grants, which support college attendance by low-income students. Low-income students also qualify for the EOPS program, which pays for books and fees. Private financial aid is also available by applying through the college financial aid offices. California residency is required for all financial aid. A major gap in financial aid availability, however, is that English as a Second Language classes do not qualify for most aid, as ESL is not considered a degree or certificate major.

Two public adult schools also serve Oakland and Richmond. Oakland Adult and Career Education (OACE) has locations in the East Oakland, Eastlake, and Downtown neighborhoods, all of which are accessible via AC Transit and/or BART. OACE serves nearly 16,000

students per year from diverse backgrounds, particularly African-American, Hispanic, and Asian adults, along with a large number of recent refugees from a variety of countries. Costs are typically \$10 per course, with higher costs for certificate programs; the Certified Nursing Assistant program is \$257, the Administrative Assistant program is \$35 per session, and the Medical Front Office program is \$35 per session plus \$160 for books. English as a Second Language and Adult Basic and Secondary Education classes are offered free of charge. As costs are very low, OACE does not provide financial aid, but some students secure financial aid through outside sources. No identification is required to enroll.

West Contra Costa Adult Education is located in Richmond, with locations that are mostly accessible by public transit. WCCAE serves 12,500 students, serving particularly large numbers of Hispanic, Southeast Asian, and African-American adults. Costs average \$3 per hour of instruction, or \$60 per course, totaling up to \$600 for a 200-hour course of study. English as a Second Language classes are offered free of charge. Like OACE, West Contra Costa Adult Education does not offer financial aid, but some students secure financial aid through sources such as the County Employment Development Department or One-Stop Centers. No identification is required for enrollment.

In general, participation in adult school education and training programs requires a lesser level of literacy and basic skills than participation in community college classes and programs. For example, the lowest-level ESL classes offered by the adult schools do not require literacy in any language, while the lowest-level community college ESL classes generally require basic literacy in a student's native language. Some adult school programs, particularly for ESL, are highly flexible and informal, with rolling enrollment and flexible attendance policies, whereas community college programs tend to be more structured, following a standard academic schedule with specific course requirements and resulting college credits. The two educational systems frequently work together to refer students to the most appropriate classes and programs to meet students' individual abilities and needs.

### Job Readiness Training

The community colleges and adult schools offer a wide variety of basic skills, job readiness training, and English as a Second Language courses as described in *Table 6-1* and *Table 6-2*.

**Table 6-1 Training Available:  
General Job Readiness**

<p><i>Community Colleges</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peralta Community College District</b> — Accredited coursework in basic skills (math and English) and computer skills. Some industry-specific training programs include basic skills as well. <i>English proficiency:</i> Basic required. Student proficiency ranges from third to 12th grade. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture and lab.</li> <li>• <b>Contra Costa College</b> — Accredited coursework in GED, customer service, soft skills and work readiness, basic computer skills. Some industry-specific training programs include basic skills as well. Career exploration programs are offered at all campuses. <i>English proficiency:</i> College-level proficiency required for most courses. Instruction is in English. Bilingual teachers' aides are available in some courses. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture, some lab, online, some internships.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Adult Schools</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Oakland Adult and Career Education</b> — Provides accredited instruction for GED, high school diploma, computer skills, and workforce readiness through both academic programs and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. Community-based partner organizations assist with student intake, ongoing support, evaluation, and placement after training. Some industry-specific training programs include contextualized basic skills as well. <i>English proficiency:</i> At least Intermediate ESL proficiency in English. <i>Instruction style:</i> Direct instruction, individualized instruction, small group, online, computer-based, independent study.</li> <li>• <b>West Contra Costa Adult Education</b> — Accredited coursework offered in GED, soft skills, customer service, computer skills, and other work readiness areas. <i>English proficiency:</i> Beginning ESL proficiency. Many courses also offered in Spanish. <i>Instruction style:</i> Instructor-led, experiential.</li> </ul>

## 6 Training & Support *continued*

Table 6-2 Training Available: English as a Second Language

<p><i>Community Colleges</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peralta Community College District</b> — Extensive accredited ESL classes offered that proceed through multiple levels.</li> <li>• <b>Contra Costa College</b> — Extensive accredited ESL classes that proceed through multiple levels, from basic to college level. Note that coursework does not qualify for financial aid because ESL is not a major. <i>Literacy level:</i> fifth- or sixth-grade literacy in native language (if less, referred to Adult Education — see below). <i>Instruction style:</i> Classroom instruction as well as tutoring, audio training, video training, small learning communities.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Adult Schools</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Oakland Adult and Career Education</b> — ESL classes proceed through multiple levels and use curriculum directly related to job readiness, including completing applications, interviewing, workplace safety, and career advancement. Courses also introduce basic computer skills. Enrollment is rolling with flexible entry and exit. Accreditation of OACE programs has recently been extended to include the ESL program. <i>Literacy level:</i> The lowest-level ESL course does not require literacy in any language. Students continuing from literacy are promoted based on 80% mastery of literacy standards. Students enrolling in OACE ESL classes at beginning levels are CASAS tested and interviewed to establish literacy levels prior to placement. <i>Instruction style:</i> Classroom instruction, student-centered methods, lecture, reading, writing, experiential, conversation, and project-based learning. Online and web-based instruction customized to individualized student needs are being expanded to include a range of ESL instruction from wholly online to blended learning options for students enrolled in traditional classrooms.</li> <li>• <b>West Contra Costa Adult Education</b> — ESL classes proceed through multiple levels, from literacy to advanced, and use a life skills curriculum that includes job readiness subjects such as job search strategies, workplace safety, and career advancement. Where possible, computer instruction is incorporated into the ESL classes. In partnership with Contra Costa College and Catholic Charities of the East Bay, WCCAE offers an ESL for early childhood education class designed to help adult school students transition into the early childhood education program at Contra Costa College; students earn 0.5 college credits for this course. WCCAE also currently offers an on-site workplace ESL class at a factory in Richmond, and has offered other workplace ESL classes in the past. <i>Literacy level:</i> The lowest-level ESL class does not require literacy in any language. <i>Instruction style:</i> Classroom instruction is student-centered, including communicative methods such as pair and group conversation and problem-solving, total physical response, and language experience approach and project learning. The WCCAE program also incorporates distance learning.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Employers</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few employers surveyed offer on-site ESL instruction.</li> </ul>

**Industry-Specific Training** All four educational institutions also offer training specifically for jobs in the industry clusters targeted by this study. Several of these industry-specific training programs are part of public-private collaborative workforce development initiatives. For example, the Peralta and Contra Costa Community College Districts have partnered to form the East Bay Career Advancement Academy, a broad initiative in which basic skills education is contextualized with industry-specific training in a variety of fields, together with connections to community-based partners for student support services, to adult education programs for basic skills training, and to employers for job placement.<sup>43</sup>

Several collaborative industry-specific training programs have also emerged through the efforts of the Oakland Partnership described previously. Those that relate to the target industry clusters for this study include:

- **The Allied Healthcare Sector Initiative**, which provides training and job placement in a variety of health jobs through Merritt College and community and employer partners, with a particular focus on training bilingual and bicultural students.
- **The East Bay Green Jobs Project (the Green Academy)**, which aligns green technology training, resources, and curriculum to meet employer demand for skills required in the new green economy with collaboration for recruitment, education, training, and job placement of students. Also, the Green Jobs Corps provides entry-level training in green industry for disadvantaged Oakland residents.
- **The Alameda Transportation and Logistics Academic Support Initiative (ATLAS)**, a job training program offered in collaboration with the Peralta Community College District that prepares students for entry-level and career jobs in warehousing, truck driving, and inventory control.

These programs, as well as others related to the target industries and provided by the Peralta and Contra Costa Community College Districts and the Oakland and West Contra Costa adult schools, are described in more detail in Table 6-3, Table 6-4, and Table 6-5.

Table 6-3 Training Available

	Construction and Green Technology	Health Care
Community Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peralta Community College District</b> — Accredited training at Laney College in a variety of construction crafts including carpentry, cabinet-making, construction management, HVAC, machine technology, and welding (all two to four semesters), as well as electrical (12 semesters). Green industry training, also accredited, includes renewable energy systems, energy design, green construction, green diesel mechanic, environmental control technology, solar, energy efficiency and auditing, and energy management (all one to four semesters). <i>English proficiency:</i> Requires ninth- to 12th-grade proficiency. Carpentry is also offered in Spanish. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture and lab. One program includes a hands-on home rebuilding project. <i>Employer connections:</i> Some.</li> <li>• <b>Contra Costa College</b> — Basic Skills for construction (reading/writing, math, life skills for construction) and Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate (overview of basic carpentry, dry-walling, electrical, plumbing, refrigeration). Accredited green industry training includes Process Control Technology and an AA degree in PTEC at Los Medanos College in Pittsburg. <i>English proficiency:</i> For construction, college-level proficiency required for most courses. Instruction is in English. Bilingual teachers' aides are available in some courses. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture, some lab, online, some internships. <i>Employer connections:</i> Strong connection to nonprofit construction employer in Richmond. Facilitate job or internship placement, student recruiting, specialized training. Employer connections for green industry as well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peralta Community College District</b> — The collaborative Allied Healthcare Sector Initiative program offers certificates and degrees through accredited coursework in licensed vocational nursing (LVN) (two years), microscopy (one year), medical assisting (18 weeks), emergency medical technician (EMT) (one year) nutrition/dietetics (two years), dietetic technician (one year), dietetic manager (one year), radiation technician (two years) at Merritt College and The Unity Council in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood. Programs particularly target bilingual/bicultural students. <i>English proficiency:</i> College level. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture, lab, clinical internships. <i>Employer connections:</i> Advisory board and relationships with relevant industries through Allied Health program.</li> <li>• <b>Contra Costa College</b> — Contra Costa College offers accredited programs in CNA, dental assisting, medical assisting, nursing, and other medical fields, including advanced skill training, certification, licensing, and internships. <i>Employer connections:</i> Job or internship placements, student recruiting, specialized training.</li> </ul>
Adult Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Oakland Adult and Career Education</b> — Currently developing an introductory program in the energy efficiency trades in collaboration with an energy sector partner. The program will include HVAC, insulation, whole home performance analysis, building theory, and weatherization retrofitting.</li> <li>• <b>West Contra Costa Adult Education</b> — Accredited courses in welding and building maintenance located on high school campuses. <i>English proficiency:</i> Courses are taught in English or Spanish, and a sixth-grade reading level is required. <i>Instruction style:</i> Demonstration and discussion. <i>Employer connections:</i> WCCAE helps facilitate student recruitment and testing with construction companies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Oakland Adult and Career Education</b> — Accredited program for Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). Four-month evenings program or three-months days program, resulting in CNA certificate. Students must complete clinical practicum for certification. OACE also offers a state-licensed home health-care aide (HHA) program and medical front office training including medical terminology and billing. CNA and HHA training offered in East Oakland. <i>English proficiency:</i> Ninth-grade level. Instruction is in English. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture, hands-on contextualized learning, demonstrations, collaborative learning, discussion. <i>Employer connections:</i> Connections to residential care facilities for practicum placement, which sometimes lead to jobs.</li> <li>• <b>West Contra Costa Adult Education</b> — Programs in Allied Health, including CNA, HHA, medical office training and billing. <i>Employer connections:</i> Job placements are available in CNA/HHA clinical programs.</li> </ul>
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction and green technology companies surveyed offer extensive on-the-job training for skills and safety. Green companies also offer on-site classroom instruction. Some outside construction training is also provided by unions and professional trainers. Some of these employers offer tuition reimbursement for off-site training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most health care employers surveyed offer extensive on-site training and continuing education, as well as tuition reimbursement and educational leave to participate in on- and off-site training.</li> </ul>

