

# **New Mainers – Refugees Workforce Development Project**

U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration

For

Portland Social Services Division

Lewiston Adult Education

## **Final Evaluation Report**

Prepared By:

Peter J. Gartland

Glenwood Research

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*The New Mainers-Refugee Workforce Development Project is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. This program is an equal opportunity program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities*

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## Executive Summary:

### Introduction

The New Mainers-Refugees Workforce Development Project (NMRWDP) was a federally funded project designed to provide work readiness training and job placement and retention services for up to 300 immigrant and refugee community members. The project was conducted within the two Maine communities of Portland and Lewiston. Key project collaborators included:

- The City of Lewiston
- The City of Portland Social Services Division
- Adult Ed – Lewiston, and Adult Ed – Portland
- Catholic Charities of Maine’s Refugee and Immigrant Services
- The Department of Labor’s Career Centers in Lewiston and Portland
- Lewiston and Portland’s General Assistance offices
- City of Portland’s Refugee Services Program.
- The Maine Department of Health and Human Services

### Research Methodology

Research Methodology consisted of a process and outcome evaluation utilizing a quarterly progress reports, interviews, focus groups, scale administration and observation. Participatory evaluation methods were employed to gain staff insights and interpretation of observed findings.

### Outcomes – Goals and Objectives

Using the DOL prescribed format, the project tracked outcome data on a quarterly basis. Information contained in this report reflects project activity for the entire project period.

## Performance Measure Highlights

All goals established for the project were met or exceeded. Outcome highlights include:

❖ Placements –ESOL Job Class participants placed in jobs	104
❖ An ESOL job placement rate of	106% <sup>1</sup>
❖ Wages – Average hourly wages paid to those placements	\$ 9.41
❖ Placements – Workshop participants (ESOL 3 & 4) placed	63
❖ A Workshop placement rate of	39%
❖ Wages – Average hourly wages paid to those placements	\$ 10.10

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<sup>1</sup> Placement rate exceeded ESOL completion rate for 2 reasons: 1) a number of ESOL participants were placed before they completed the class; and 2) some participants were place more than 1 time.

## Curriculum Efficacy

We utilized a Barrier Scale to identify how well the Job Class curriculum worked at reducing self-identified barriers to employment among the population. The scale was administered to Job Class students at entry to the class, and again at conclusion of the seven weeks of curriculum.

At pre-test, the barriers most frequently identified as a problem were:

1. Knowing how to do a resume; knowing how to use a computer to find a job;
2. knowing how to find job openings;
3. A lack of USA work experience and,
4. Having enough skills for jobs in the area.

50% or more of all respondents identified these five barriers as problems at pre-test.

At post-test, the barriers demonstrating the largest change (largest decrease in problem score) were:

1. Knowing how to do a resume
2. Knowing how to use a computer to find a job
3. Knowing how to find job openings
4. Having enough skills for jobs in my (geographic) area

Results indicate the curriculum, as delivered in the ESOL classes was effective because every tested barrier demonstrated a decrease in the number of respondents identifying it as a problem upon completion of the curriculum.

## Participant Comments

Individuals who completed the Job Class generally reported they felt better prepared to get a job. Further, they confirmed curriculum objectives were met by reports they learned:

- How to prepare a job application
- What to expect for questions at a job interview
- How to answer interview questions (what not to say)
- How to locate job openings
- How to prepare a resume and cover letter
- The job application process

In addition, they reported:

- Meeting new people (instructors and classmates) who helped them locate available jobs
- Developing new, and/or strengthened their existing computer skills
- Their English language skills improved

## Employer Comments

Employers participating in the program confirmed, through an administered survey instrument, the program correctly identified potential barriers to refugee employment; and the program curriculum is focused on the appropriate skills.

Six variables stand out as being ‘very important’ to ‘absolutely necessary’ for employers surveyed.

1. Having a high level of English language conversational skills (one’s ability to comprehend as well as speak fluent English)
2. Demonstrating knowledge of USA work expectations(i.e. sick leave; being on-time for work; how to dress for work)
3. Demonstrating a willingness to conform to the existing work schedule
4. Having realistic wage expectations
5. Having previous work experience in general
6. Having specific skills for the jobs offered

## Suggested Program Modifications

Suggestions for program modifications were provided by program and administrative staff during interviews and focus groups held throughout the program time-line.

