

Solano County

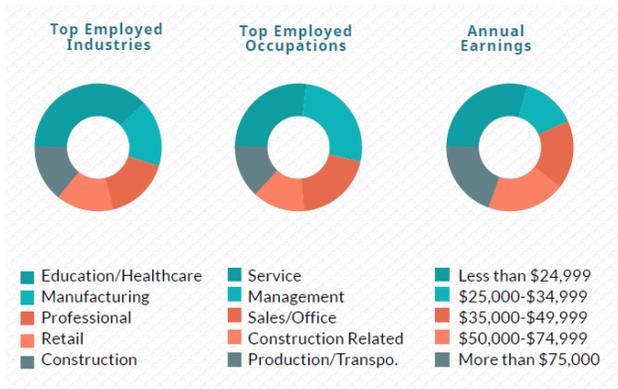
Local Plan PY17-21 Modification – ELL and Foreign Born Attachment

ELL, Foreign Born, and Refugees

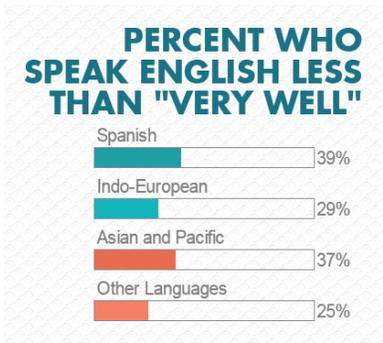
Demographics, Barriers to Employment, and Other Relevant Information

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

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



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



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

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

Gaps in Services

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

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

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

Outreach and Recruitment Strategies

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

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

Amongst the ELL stakeholders in Solano County, it has been identified that the most effective means of outreach and communication about employment support services is spread through word of mouth. Through the ELL stakeholder group and other ELL partners, the Solano WDB will establish a network of

support services and distribute information amongst key LEP community members in order to build trust among the LEP population and increase word of mouth referrals.

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

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

Local WDB Partner Engagement and Strategic LEP Service Delivery

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

There is a need to help bi-lingual students perceive their second language as a strength not only in the workplace, but in the community as well to assist ELL programs. Supporting students within the ELL community will give these students an advantage as they advance to post-secondary education and enter the workforce. Highlighting specific bi-lingual skills and workforce resources would be beneficial to the ELL community, as this would give a different perspective to the value of being bi-lingual and the subsequent job opportunities. Through the WDB's systemic work with the K-12 system, the WDB will encourage ways to increase pride in bilingualism and highlight the business need for bilingual employees.

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

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

Data sharing amongst partners will help bring awareness to the ELL communities growing needs along with the needed credential obtainment resources that can navigate ELL and foreign born individuals back into their chosen career paths or occupations. The WDB will work with partners to share effective

Attachment D: ELL and Foreign Born

data on geographic concentrations of the ELL population, as well as labor market information and outcomes data to aid in increased opportunities for Solano's ELL population.