## 6 Training & Support *continued*

Table 6-4 Training Available

	<i>Logistics and International Trade</i>	<i>Custom Manufacturing</i>
<i>Community Colleges</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peralta Community College District</b> — The collaborative ATLAS program provides eight-week comprehensive accredited training in warehousing and logistics through College of Alameda. Oakland Adult and Career Education (see below) provides education support for the program. Contextualized math, English, and ESL are included in the program. ATLAS is planning to add training in Class A truck driving and possibly a merchant marine certificate. Coursework in logistics clerical (one semester) is also offered. <i>English proficiency:</i> Basic required. Sixth-grade reading level recommended. <i>Instruction style:</i> Direct instruction, lab, community-based research projects, self-directed and cooperative learning, multimedia, embedded assessments. Online coursework available. <i>Employer connections:</i> Extensive collaboration for ATLAS with Port of Oakland, City of Oakland, Teamsters, and International Longshoremen.</li> <li>• <b>Contra Costa College</b> — Various accredited courses related to logistics and trade. <i>English proficiency:</i> Read and write at the ninth-grade level. Bilingual teacher assistants available. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture, reading, experiential, online. <i>Employer connections:</i> Job and internship placement, student recruiting, specialized training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peralta Community College District</b> — Accredited training and certificates in specialty baking, pastries, machine technology, restaurant management, safety and sanitation, biotechnology manufacturing, and management and supervision (most three to four semesters). <i>English proficiency:</i> Ninth-grade level for culinary courses, 12th-grade level for machine technology. Culinary courses have some Chinese bilingual instructors and aides. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture and lab. <i>Employer connections:</i> Some.</li> <li>• <b>Contra Costa College</b> — Accredited training in culinary arts including basic skills, advanced skills, certification, and licensing. <i>English proficiency:</i> College-level proficiency required for most courses. Instruction is in English. Bilingual teachers' aides are available in some courses. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lecture, reading, experiential, online. <i>Employer connections:</i> Job or internship placement, student recruiting, specialized training.</li> </ul>
<i>Adult Schools</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Oakland Adult and Career Education</b> — OACE provides education support for the ATLAS program (see above). OACE is also launching a three-month adult education program in international trade, transportation, and logistics (ITTL) at the West Oakland McClymond's campus in Spring 2009. <i>English proficiency:</i> See above. <i>Instruction style:</i> See above. <i>Employer connections:</i> See above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Oakland Adult and Career Education</b> — Accredited training leading to a Certificate in Baking in West Oakland through collaboration with an industry partner. The nine-week full-time program includes baking skills, job readiness, support services, and job placement. OACE is planning to add programs in cake decorating and advanced baking. <i>English proficiency:</i> Sufficient to read and respond to written instructions, recipes, and safety information. Instruction is in English. Sixth-grade reading level recommended. <i>Instruction style:</i> Lectures, demonstrations, group work, homework, contextualized learning. <i>Employer connections:</i> Job search and job placement services provided to baking students.</li> </ul>
<i>Employers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few logistics and international trade employers provide on-site training. Several are partners in the ATLAS program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most custom manufacturing employers surveyed offer on-the-job and/or on-site training. Some work with outside trainers. Some provide tuition reimbursement for off-site training.</li> </ul>

**Table 6-5 Other Industries with Potential for the Target Populations**

<i>Community Colleges</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peralta Community College District</b> — Programs in bioscience technician, child development, early childhood special education, human services, social service paraprofessional, culinary arts (including baking and cooking), transportation/automotive technology, and small business entrepreneurship are offered at various campuses.</li> <li>• <b>Contra Costa College</b> — Programs in administration of justice, automotive services, biotechnology, business/accounting, business office technology, computer information systems, culinary arts, early childhood education, health and human services, and real estate. A program in appliance service technology is offered at Los Medanos College in Pittsburg. <i>Employer connections:</i> Job and internship placement is available in early childhood education, health and human services, and real estate.</li> </ul>
<i>Adult Schools</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Oakland Adult and Career Education</b> — Programs for administrative assistant, information technology, and fashion industry (basic sewing and pattern making). <i>Employer connections:</i> Advisory council with employers from these industries.</li> <li>• <b>West Contra Costa Adult Education</b> — Training offered in business and office computers.</li> </ul>

## Effective Training for the Target Populations

Most of the above training programs are designed for the general population of students, not specifically for members of the target populations. However, the training providers identified a number of best practices in providing effective training for two of the target populations.

Formerly and currently incarcerated individuals are served by specific programs at Oakland Adult and Career Education, Merritt College, and Contra Costa College, often through collaboration with community-based and/or public agencies that work with this population. Training providers indicated that formerly incarcerated individuals benefit from training that includes contextualized basic skills. Intensive classroom instruction and hands-on learning is more effective with these students than online courses. Transitional jobs, as well as job shadowing, is particularly valuable in demonstrating successful job performance for formerly incarcerated individuals. These individuals also greatly benefit from transitional support services and an integrated approach to providing a wide array

*“Contra Costa College understands the important role we play as the primary higher education and training provider in West Contra Costa County. The significance of that role is heightened when one considers the percentage of marginalized populations that face barriers to employment in our community. For this reason, we have developed specialized small learning communities to provide the extra support necessary to ensure success for our students. The college has a long history of being sensitive to the complex needs of these students and will continue to support efforts to improve our community, one student at a time.”* — McKinley Williams, President, Contra Costa College

of information and training in skill areas that will be necessary for sustainable success. For example, many ex-offenders need sustained support to learn how to manage finances responsibly, meet parenting responsibilities effectively, and understand the impact and consequences of substance abuse and other negative behaviors.

All of the training providers surveyed have extensive experience teaching adults with limited English skills, typically through English as a Second Language classes. Effective training approaches for adults with limited English proficiency include integration of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) into training as well as hands-on training and instruction. Educational support in students’ native languages facilitates learning as well. Partnerships with other agencies to provide culturally appropriate support services as well as assistance with job placement and development are also valuable, as are partnerships with employers for internships and job shadowing opportunities, particularly bilingual employers. Certificate programs are particularly useful for LEP adults

## 6 Training & Support *continued*

as they substantially increase their employability. Some training providers, particularly the adult schools, have provided ESL classes at job sites, nonprofit agencies, and other off-site locations, an approach that greatly increases accessibility of these classes for LEP individuals.

Training providers did not identify specific training strategies for aged-out foster youth. Contra Costa College has provided grant-funded small learning communities for current and former foster youth. The programs covered all student costs as well as meals, transportation, child care, and extra tutoring.

### Support Services

Because of the special challenges faced by individuals with criminal records, adults with limited English skills, and aged-out foster youth, supportive services beyond job training are often vital to enabling members of these target groups to obtain and retain employment. Needed support may include directly job-related services such as job search and placement. In addition, because members of these target populations often have very low incomes,

support that helps individuals meet more basic needs such as child care and transportation is also important; individuals without stable housing, child care, and transportation or without sufficient income to meet basic needs are often unable to participate in job training and may struggle with job performance. Support services are available through a variety of sources.

*“Former foster youth are resilient! They have overcome a lot, and don’t get as rattled as other people. They have a higher level of handling stress.”*

— Service provider

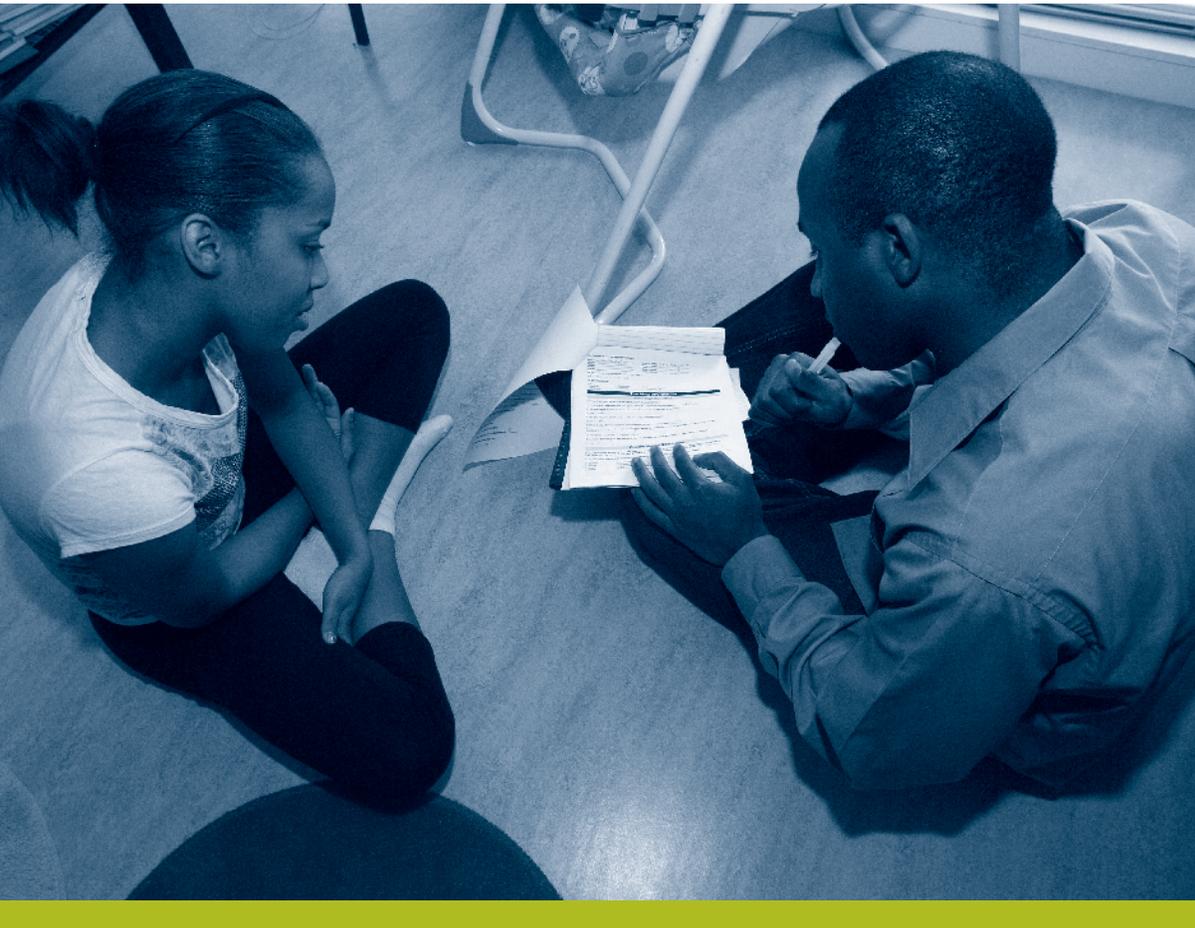
### Support Provided by Employers

Many employers surveyed for the current study offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which typically include counseling and other individual support services. Some offer on-the-job mentoring, and some offer assistance with transportation to the worksite. Several health care employers offer employee wellness programs. In some sectors, support for employees is

available through labor unions, particularly in the construction and logistics fields. In general, there is more limited employee support available from employers in the manufacturing and logistics sectors compared to the construction/green and health care sectors.

*“The community benefits from the successful reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals into the workforce.”*

— Service provider



Young adult meeting with her First Place case manager to discuss opportunities for going back to school



English as a Second Language students at the Oakland Adult and Career Education Center

### Support Provided by Training Institutions

In terms of employment-specific support, both community college systems provide substantial assistance with job search and placement. The Peralta Community Colleges have a One-Stop Center on-site at the College of Alameda, and Contra Costa College has a Job Placement Center, a College Network to connect employers with students seeking employment, and an annual job fair. Community colleges also help students secure internship and practicum placements. The adult schools surveyed largely assist students with job search and placement through partnerships with One-Stop Centers, community job fairs, and other outside resources.

The community colleges surveyed also offer educational support for students including tutoring, academic

***“The adults we serve with limited English skills will do almost anything to work — they are very motivated to be employed. They exhibit a willingness to learn, and to work long hours and in difficult circumstances, often taking jobs that others do not want.”***  
— Service provider

counseling, and accommodation for learning disabilities. Through targeted programs such as EOPS, students can also access more general support including mentoring, counseling, support groups, child care, and transportation vouchers. The adult schools surveyed provided more limited support, including babysitting for ESL classes. Oakland Adult and Career Education also had plans for a program to provide students with rebuilt computers. Both community colleges and adult schools also frequently refer students to community-based and public agencies for additional support services.

### Support Provided by Target Population Service Providers

Service providers that work with individuals from the three target populations provide an extensive array of support services related to employment as well as basic needs. In terms of employment-specific support, nearly all service providers surveyed provide some level of job readiness and soft skills training, as well as assistance with enrolling in training and education and financial and other support while students are completing training and education. Nearly all service providers surveyed also assist individuals with job searching, completing job applications, and securing internship and job placements. Many also assist financially with funds for work clothing, tools, union dues, and other work-related expenses. Finally, almost all service providers provide job coaching once individuals have secured employment.

In terms of support for basic needs, nearly all surveyed service providers offer case management and counseling. Many provide assistance with transportation. Some provide support that meets specific needs of the target population. Organizations serving formerly incarcerated individuals often provide sheltered employment opportunities, substance abuse recovery support, legal advice, and bonding and tax credit assistance for employers. Those that serve adults with limited English proficiency frequently offer translation and interpretation services, and the organizations working with former foster youth often provide assistance with child care. All of the service providers surveyed also maintain extensive networks with other public and private service agencies and frequently provide referrals for support in other areas such as housing, medical care, or asset building.

# 7

## Asset Building

***“Entrepreneurs play a key role in positively transforming the communities where they operate. Businesses can be a catalyst of economic prosperity by creating job opportunities in their own communities for populations that have historically experienced significant barriers to employment. This creates a multiplier effect that builds wealth for these individuals as well their community.” — Jose Corona, Executive Director, Inner City Advisors***

An important support service that can improve the well-being and job performance of low-income workers, including members of the target populations, is financial education and opportunities for financial asset building. In particular, access to quality financial products and services, savings opportunities, and government and private supports can help low-income employees build long-term assets and improve their capacity to handle personal economic crises. This is especially relevant for members of the target population who are new to the workforce, have never received steady paychecks in the United States, or are re-entering the workforce after a long-time employment gap.

From the worker’s perspective, asset-building opportunities can provide strategies for enhancing financial health over the long term, thus enabling individuals to meet basic needs, focus on performing well on the job, and advance their careers and family financial stability. From the employer’s perspective, asset-building support can serve as a tool to reduce turnover and improve retention of employees, thus addressing a common employer concern about hiring low-income individuals.

Personal financial distress among employees leads to poor health and reduced productivity on the job, as employees spend time at work worrying about personal finances and dealing with personal financial issues. Individuals with insecure personal finances often take second jobs, frequently leading to lower productivity at their primary jobs. Furthermore, employees with precarious personal finances are more likely to have wages garnished and to request paycheck and retirement fund advances, thus increasing employers’ overhead costs.

Consequently, programs designed to improve workers’ financial health can benefit employers by increasing productivity and reducing overhead costs. In addition to improving employees’ personal financial health, asset-building benefit programs can increase employee loyalty, leading to lower recruitment expenses and reduced workforce turnover. Moreover, from a community perspective, improved financial health among low-income individuals contributes to social and economic stability and facilitates business growth.

The workplace is an ideal place for individuals to focus on building financial assets because it is where income is earned and people have a natural relationship with money. The infrastructure of automated payroll deductions and worksite enrollment can also facilitate participation by employees in asset-building programs.

Frequently, traditional employee benefit programs do not meet the needs of low-wage workers. Paycheck-to-paycheck survival minimizes employees’ ability to consider long-term investments such as stock. Low incomes mean that health insurance premiums and co-pays are often unaffordable. In addition, complicated enrollment procedures can be barriers to participation for employees without financial investment experience, and cultural norms can contribute to distrust of mainstream savings and investment institutions.

However, there are many types of benefits that employers can provide to effectively support the financial health of entry-level or low-wage employees. Many employers choose to “bundle” several different benefits for their employees, with the primary types of benefits falling into four main categories:



Former foster youth celebrating completion of her financial education course

1 **Financial Education and Counseling** includes education and guidance related to employees' personal financial experience and goals. Examples include one-on-one sessions with a financial counselor; seminars and workshops; and communications through paycheck stuffers, print materials or DVDs, emails or text messages, or online tutorials. Individual financial counselors can help employees troubleshoot tasks such as opening a bank account, and some employers' Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) include financial counseling as part of their package of services. Seminars and workshops are particularly effective for lower-income workers who have limited knowledge of financial decision-making options, particularly when tied to specific plans with capacity for on-site enrollment and changes, and when coupled with contextual real-life examples and participation incentives.

**Best Practices: Paycheck Stuffers with Information on Financial Benefits and Services**

A number of employers insert paycheck stuffers to inform employees about the Earned Income Tax Credit and opportunities for free tax preparation services.

2 **Income Supports** increase or leverage employees' existing income. Examples include benefits such as transportation vouchers or on-site child care. Some employers offer space at the worksite for community organizations to assist employees with free tax preparation to access the Earned Income Tax Credit or enrollment in government support programs such as subsidized child care or low-cost medical insurance.

**Best Practices: Sponsoring Free Tax Preparation**

Some employers have sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites at the workplace, enabling employees to access government tax benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and to avoid paying high fees for tax preparation services.

## 7 Asset Building *continued*

③ **Financial Products** decrease the amount of money employees pay for essential financial services by offering quality low-cost, consumer-friendly transactional and credit products. Direct deposit can increase low-income employees' financial stability and reduce out-of-pocket

expenses for check-cashing, money orders, bill payment, and other services. However, up to one-third of low-wage workers who are eligible for direct deposit do not use it, usually because they do not have bank accounts. Thus programs that help “bank the unbanked” — by connecting employees to low-cost, consumer-friendly banking options and by addressing cultural

and logistical barriers to banking, such as language barriers, lack of familiarity with mainstream financial institutions, and identification requirements — can have particularly positive impacts on low-income workers' financial security. Examples of such programs include employer-provided low-cost pre-paid debit cards, employer-sponsored low-cost alternatives to payday loans, and credit union services located at the worksite.

### **Best Practices: Employer-Sponsored Tax Refund Anticipation Loans**

Some employers have offered employees secured loans backed by employees' IRS-certified tax refunds, through partnership with credit unions, as a low-cost alternative to refund anticipation loans.

④ **Asset-Building Programs** promote savings, ownership, and investment to help employees acquire, leverage, and preserve wealth. Opt-out automated systems for saving are particularly effective in building employee assets, particularly if money can be saved or invested before the worker receives it. Examples include payroll deductions for 401(k) plans or unrestricted savings accounts, as well as Employee Stock Purchase Plans (ESPPs) or Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs). Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are a form of savings account in which employers or community-based partners match employees' savings, with the funds then restricted to use for specific goals such as home ownership, education, or automobile purchase.

### **Best Practices: Employer-Sponsored Pre-Paid Debit Cards**

Community Financial Resources, an East Bay nonprofit, has developed a low-cost pre-paid debit card platform that can be implemented directly by an employer or community organization. The card has a transparent fee structure and allows for essential transactions such as bill payment, check writing, remittances, ATM use, and point-of-sale transactions. SEIU offers the pre-paid debit card as a benefit to members.

### **Best Practices: Employer-Sponsored Savings Accounts**

Give Something Back, an Oakland employer, offers an Individual Development Account (IDA) program that matches employee savings 1:1 for specific goals such as home ownership, higher education, or automobile purchase.

These four types of benefits are summarized in *Table 7-1*.

The primary reason many employers do not offer financial education and asset-building benefits is cost; particularly in these times when the costs of benefits such as health care are rising, some employers feel that offering services related to employees' financial health would require sacrificing other, more central benefits that are more highly valued by employees. In addition, financial education paid for by employers is not exempt from federal taxation unless it relates to retirement planning.

Many financial-health benefits can be provided by employers at low cost, however. Free curricula created by entities such as the FDIC are available for financial education workshops, and local financial institutions such as credit unions and banks can be approached as partners to provide noncommercial financial education and low-cost financial products at no cost to the employer. Businesses can also partner with community-based and governmental organizations to connect employees to programs such as IDAs and free tax preparation services. Providing employers with a toolkit of low-cost approaches to supporting employees' financial health can encourage employer adoption of these types of benefits.<sup>45</sup>



Customer service representative at Give Something Back filling office supply orders

Asset-building programs and financial health benefits can create important opportunities for low-income employees to protect their day-to-day financial stability and invest in their long-term financial health. Just as important as asset building, however, is the opportunity to earn wages that pay enough to meet living expenses. Various calculations of the income needed to achieve economic self-sufficiency in different localities are available (see, for example, the Self-Sufficiency Standard published by the Insight Center for Community Economic Development at [www.insightcced.org](http://www.insightcced.org)). Local living wage ordinances and labor union bargaining are both tools that have been used to increase the general level of wages for low-income workers. Public and community investment in and promotion of industries that pay higher wages to entry-level workers, including many of the industries targeted in this study, are also strategies for raising the wages of low-income and less-experienced workers to rates that enable financial self-sufficiency.

*“The financial health of employees — including adequate income to provide for their families, savings for emergencies and investments such as education, long-term plans for retirement, and low-cost ways to access their money — contributes to productivity, good customer service, and retention.” — Lisa Forti, Program Coordinator, Income & Asset Development, Urban Strategies Council*

Table 7-1 Asset-Building Benefits for Employees

	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Tools &amp; Strategies</i>
<i>Financial Education &amp; Counseling</i>	Provide education and guidance relevant to personal financial experience and goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one sessions</li> <li>• Workshops and seminars</li> <li>• Print materials, including paycheck stuffers</li> <li>• Emails or text messages</li> <li>• Internet tutorials</li> <li>• Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)</li> </ul>
<i>Income Supports</i>	Increase or leverage existing income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free tax preparation</li> <li>• Benefits enrollment</li> <li>• Work supports such as transportation vouchers</li> </ul>
<i>Financial Products</i>	Decrease the amount of money paid for essential financial services by offering low-cost, consumer-friendly transactional and credit products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-paid debit cards</li> <li>• Direct deposit</li> <li>• Payday loan alternatives</li> </ul>
<i>Asset-Building Programs</i>	Create opportunities for savings, ownership, and investment to acquire, leverage, and preserve wealth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)</li> <li>• Automatic enrollment in retirement plans</li> <li>• Auto-save programs</li> <li>• Employee Stock Purchase or Ownership Plans (ESPPs or ESOPs)</li> <li>• Savers clubs</li> </ul>

# 8

## Recommendations

*“Employers will do well to seek out the many resources and tools available in this report. Resources such as Enterprise Zone Credits and Employment Trainings Funds have played a decisive role in our company’s growth and profitability over the past 18 years. The opportunities are there for businesses to find and use them for competitive advantage.”*

— Mike Hannigan, President, Give Something Back, and Chair, Oakland WIB

### Introduction

Through the surveys of employers, labor unions, training institutions, and service providers, as well as through the focus groups with members of the target populations, a number of recommendations for best practices related to employment for the target populations were identified. These recommendations were compiled and then reviewed and discussed by the members of the Stakeholder Roundtable. Through a collaborative process of knowledge sharing and debate that drew on the multiple perspectives represented in the roundtable — ranging from employers, to service providers, to community advocates, to training institutions, to representatives from local Workforce Investment Boards — the group modified, augmented, and prioritized the recommendations, ultimately coming to consensus on the final slate presented below.

Recommendations are divided into four primary sections: Best Practices for Employers, for Training Institutions, for Service Providers, and for Policymakers, with specifics regarding the three target populations within each section.

### Best Practices for Employers

1 The hiring incentives desired by employers were almost identical across all sectors and all target populations. Thus to encourage employers to hire from the target populations, the following three options should be explored:

- Financial incentives such as tax breaks, business fee remission, and subsidized wages;
- Outside support to help employers meet the needs of employees from the target populations, particularly outside job coaches who can help employers resolve job performance problems with targeted employees; and
- Community recognition.

### Best Practices: Accessing Tax Credits For Hiring Low-Income Local Residents

Give Something Back has utilized tax credits extensively for hiring residents of the Oakland Enterprise Zone, recruiting employees through Oakland-based community agencies and including questions about Enterprise Zone eligibility on standard job application materials. Accessing the tax credits requires an investment of HR time and training, but Give Something Back has found that the financial benefits have greatly exceeded the costs, as well as adding to its company culture of commitment to the local community. Similarly, in Richmond, Galaxy Desserts has utilized Richmond Enterprise Zone tax credits to encourage hiring of local residents.

2 Job coaching was one of the incentives most frequently requested by employers, and nearly all service providers surveyed provide job coaching to their clients. Thus employers should be provided with information about job coaching (e.g. what’s available? what’s effective?) and service providers should connect with employers to facilitate job coaching that involves not only the employee, but also her/his employer.

*“Job coaches are a good incentive for a business to hire from disadvantaged groups, because they can provide a lot of the extra support that’s needed.”*  
— Logistics and trade employer

3 Many employers are willing to support employees from the target populations, but have little experience doing so. Thus employers should be provided with in-kind and/or financial support to train supervisors about the specific needs of and effective strategies for supporting employees from the target populations. An employer toolkit that describes best practices, includes sample job application forms and recruitment materials, and provides information about available tax credits and similar programs would be especially valuable in supporting employers who are interested in hiring from the target populations. Employers should also be provided with information about other employers' experiences working with the target populations, e.g. tips, effective practices, and success stories.

#### Best Practices: Obtaining Tax Credits for Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Individuals and Youth

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit provides a federal tax credit for employers that hire individuals from certain targeted groups, including individuals hired within a year of release from felony incarceration, adults ages 18–40 or summer youth ages 16–17 who reside in an Empowerment Zone or Renewal Zone, and other qualified low-income individuals such as disabled veterans, welfare or Food Stamp recipients, SSI recipients, or vocational rehabilitation referrals. The amount of the credit varies by target group, typically up to \$6,000, with specified requirements for employee retention. For more information visit [www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs\\_and\\_Training/Work\\_Opportunity\\_Tax\\_Credit.htm](http://www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/Work_Opportunity_Tax_Credit.htm).

4 Human resources staff are vital to implementing inclusive hiring processes and promoting a company culture of accepting and supporting members of the target populations in the workplace. HR staff in the target industries would benefit from partnerships with service providers and peer support opportunities to learn about effective approaches for supporting employees from the target populations, training managers to effectively supervise and support these employees, and promoting a corporate environment that is supportive of these types of efforts, while appropriately managing risk.

5 Unions are conduits to some jobs in the target industry sectors, particularly for jobs with living wages in construction and logistics and international trade. Thus workforce development strategies designed to facilitate employment of the target populations in these industries need to involve unions as partners. Unions should also be encouraged to ensure that their training and apprenticeship programs and hiring processes are readily accessible to members of the target populations, for example by offering training in languages other than English or with assistance from bilingual translators. Furthermore, providing unions with information about tax credits and other benefits that members of the target populations can bring to employers would enable unions to facilitate and directly promote employment of target population members.

*“We receive tax credits for employing formerly incarcerated individuals, and the community benefits when other people see that they are employed.” — Logistics and trade employer*

#### Best Practices: Bilingual Apprenticeship Programs

The Carpenters' Union, Northern California Region, has increased the accessibility of its training by providing bilingual teachers for many of its apprenticeship programs, and translating some classes into Spanish.



Participants in Cypress Mandela Training Center's pre-apprenticeship program in the construction trades

## 8 Recommendations *continued*

6 The training providers surveyed offer a wide variety of accredited and affordable job readiness, basic skills, English as a Second Language, and industry-specific training classes and programs. Employers should consider providing tuition reimbursement and educational leave to allow employees to access these types of off-site training. Off-site employee training in English as a Second Language, basic skills, and soft skills might offer a particularly positive cost-benefit ratio for employers, as these skills substantially impact employee performance and advancement potential, but few employers offer these types of training directly.

### **Best Practices: Accessing State Employment Training Funds**

The California Employment Training Panel (ETP) will reimburse employers for part of the cost of training current employees. Employers must face out-of-state competition or qualify under other special criteria, and trainees must earn a minimum base wage including health benefits (\$14.18 per hour for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties in 2009) and remain employed by the company for at least 90 days after training. Reimbursement rates range from \$15 to \$27 per trainee per session, depending on the type of training and type of employer. Special programs are available for small businesses and companies operating in high unemployment areas. Training institutions, employer groups (such as chambers of commerce), WIBs, and WIA-funded organizations can also access funds to provide training, including vocational ESL classes, for unemployed workers. Locally, East Bay employer Give Something Back uses ETP funds to support training for its employees. For more information about the program, visit [www.etp.ca.gov/process.cfm](http://www.etp.ca.gov/process.cfm).

7 Many training providers are also willing to provide basic skills, ESL, and specific vocational training courses on-site at employer's business locations. Employers should partner with adult education schools and community colleges, providing free on-site training space and time before, after, or during shifts for employees to attend classes. Employers can explore partnerships with these training providers to offer on-site training to their employees at minimal cost.

8 More broadly, employers should be encouraged to actively communicate and develop partnerships with training providers and service providers in order to articulate training and support needs, so that effective collaborations can be developed that will support target population employees while meeting employers' needs for specific skills and general job readiness and on-the-job performance among workers.

### **Best Practices: On-the-Job Training in Construction and Green Technology**

Many construction and green technology employers provide extensive on-the-job training for employees, which makes training accessible and affordable for individuals with limited prior work experience. Gardeners' Guild offers a structured on-site training program, with testing, for promotion to higher levels of employment. Several construction companies partner with labor unions for employee training. SolarCity has collaborated with a community college to develop a training module for employees which is now available to the general public.

9 Language and basic skills limitations are barriers for some members of the target populations in completing job application forms. Employers should consider allowing applicants to complete applications online and/or take application forms off-site to complete and then return, so that applicants can complete forms with assistance from service providers or others who can help with translation or literacy challenges.

### **Best Practices: Conducting Multilingual Hiring Processes**

A number of custom manufacturing employers, including Galaxy Desserts, Premier Organics, Mission Foods, and Bay Area Restaurant Management Group (East Bay Foods, Inc.) offer job application forms and/or job interviews in both English and Spanish.

10 Members of the target populations often have limited networks of job contacts, contributing to their underrepresentation in the workforce in some of the target industries. Thus employers should consider expanding advertisement of job openings from word-of-mouth and targeted listings to vehicles that are more broadly accessible to the target populations, such as One-Stop Centers, recruitment initiatives at adult education centers, and/or online listings.

11 Struggles to meet basic needs often hinder members of the target populations in their efforts to be reliable and productive employees. Employers should consider partnering with community-based organizations to provide benefits such as on-the-job child care, assistance with transportation, and eligibility screening for public programs that provide supports such as child care, medical care, clothing, and transportation to help ensure that employees' basic needs are met so that they can maximize job performance. Employers would also benefit from information about community-based and public agencies that offer support services to benefit employees from the target populations in order to provide appropriate referrals; 2-1-1 and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are two resources that can help employers connect their employees with needed community services.

**Best Practices: On-Site Eligibility Screening and Enrollment for Public Benefits**

SF Works, an arm of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, has developed a program to offer free eligibility screening and enrollment in government benefits (e.g. low-cost dental care or eyeglasses, low-cost auto insurance, city parks and recreation memberships, etc.) to employees at a number of large hospitals in San Francisco.

12 Transitional jobs are short-term (three- to twelve-month) wage-paying jobs that combine real work, development of soft and hard job skills, and supportive services, as a tool to enable individuals with limited work experience to transition into long-term employment. Related organizations are alternative staffing agencies or temporary employment agencies that provide structured job placements with extra employee coaching and supervision. These types of sheltered work experiences could offer a pathway into sustainable employment for some members of the target populations, particularly for formerly incarcerated individuals and aged-out foster youth. Employers should consider working with transitional job programs and alternative staffing agencies as a way to meet their staffing needs while accessing extra employee support and helping members of the target populations build their soft and hard job skills and work experience.

**Best Practices: Facilitating Connections through Transitional Jobs**

Short-term jobs that incorporate skill development and supportive services are very effective in helping individuals with limited work experience transition to permanent employment. The National Transitional Jobs Network is a membership organization for transitional job providers around the country, and publishes materials on best practices for starting transitional jobs programs and designing transitional jobs specifically for formerly incarcerated individuals and youth. They also provide contact information for current transitional jobs providers nationwide. For more information, visit [www.transitionaljobs.net](http://www.transitionaljobs.net).

13 Employee financial health benefits employers through enhanced employee recruitment and retention and increased productivity. Employee benefits relating to financial health also improve low-income workers' personal financial stability and help workers build long-term financial assets. Many financial health benefits cost little for employers to provide, especially if conducted in partnership with public or community-based agencies. Thus employers should be provided with informational toolkits describing different types of financial health benefits and methods for providing them. Employers should also be connected with community-based and governmental agencies that can serve as partners to provide these types of employee benefits at a reduced or free cost to employers. Types of financial health programs that employers can provide include:

- Financial education and counseling, such as offering financial literacy workshops or paycheck stuffers about the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Income supports, such as sponsoring free tax preparation services or providing transportation vouchers.
- Financial products, such as direct deposit or pre-paid debit cards.
- Asset-building programs, such as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) or retirement savings plans with automatic enrollment.

**Best Practices: Employer-Sponsored Payday Loans**

A community organization in Kentucky has piloted an employer-sponsored low-cost payday loan alternative that incorporates a savings component, and has achieved high rates of employee take-up and very low default rates. The San Francisco-based nonprofit Rubicon National Social Innovations is developing a similar product with automatic enrollment features to keep employer costs low.

## 8 Recommendations *continued*

### Recommendations Specific to Employing Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

1 Existing incentive programs such as federal Fidelity Bonds and federal Work Opportunity Tax Credits are particularly designed to encourage employers to hire individuals with criminal records and thereby limit employer risk. Employers should be provided with information about the benefits of these programs and how to access them, as well as individualized assistance with implementing them.

#### Best Practices: Accessing Federal Bonding for Employees with Criminal Records

Employers who hire individuals with criminal records are eligible to access federally sponsored Fidelity Bonds that guarantee honesty for at-risk employees. There is no cost to employers or employees to access the bonds, which insure employers against loss of money or property due to dishonest acts by covered employees. Bonds are typically issued for \$5,000 coverage, with no deductible and a six-month term, with the possibility of renewal for an additional six months. In the history of the federal program, which has placed over 42,000 individuals, over 99% of bonded individuals have proven to be honest employees, with only a 1% claim rate. Bond issuance is streamlined and user-friendly, with automatic instant approval and no special application required for job seekers or employers. Though bonds are typically used for individuals with criminal records, other at-risk employees are also eligible for bonding under the federal program, including economically disadvantaged youth and adults who lack a work history, individuals recovering from substance addiction, and welfare recipients and others with a poor credit history. For more information: [www.bonds4jobs.com](http://www.bonds4jobs.com).

2 Employers are sometimes unclear about what information about criminal convictions is legally allowed to be considered in employment decisions. This information should be provided to employers.

*“They say after seven years, you don’t need to list a felony, but sometimes employers seem to ask about them and sometimes they don’t. Who knows what I should be telling people?”* —Formerly incarcerated individual

3 Service providers often work closely with formerly incarcerated clients to identify appropriate jobs and help them complete the application process. Employers should make information readily available about their hiring policies with respect to criminal convictions so that applicants and service providers do not waste time on applying for jobs that are inaccessible to ex-offenders.

### Recommendations Specific to Employing LEP Adults

1 Adults with limited English skills are sometimes unable to access jobs for which they are qualified because the application forms and interviews are in English, even though performing the job does not require English proficiency. Similarly, on-site job training required for advancement is sometimes offered only in English. Thus employers should be encouraged to translate job application and training materials and provide translators for interviews and on-site training to enable LEP individuals to access these opportunities.

2 Employers in all sectors expressed interest in facilitating English as Second Language training among their LEP employees. Most are unable to provide this service directly. Thus employers should be connected with training institutions and/or community-based organizations to provide on- or off-site ESL training for employees.

3 English proficiency is especially important for promotions. Employers should be encouraged to facilitate ESL training for existing employees through on-site classes, partnership with ESL providers, or tuition reimbursement and/or educational leave.

### Recommendations Specific to Employing Aged-Out Foster Youth

1 Most employers surveyed know very little about former foster youth, but many expressed interest in supporting aged-out youth as employees. Thus employers should be provided with basic information about this target population and their employment needs.

*“One of the strengths of aged-out foster youth as employees is that they are highly motivated. Unlike most 18-year-olds, they are not working for spending money but for money in order to eat and pay the rent and PG&E.”*  
— Service provider

2 National organizations that support employment and workplace-based learning for current and former foster youth have outlined strategies for employers to promote successful workplace experiences with young adults.

Recommendations include:

- Thorough initial orientation to the workplace;
- Early and clear communication about job expectations;
- Active and supportive supervision with frequent constructive feedback from supervisors;
- Specific training around workplace safety issues; and
- Coordination with community-based service providers to facilitate ongoing job coaching and support.

Employers working with aged-out foster youth should implement these practices to maximize opportunities for successful long-term employment.

### Best Practices for Training Institutions

1 Members of the target populations often struggle to positively differentiate themselves from the crowd of job applicants and secure jobs due to perceived limitations in terms of criminal records, lack of language skills, or lack of work experience. Formal job skill certifications and licenses can compensate for some of these barriers and enhance employability for members of the target populations. Thus training institutions should consider structuring training programs (and perhaps even programs in basic skills, soft skills, and English as a Second Language) to result in formal certificates that can be listed by job applicants on employment applications.

#### Best Practices: Incorporating Basic Skills Education into Industry-Specific Job Training

Peralta and Contra Costa community colleges partner to coordinate the East Bay Career Advancement Academy, a series of industry-specific job training programs where basic skills education is incorporated into industry-specific training. Collaborators include community partners such as Rubicon Programs, which provide assessments and referrals of students into the program; local adult schools; Workforce Investment Boards; and employers, who provide students with internships and job placements.

2 Members of the target populations often lack basic literacy and math skills, which limit their abilities to secure jobs, take advantage of training opportunities, and qualify for promotions. Training institutions should include contextualized basic skills as an integrated component of industry-specific classes.

#### Best Practices: Collaboration of Logistics and Trade Employers, Unions, and Training Institutions

The Alameda Transportation and Logistics Academic Support Initiative (ATLAS) is a collaborative eight-week program that provides comprehensive accredited training in warehousing and logistics through the College of Alameda, one of the Peralta Community Colleges. Oakland Adult and Career Education provides basic skills education support for the program, as contextualized math, English, and ESL education is included in the program. ATLAS is planning to add training in Class A truck driving and possibly a merchant marine certificate. Job placement for ATLAS graduates is achieved through extensive collaboration with the Port of Oakland, the City of Oakland, the Teamsters, and the International Longshoremen.

3 Lack of soft skills is a barrier to hiring and especially retention for many members of the target populations. Thus training institutions should provide specific training in soft skills, including cultural norms and on-the-job conflict resolution strategies. Training institutions should also consider incorporating job shadowing and internship opportunities as components of training programs to help trainees develop soft skills and job contacts in a supportive environment.

4 Many members of the target populations lack substantial work experience, and many employers rely on positive job references in making hiring decisions. Thus training providers should consider including internships and other supervised employment as part of training programs in order to build opportunities for trainees to develop positive employer references.

5 Most members of the target populations are very low-income and cannot afford to take advantage of training opportunities that require high out-of-pocket expenses or with schedules that do not allow for simultaneous paid employment. Thus training providers should facilitate paid training opportunities and financial aid that includes living expenses and/or flexible training schedules that accommodate work schedules.

## 8 Recommendations *continued*

### Recommendations Specific to Training LEP Adults

1 ESL classes that include industry-specific job-related terminology are most valuable in increasing employability and promotion opportunities for LEP adults. Thus training providers should work with employers to identify industry-specific language needs to incorporate into ESL training. Helping employers develop industry-specific ESL training materials to provide to their employees could be another approach to helping employees build targeted language skills.

#### **Best Practices: Collaboration of Health Care Employers and Training Institutions**

The collaborative Allied Healthcare Sector Initiative program offers certificates and degrees through accredited coursework in a variety of medical careers, including licensed vocational nursing (LVN), microscopy, medical assisting, emergency medical technician (EMT), nutrition/dietetics, dietetic technician, dietetic manager, radiation technician. Classes are offered by the Peralta Community Colleges both at Merritt College and off-site at the nonprofit Unity Council in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood. The program particularly targets bilingual/bicultural students. Internship and job placements for students are secured through collaboration with local health care employers.



Maggie Montalvo, Unity Council Healthcare Sector Manager, providing orientation to two medical assistant students for their internship at Kaiser Hospital

2 Many individuals with limited English skills are unable to access industry-specific training because it requires oral and/or written proficiency in English, even if performing the jobs does not require a high level of English proficiency. Thus training providers should offer industry-specific training in languages other than English or with available assistance from bilingual tutors and aides.

3 Some individuals with limited proficiency in English also lack basic literacy skills in their native languages, and basic literacy is sometimes required to access even beginning ESL training. Thus training providers should offer beginning ESL classes that do not have literacy requirements, and should consider offering basic literacy training in languages other than English.

4 Immigrants often face cultural as well as linguistic barriers to employment, as cultural norms related to eye contact, workplace interpersonal relations and communication, and other behaviors and ways of conducting business in immigrants' countries of origin are often different from those in the United States. Thus soft skills training in cultural expectations for the workplace can help immigrants navigate the social and cultural aspects of securing and retaining employment.

5 Some LEP individuals are certified to work in skilled occupations in their home countries, but lack the parallel certification to work in the same industries in the United States. Thus training institutions should offer accelerated programs, with extra language support, to help individuals transfer existing skills and prior certifications into U.S. equivalents.

*"Immigrant adults are often skilled, with experience from their countries of origin, but simply lack the certification or education required on the job here. Employers benefit from their knowledge and experience and their sincere desire to do a good job." — Service provider*

6 Many LEP individuals are extremely low-income. However, ESL classes provided by community colleges require payment of fees and are not usually eligible for standard financial aid. Thus these training institutions should be encouraged to find strategies to provide private financial aid to lower the out-of-pocket cost for participating in ESL training. Adult schools provide ESL classes free of charge.

## Best Practices for Service Providers

1 Support for basic needs is necessary for many members of the target populations to succeed in employment. Thus service providers should offer wraparound employment support in the form of assistance with transportation, phone access, child care, and affordable housing, coupled with one-on-one case management to identify individual needs. Connecting clients with long-term sustainable supports for these basic needs (beyond their short-term involvement with the service provider) is vital for facilitating job retention and promotions.

### Glossary of Terms: Job Coaches, Case Managers, and Related Positions

**Case Manager:** Works with individual to address a broad variety of work, family, and/or personal needs and coordinate needed services. May be involved in any of the tasks described below.

**Job Developer:** Builds relationships with employers that have job opportunities, and matches unemployed individuals with potentially appropriate open positions.

**Employment Specialist:** Works with unemployed individual to help with job readiness, job search, and application process.

**Job Coach:** Works with individual who has obtained employment (may also work with employer) to help with job performance and retention as well as positioning for promotion.

**Job Mentor:** Works with individual who is currently employed to offer advice and guidance about job performance and long-term career development. Typically a volunteer, not a paid professional.

2 Due to low incomes, members of the target populations are sometimes unable to access training or employment opportunities because of lack of funds to cover one-time costs such as tools, union dues, and work clothing. Thus service providers should provide or facilitate connection to resources to cover these employment “start-up costs” for clients.

3 Members of the target populations sometimes fail to apply for well-matched job opportunities due to lack of familiarity with industries and the types of jobs they offer. Service providers should help address this barrier by providing clients with information about priority industries and jobs, through direct informational programs and/or through partnerships with employers, training institutions, or intermediaries such as One-Stop Centers or trade councils.

4 Many members of the target populations lack job contacts for legitimate, fair-paying, non-seasonal work, which limits their access to job openings, particularly in certain industries (e.g. logistics/trade and construction). Service providers should help address this limitation by building institutional connections to employers in industries that offer well-matched job opportunities for their clients. Service providers should seek out connections not only with large employers, but also with small and medium-sized businesses, which may be more flexible in hiring, particularly in a troubled or transitioning economy. Strategies for building connections should be targeted to the size and specific characteristics of potential employers. For example, large companies may benefit from formal presentations and general information about the target population’s characteristics, strengths, and needs, while a more appropriate approach for small businesses might comprise basic education about the target population and a more intensive focus on individual employee job coaching and hands-on employer support.

*“It was most helpful when employment counselors had established good relationships with employers.” — LEP adult*

5 The complexities of applying for jobs and training opportunities and accessing asset-building opportunities can serve as barriers for individuals who have limited experience with employment processes and educational and financial institutions. Thus service providers should offer clients hands-on support with navigating job, training, and financial institutions and formal application processes. Assistance with completing applications and escorts to job interviews are particularly helpful.

6 Members of the target populations are often successful in securing entry-level jobs, but then struggle to retain those jobs or to gain promotions that will lead to long-term financial self-sufficiency. Thus after individuals have obtained employment, service providers should create post-employment programs to provide less intensive but longer-term ongoing support for clients to help them retain jobs and strategize career advancement.

*“I’ve never had a promotion. They are not offered to people in the positions I’ve been in.” — Aged-out foster youth*

## 8 Recommendations *continued*

7 To achieve long-term economic stability, members of the target populations need to build not just incomes but also assets. Service providers should form partnerships to facilitate financial education and asset-building opportunities for their clients.

8 Employers are often unfamiliar with the target populations, and thus may be unaware of target population members as potential employees, or they may be reluctant to hire from these populations due to lack of understanding or misinformation. Service providers can encourage employers to consider target population members as

employees by providing general education about the characteristics and needs of members of the target populations. Marketing the specific strengths and benefits that target population members bring to employment — both in terms of intangibles such as strong motivation and concrete

benefits such as employer tax credits — can further encourage employers to hire from the target populations. Service providers should also consider providing printed and online materials as well as trainings and presentations to clearly explain eligibility for and procedures for accessing tax credits, bonding, and other concrete employer benefits. This information should be distributed both to employers and to job applicants from the target populations.

*“Many people with criminal records are eager to demonstrate that they are both rehabilitated and hard workers. Many are highly motivated and just want a chance to prove they can do the work. And from an employer standpoint, there are quite a few benefits to hiring formerly incarcerated individuals, e.g. tax credits and bonding.” — Service provider*

### Recommendations Specific to Serving Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

1 Ex-offenders are sometimes unclear about their legal rights and/or the process to pursue regarding disclosure of criminal justice involvement and record expungement. Thus service providers should connect ex-offenders with access to legal advice and representation to address issues such as criminal history remedies (including remedies to regain driving privileges), housing law, credit law, disability disclosure and accommodation counseling, and various employment law concerns. Adult education programs can also offer information, training, and support on how to pursue these options.

#### Best Practices: Legal Services for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Rubicon Programs’ Hawkins Center, serving formerly incarcerated individuals, provides legal representation and brief legal advice to help individuals lower legal barriers to employment, e.g. through criminal history remedies and counseling on housing law, credit law, disability disclosure and accommodation, and other aspects of employment law.

2 Conditions of parole and probation can sometimes be barriers for formerly incarcerated individuals in scheduling work and meeting employer expectations. Thus service providers should work with parole officers to encourage strategies that will facilitate rather than inhibit employment.

3 Many ex-offenders owe child support payment in arrears, leading to garnishment of wages when they begin employment. Thus service providers should work with child support collection agencies to encourage strategies that will support rather than discourage legal employment.

4 Substance addiction is a challenge for some formerly incarcerated individuals. Thus service providers should offer or form partnerships to make available substance abuse treatment and ongoing support for recovery.

5 Individuals with criminal records are ineligible for some types of public benefits related to affordable housing and other basic needs. Thus service providers should work closely with public agencies and individually with clients to identify restrictions, flexibility, and unblocked opportunities to access public benefit programs.



Students in the construction trades at Contra Costa College in San Pablo



Cindy Hay, Employment Support Specialist, providing assistance to a client at the Unity Council One-Stop Career Center

## Recommendations Specific to Serving LEP Adults

1 Undocumented status severely limits employment opportunities, and also limits some training opportunities and even ESL class opportunities. Thus service providers should assist clients with pursuing citizenship and other methods of achieving legal work status, either directly or through partnership with legal aid providers or other agencies. Employers are also often unfamiliar with immigration documents for refugees who are legally permitted to work; service providers can help address this problem by helping refugees clarify immigration documents to employers.

### Best Practices: Language Assistance for Adults with Limited English Proficiency

Organizations that serve adults with limited English proficiency frequently provide language and translation assistance for completing job applications and preparing resumes, as well as escorts to job interviews.

2 Many immigrants are unaware of the types of services and resources provided by public and private agencies in the United States, or are unsure of their legal rights to access such resources. Thus service providers should inform immigrant clients about resources for which they are eligible through public and private agencies.

3 LEP adults may be particularly unlikely to utilize mainstream financial institutions such as banks due to language barriers, cultural lack of familiarity, and because of the identification documentation required. As a result, individuals often pay high fees for check cashing, money orders, and other financial services. Service providers should work with LEP clients to address the informational and logistical barriers to taking advantage of lower-cost mainstream financial services.

## Recommendations Specific to Serving Aged-Out Foster Youth

1 A lack of basic skills in literacy and math and a lack of a high school diploma or GED severely limit the long-term job prospects of many former foster youth. Thus service providers should partner with educational institutions and focus on supporting aged-out youth in completing a high school credential and building basic reading and math skills.

*“Math skills have held me back — I had to take a test for one job application and I don’t think I did well on that.” — Aged-out foster youth*

2 Lack of work experience is another primary barrier to employment for former foster youth. Internships and other sheltered employment opportunities that model real job expectations can be especially valuable in helping young people develop soft skills and work experience, and would particularly benefit both youth under age 18 who are still in foster care as well as young adults who have recently aged out of the foster care system.

3 Jobs that are appealing to many aged-out youth are those that require only short-term initial training but have opportunities for advancement with more training. Thus service providers should identify these types of jobs and prioritize these industries for building connections with training institutions and employers.

4 Many aged-out young adults require flexible job schedules because they are often attending school as well as working and/or have child care constraints. Thus service providers should identify these types of jobs and prioritize these industries for building connections with training institutions and employers.

*“Lack of work experience has been a big obstacle — even when trying to get an entry-level position, employers want some experience.” — Aged-out foster youth*

## 8 Recommendations *continued*

- 5 Balancing work and education/training is a major challenge for many aged-out foster youth, and should be an area addressed by service providers working with this population. More generally, many former foster youth have had limited opportunities to develop the self-initiative and critical thinking skills needed to manage the employment and personal challenges of adult life. Service providers should create opportunities for former foster youth to make choices and exercise independence in order to support a successful transition to adult self-reliance.
- 6 Many former foster youth have ongoing mental health needs that can interfere with their ability to work if not well-supported. Thus service providers should provide or connect clients with mental health supports as part of wraparound employment support. Helping clients put in place long-term plans for mental health support is important for long-term sustainability of employment and mental well-being.

- 7 A lack of social support can limit former foster youth in both employment, due to lack of job contacts, and in

meeting basic needs, due to lack of emotional and practical personal support. Service providers should help address this challenge by connecting clients with mentors and other

opportunities to build permanent connections with caring adults.

*“Someone to go with me when I go to a job interview, just to be there as a support, would be helpful. Also someone to practice interviewing with me.” — Aged-out foster youth*

- 8 Research shows that former foster youth tend to follow four different work trajectories as young adults: 1) *Consistently connected*, where youth enter the workforce before age 18 and maintain high levels of employment from age 18 into their 20s; 2) *Later connected*, where youth start work more slowly, beginning employment after age 18 and progressing slowly into their mid-20s; 3) *Initially connected*, where youth work prior to age 18 and through their late teens, but then drop out of the workforce in their 20s; and 4) *Never connected*, where youth fail to enter the workforce prior to or after entering adulthood. Strategies to support former foster youth in finding and retaining employment may need to be tailored to address the needs of young adults on each of these different trajectories.

### **Best Practices: One-on-One Case Management for Aged-Out Foster Youth**

Many organizations that work with aged-out foster youth provide one-on-one counselors or case managers who offer young adults hands-on support with applying for jobs and securing needed employment support such as transportation and child care, and then provide one-on-one job coaching once employment has been secured. At First Place for Youth, an employment specialist provides additional support around identifying jobs of interest, preparing resumes and cover letters, and practicing for interviews.



First Place job coach prepares a former foster youth for his first day of work

## Best Practices for Policymakers

1 Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) can play a particularly important role with respect to promoting employment for members of the target populations. WIBs can encourage development and support of sustainable jobs for disadvantaged populations by promoting the concept of self-sufficiency employment throughout WIB communications and activities, thus focusing on the larger goals of improving the economy and quality of life of the local community, in addition to meeting minimum legislated WIB responsibilities.

### Best Practices: Promotion of Sustainable Employment for Disadvantaged Populations

Some Workforce Investment Boards throughout the country have incorporated self-sufficient employment as a core concept throughout their work. A guide to best practices by these WIBs has been published by Wider Opportunities for Women and is available at [www.wowonline.org/ourprograms/promising](http://www.wowonline.org/ourprograms/promising). Areas of best practices currently being implemented include: choosing a high definition of self-sufficiency; counseling customers about income goals, career paths, and work supports; employing sector strategies; negotiating job training contracts and customized training services; increasing access to work supports; assessing outcomes and benchmarks; and responding to community demographics.

2 Policymakers should fund collaborative ventures between employers, training institutions, and service providers, providing financial support for the partnership infrastructure as well as the specific project. Funding the costs of collaboration — such as convenings, resource guides, websites, and other communications tools — allows diverse stakeholders to work together, share information, and co-create a system to provide opportunities for those with significant barriers to work.

3 Incentives for employers such as tax credits, bonding programs, and business fee remission are strong motivators to encourage hiring from the target populations. Policymakers at multiple levels of government can create and support these types of programs. Just as importantly, policymakers should actively disseminate information about these programs to ensure that employers are aware of them and easily able to access them.

4 Policymakers should ensure that accurate information is available to employers about what information can legally be considered in employment decisions, particularly related to potential employees' criminal justice history. Information about proper documentation of legal work status for refugees should also be made readily available to employers.

5 Wages that are high enough to allow workers to meet living expenses are a key component of financial health that can be encouraged by policymakers. Living wage ordinances, as well as community investment in and promotion of industries that pay higher wages to entry-level workers (such as many of the industries targeted in this report), can help create more opportunities for less-experienced workers to earn living wages that facilitate economic self-sufficiency.

6 Policymakers can promote employment of target population members by designing and reforming public systems in order to facilitate work. With respect to formerly incarcerated individuals, parole and probation guidelines can be designed to promote rather than hinder employment; child support enforcement can be made more flexible in order to encourage rather than discourage legal employment; and eligibility for public benefits such as subsidized housing and income support programs can be modified to include individuals with criminal records for whom such supports might provide the needed bridge to productive employment and long-term legal self-sufficiency. With respect to adults with limited English proficiency, pathways to citizenship and legal work status can be developed to enable undocumented immigrants to pursue legal and more sustainable employment. And for aged-out foster youth, to whom the state owes a particular responsibility as the legal parent until the age of majority, programs and funding can be put in place to provide support for employment as well as basic needs such as housing and child care to enable these young people to successfully transition to self-sufficient adulthood.

*In light of the current economic climate, it is all the more important for policymakers to invest in these partnerships and create opportunities for workforce advancement, particularly for those with the most barriers to work.*



# Conclusion

*“Solutions to society’s intractable problems rarely emerge from one individual, but together we can discover a myriad of bold ideas to solve any problem.”*

— Deborah Alvarez-Rodriguez, President & CEO, Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo, & Marin; Board Chair, East Bay Community Foundation

By seeking out a variety of perspectives on the employment needs and opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth in the East Bay, the Urban Workforce Development Study was able to generate a detailed profile of the employment challenges and strengths of the target population members; extensive information about well-matched employment opportunities in four key industry clusters; and opportunities and best practices in training, asset building, and support to maximize employment success. Vital to the success of the study was the participation and leadership of the Stakeholder Roundtable, with its representation of diverse viewpoints including employers, service providers, advocates, labor unions, policymakers, and philanthropy. Focus groups to solicit the direct perspective of members of the target population were also critical to achieving a grounded and nuanced understanding of the issues to be addressed and best practices in addressing them.

## Key Findings

- **Formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth face significant barriers to employment.** Formerly incarcerated individuals are most impacted by the fact that many jobs categorically exclude anyone with a felony criminal record. For adults with limited English proficiency, lack of language skills limits many aspects of employment, from applying for jobs through securing promotions. Aged-out foster youth typically lack work experience and also need significant support to meet their basic needs and to succeed in the workplace.
- **Target population members also bring important strengths as employees.** Many members of the target populations are exceptionally motivated to work. Moreover, their specific skills and characteristics can contribute to workforce quality in a variety of ways, ranging from increasing cultural diversity, to fostering employee dedication and enthusiasm, to promoting community well-being. In addition, employers can benefit from tax credits and other concrete incentives for hiring from the target populations.
- **Entry-level jobs appropriate for target population members are available in the industries of construction and green technology, health care, logistics and international trade, and custom manufacturing.** These four industry clusters are expected to be strong prospects for sustainable employment in the East Bay over the long-term. Desired employee qualifications vary by position and industry, but all four industries offer employment opportunities that match the skills, experience, and interests of members of the target populations. Many of these jobs include strong potential for further training and promotion.
- **Employers in the target industry clusters are willing to hire members of the target populations.** Nearly all employers were open to the idea of hiring members of the target populations, and many noted that doing so could benefit their businesses and communities.
- **Employers need information, support, and incentives to ensure that target population members can succeed as employees.** Many employers have limited experience or information about the target populations, and most expressed a need for additional support or incentives in order to fully support target population members as employees. Most employers were willing to work with outside training institutions and service providers in order to provide additional support to employees.
- **A variety of job training opportunities are available to qualify target population members for employment and promotions in the target industries.** Community colleges and adult schools offer a diverse array of job-related training, ranging from job readiness and basic skills, to English as a Second Language and citizenship classes, to industry-specific certificate programs. Most of these training opportunities are affordable and accessible to members of the target populations. Labor unions also offer training opportunities in some industries.

- **A variety of support services are available to help target population members succeed in employment and meet their basic needs.** Community-based service providers offer support for members of the target population in a wide variety of areas, including case management, basic needs assistance, child care, and transportation, as well as employment-specific support such as assistance with applying for jobs and job coaching. Additional support is available through some employers, training institutions, and labor unions.
- **Asset building is another important component of long-term economic stability for target population members.** Programs to help employees build assets and develop financial health can promote long-term employment success and economic stability.

### Importance of Collaboration

The most important and overarching finding from this Urban Workforce Development Study, however, was the following: **Communication and partnership among all stakeholders are vital to successfully connecting formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth to sustainable long-term employment.** Partnerships between employers, training institutions, and service providers can facilitate the development of training programs that meet employers' needs and lead to job opportunities for target population members, and can create systems of on- and off-the-job support that enable employees to succeed in the workplace, achieve financial stability, and pursue long-term career development. In many cases, appropriate training programs, support services, and concrete incentives already exist, and the main task needed is to make connections between these supports and the employers and target populations who can benefit from them. Policymakers also have an important role to play in promoting the importance of employment for target population members as well as developing and supporting the types of programs that can promote their employment success.

Many of the recommendations developed through this study relate to improving communication and promoting partnerships among the various stakeholders currently or potentially involved in the employment of formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English skills, and former foster youth. Other recommendations focus on specific changes to employer practices — such as

translating job application forms into other languages — that can significantly enhance employment opportunities for members of the target populations, as well as implementation of best practices for training institutions and service providers — such as incorporating basic skills development into job training programs, or providing wraparound services that address basic needs as well as employment support. Recommendations for policymakers focus on prioritizing support for the employment of target population members in outreach activities, policy development, and system reform.

### Next Steps

The objective of the Urban Workforce Development Study was to serve as a blueprint for prioritizing workforce development strategies in the East Bay and to identify best practices to be implemented by a variety of stakeholders that will enable individuals from the target populations to secure and succeed in sustainable and high-quality employment. Having identified a number of specific recommendations for employers, training institutions, service providers, and policymakers, this report suggests important next steps needed to advance the employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and aged-out foster youth.

This study will be used as a guide by stakeholders directly involved in employment, training, and support to develop and modify practices in order to maximize the employment success of members of the target population members. It is also expected that philanthropy, government, and other East Bay community partners will use this study to identify investment opportunities to promote sustainable target population employment. Finally, following from the collaborative process and diverse Stakeholder Roundtable involved in carrying out this project, it is hoped that this study will serve as an impetus for increased communication and collaboration among the diverse community stakeholders that currently or potentially play a role in the employment of formerly incarcerated individuals, limited English-speaking adults, and aged-out foster youth

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# Stakeholder Roundtable Members

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## **Alameda County Foster Youth Alliance**

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# Survey Respondents

**A total of 76 surveys were completed for the study, representing 37 employers, 39 labor unions, seven training institutions, and 23 service providers. Following is a list of the respondents:**

## Employers

1. Alameda County Medical Center
2. Alta Bates Summit Medical Center
3. Asian Health Services
4. Berkeley Free Clinic
5. Berkeley Farms
6. California Oils Corporation
7. Canyon Construction
8. Crunchy Foods
9. East Bay Foods, Inc.
10. Federal Building Company
11. Galaxy Desserts
12. Gardeners' Guild
13. Give Something Back
14. GSC Logistics
15. Hensel Phelps Construction Co.
16. Kaiser Permanente East Bay
17. Kaiser Permanente Optical Services
18. La Clinica
19. LifeLong Medical Care
20. Macy's Logistics and Operations
21. Mission Foods
22. Native American Health Center
23. Numi Tea
24. Pankow Builders
25. Premier Organics
26. REC Solar
27. Revolution Foods
28. Alan Ritchey, Inc.
29. James E. Roberts-Obayashi Corporation
30. Safeway Bakery
31. Scream Sorbet
32. SolarCity
33. Sweet Maria's
34. Swinerton Builders
35. Transbay Fire Protection
36. Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center
37. United Parcel Service (UPS)

## Labor Unions (representing more than 250 employers)

1. Bakers Local 125
2. Building & Construction Trades Council of Alameda County (represents 28 individual unions)
3. Carpenters — Northern California Region
4. Communications Workers of America Local 9415
5. International Longshore & Warehouse Union Local 6
6. International Union of Painters & Allied Trades District Council 16
7. Office and Professional Employees Union Local 29
8. Sailors Union of the Pacific
9. Service Employees International Union Local 1021
10. United Food & Commercial Workers Local 5
11. Unite Here Local 2850 (hotel and restaurant employees)
12. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1245

## Training Institutions

1. Contra Costa College
2. Oakland Adult and Career Education
3. Peralta Colleges: College of Alameda, Berkeley City College, Laney College & Merritt College
4. West Contra Costa Adult Education

## Service Providers

1. Alameda County Youth Development Inc.
2. Allen Temple Housing & Economic Development Corporation
3. America Works
4. Bay Area Youth Centers
5. Beyond Emancipation
6. Contra Costa Youth Continuum of Services
7. Contra Costa Independent Living Skills Program
8. First Place for Youth
9. Goodwill Industries of the Greater East Bay
10. Greater Richmond Interfaith Project (GRIP)
11. Hawkins Center (Rubicon)
12. Literacy for Every Adult Project (LEAP)
13. Lao Family Community Development
14. The Mentoring Center
15. North Cities One-Stop Career Center (Rubicon)
16. Oakland Private Industry Council
17. Opportunity West
18. Pivotal Point Youth Services
19. Project Independence (Abode Services)
20. The Stride Center
21. The Unity Council
22. Volunteers of America Bay Area
23. The Youth Empowerment Program

# Employer Survey

**Following is the survey protocol used with employers from the industry clusters. Similar comprehensive survey tools were administered to the training institutions and service providers, while shorter versions were developed for the labor unions and target population focus groups. For samples of all five survey instruments, please go to [www.eastbaycf.org/workforcestudy](http://www.eastbaycf.org/workforcestudy).**

The Urban Workforce Development Study is led by the East Bay Community Foundation and supported by a stakeholder group comprised of industry, training and nonprofit service sector representatives. Your input will help us to identify feasible and effective policies and programs to increase employment of marginalized populations, specifically those reentering from incarceration, limited English speakers and those aging out of the foster care system (turning 18 years old). These populations represent people with limited, inconsistent or no prior work histories and barriers to employment. We are looking at growing business sectors in the cities of Oakland and Richmond.

This study is funded by the Ford Foundation, who is interested in regional approaches to promote workforce development for low-moderate income residents in urban areas. Based on recent economic development research, the study is focused on identifying opportunities in five promising industries: construction, custom manufacturing (food and non-food), green technology and green manufacturing, healthcare, international trade and logistics.

We appreciate your time and participation in the study. Your individual responses will be kept confidential and not attributed to you or your company. All responses will be compiled into a summary study which will be published in Fall 2009. We will send you a copy of the report, upon its completion. Your company will be acknowledged as a participant in the study. Again, thank you for your candid input and data. This study will be used for subsequent program design, service delivery methods and fund development to help people secure and maintain meaningful employment.

## Business Profile

1. Industry (select one):
  - Construction
  - Custom manufacturing (food & non-food)
  - Green technology & green manufacturing
  - Healthcare
  - International Trade & Logistics
2. Name of business:
3. Individuals(s) interviewed:
4. Job location(s) (select one):
  - Oakland
  - Richmond
  - Other:
5. Public transit connections to job locations:
6. What work shifts do you have available? (e.g. day, night, swing, seasonal. etc.)
7. Size (select one):
  - 1-50 employees
  - 51-100 employees
  - 101-1,000 employees
  - More than 1,000 employees
8. Brief description of product/services, market, etc:
9. Expected business growth over the next five years:

# Employer Survey *continued*

## Entry-Level Jobs

10. What types of entry-level jobs exist at the business? Please name and briefly describe each type of entry-level position.

For each type of entry-level job listed above, please describe:

11. How many positions currently exist (filled plus vacant)?
12. How many entry level jobs do you expect to make in the next year?
13. What are the wages? What are the benefits?
14. What are the promotion opportunities? What career paths are available to someone who starts in this type of entry-level position?
15. What education or training is required to do the job? Desired but not required?
16. What work experience is required to do the job? Desired but not required?
17. What level of proficiency in spoken English is required to do the job? Desired but not required?
18. What level of proficiency in reading and writing English is required to do the job? Desired but not required?
19. What other skills, experience, certifications, etc. are required to do the job (e.g. valid driver's license, recommendation from prior employer, negative drug test, etc.)? Desired but not required?
20. What factors would exclude someone from being hired for this type of position — for example, a felony conviction, bad credit report, positive drug test, lack of high school diploma, large gaps in work experience, negative employer reference, etc.?
21. Are you able/willing to be flexible about any of the exclusionary factors described above? Under what conditions?

## Hiring Process for Entry-Level Jobs

22. How are your entry-level jobs advertised (e.g. newspaper, online, fliers, job fairs, notice to training providers, word-of-mouth through current employees, etc.)?
23. Do you conduct community outreach to fill jobs or partner with community organizations to help with outreach?
24. Is there a written application form?  Yes  No
25. If yes, in what language(s) is the form?
26. Can the form be taken by applicants, completed off-site, and returned?  Yes  No
27. What information is included on the form (e.g. educational history, work history, contact information for former employers, criminal convictions, scheduling availability, etc.)? Attach a copy of the form if possible.
28. What other written materials are required as part of the application — for example, a resume, letter of recommendation from former employer, etc.? Desired but not required?
29. Is there an in-person interview?  Yes  No
30. If yes, in what language(s) is the interview?
31. Does the interview include a skills test (e.g. typing test, machinery safety test, etc.)?
32. Does the interview include a written test? If so, in what language(s) is the test?
33. What other components are part of the hiring process (e.g. drug test, employer reference check, criminal record check, etc.)?

### Employee Development and Support

34. What types of training and/or educational support does your business provide on-site for employees (e.g. on-the-job training, financial literacy/education, formal classes, tuition reimbursement, time off for educational activities, etc.)?
35. What types of training and/or educational support does your business provide off-site for employees?
36. Does your business currently work with outside training and/or education providers to provide training/education or support for training/education? If yes, please describe.
37. What types of general support does your business provide on-site for employees (e.g. child care, transportation assistance, mentoring, counseling, emergency loans, etc.)?
38. What types of general support does your business provide off-site for employees?
39. Does your business currently work with outside service providers, government agencies, or other businesses to provide general support for employees? If yes, please describe.
40. How does an entry-level employee become eligible for promotion — for example, excellent performance reviews, seniority, completion of training, recommendation by supervisor, etc.?

### Target Populations

#### *Formerly Incarcerated Individuals*

41. What is your experience with hiring and/or working with formerly incarcerated individuals?
42. What benefits do you see to hiring formerly incarcerated individuals? In terms of skills, experience, and personal characteristics they might bring as employees? In terms of benefits to your business? In terms of benefits to the community?
43. What concerns do you have about hiring formerly incarcerated individuals? In terms of potential problems with eligibility for employment? In terms of potential problems with qualifications for employment? In terms of potential problems with job performance?
44. What types of support do you think would help formerly incarcerated individuals succeed as employees at your business or in your industry (e.g. job coaching, mentoring, extra training, child care, case management, etc.)?
45. Do you think your company would be willing/able to provide any of these types of support in the future? Please describe.
46. Do you think your company would be willing/able to work with an outside training provider or service provider that offered this type of support in the future? Please describe.
47. What types of hiring incentives, extra support, etc. would encourage you to hire formerly incarcerated individuals (e.g. business fee remission, tax break, outside job coaches, community recognition, etc.)?
48. What questions do you have about formerly incarcerated individuals as potential employees? What additional information about this group or about organizations that work with this group would be helpful to you as an employer?

#### *Limited English Proficiency Adults*

49. What is your experience with hiring and/or working with adults who have limited proficiency in English (LEP adults)?
50. What benefits do you see to hiring LEP adults? In terms of skills, experience, and personal characteristics they might bring as employees? In terms of benefits to your business? In terms of benefits to the community?
51. What concerns do you have about hiring LEP adults? In terms of potential problems with eligibility for employment? In terms of potential problems with qualifications for employment? In terms of potential problems with job performance?
52. What types of support do you think would help LEP adults succeed as employees at your business or in your industry (e.g. English as a Second Language classes, job coaching, mentoring, extra training, child care, case management, etc.)?
53. Do you think your company would be willing/able to provide any of these types of support in the future? Please describe.
54. Do you think your company would be willing/able to work with an outside training provider or service provider that offered this type of support in the future? Please describe.

## Employer Survey *continued*

55. What types of hiring incentives, extra support, etc. would encourage you to hire individuals with limited proficiency in English (e.g. business fee remission, tax break, outside job coaches, community recognition, etc.)?
56. What questions do you have about LEP adults as potential employees? What additional information about this group or about organizations that work with this group would be helpful to you as an employer?

***Aged-Out Foster Youth*** (young people in the foster care system “age out” at 18 and are no longer eligible for support from the state, so must become self-sufficient on their own)

57. What is your experience with hiring and/or working with youth who have aged out of the foster care system?
58. What benefits do you see to hiring aged-out foster youth? In terms of skills, experience, and personal characteristics they might bring as employees? In terms of benefits to your business? In terms of benefits to the community?
59. What concerns do you have about hiring aged-out foster youth? In terms of potential problems with eligibility for employment? In terms of potential problems with qualifications for employment? In terms of potential problems with job performance?
60. What types of support do you think would help aged-out foster youth succeed as employees at your business or in your industry (e.g. job coaching, mentoring, extra training, child care, case management, etc.)?
61. Do you think your company would be willing/able to provide any of these types of support in the future? Please describe.
62. Do you think your company would be willing/able to work with an outside training provider or service provider that offered this type of support in the future? Please describe.
63. What types of hiring incentives, extra support, etc. would encourage you to hire aged-out foster youth (e.g. business fee remission, tax break, outside job coaches, community recognition, etc.)?
64. What questions do you have about aged-out foster youth as potential employees? What additional information about this group or about organizations that work with this group would be helpful to you as an employer?

### **Additional Information**

65. What other questions should have been asked as part of this survey? What other issues should be considered that relate to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals, adults with limited English proficiency, and/or aged-out foster youth?
66. Would you be interested in learning more about the study?

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