- Projects like this should emphasize computer literacy skill. Students had strong interest and willingness to take on this computer literacy skill-building, and the program confirmed computer skills were very important to job search and acquisition.
- There was general observation that many companies have very technically difficult on-line applications. Working with employers to consider prescreening tool modifications would be a recommended change in the program.
- There was a general consensus that future workshop design should include a format with more structure and procedures, including initial program orientation, to improve the ability to maintain contact with Workshop participants.
- Work to get employers to re-consider their hiring process in general. For example, getting them to re-examining the types of assessments that actually contribute to the hiring process.
- There was general consensus that the communities need sufficient flexibility in program design to vary from the standard in order to adequately address unique circumstances.
- Since job fairs and employment site visits appeared to have worked well from both the participant and employer standpoint, it was recommended that more of these be built into future programming.

- Due to the close relationships developed between Vocational class instructors and students, where instructors learn a considerable amount of information on each student, instructors can make important contributions to, and participate in job development activities.
- To reduce participant concerns about lost benefits if they enroll, program orientation should be modified to not only include Workshop participants but also a review of public assistance and means-tested programs for which participants would still be eligible during and perhaps after participation in the program.

## Sustainability

Considering ways to sustain project activities, post federal funding, the Earmark ‘team’ of partners has remained active, and has been successful in obtaining two additional grants to continue with similar refugee / immigrant job assistance programming.

## Program Description

The New Mainers-Refugees Workforce Development Project (NMRWDP) was a federally funded project designed to provide work readiness training and job placement and retention services for up to 300 immigrant and refugee community members. Program participants came from more than a dozen countries. While some have mastered some English, many have limited, if any English language skills. Some are illiterate in their native languages. Most have limited knowledge of the American workplace. Program implementation was delayed by up to three months at initiation. However, the program was awarded an extension, which concluded at the end of November, 2011.

### Project Details:

- Lewiston was the Earmark recipient
- The City of Portland Social Services Division acted as the project fiscal agent
- Adult Ed – Lewiston, and Adult Ed – Portland provided intake assessments, participant assignments to levels 1 & 2 or 3 & 4 program activities, curriculum training, workshops, job counseling and assisting with job development.
- City of Portland and Catholic Charities – Maine – sub-contracted to Portland to provide job development and job placement support activities.
- Although Lewiston sub contracted project administration, it controlled and distributed funds to project sub contractors.
- Lewiston and Portland Adult Education provided the instruction of vocational English to speakers of other languages (ESOL).
- They also provided computer literacy training to support participant job search and application activities.
- Cultural orientation and support services, to help refugees meet basic needs while they are completing the training, was provided by Lewiston and Portland's General Assistance offices, Catholic Charities of Maine's Refugee and Immigrant Services, and the City of Portland's Refugee Services Program.
- The Maine Department of Health and Human Services provided ASPIRE (child care & transportation) and TANF (cash assistance) support while participants prepared for and searched for employment.

The program received participant referrals from any and all social service agencies within the region.

## Project Goals and Accomplishments

A review of the results for project goals and measures clearly indicate the project was successful in achieving its planned outcomes. With only minor variations, the project met or exceeded its goals and measures. The following identifies each project goal and each project measure, as included in the original application, and provides actual performance figures to demonstrate results.

### **Goal #1**

Within the 18 month project period 20% of all refugees served will obtain employment within 60 days of completing the intensive instructional program.

*The actual placement rate was over three times the planned target.*

Performance Measures	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
1. ESOL placed within 60 days	20	63	315%

### **Goal #2**

Within the 18 month project period 100 refugees with beginner (CASAS Levels 2 & 3) language skills will develop a minimum proficiency in vocational English, basic work readiness skills and basic computer literacy.

Performance Measures	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
1. ESOL (job class) attain proficiency (certificates)	100	98	98.0%

### **Goal #3 & Goal #4**

- a. Within the 18 month project period 200 refugees with intermediate (CASAS Levels 4 & 5) language skills will acquire work readiness skills through completion of workshops.
- b. Within the 18 month project period 200 refugees with intermediate (CASAS Levels 4 & 5) language skills will acquire computer literacy skills through completion of workshops.

Performance Measures	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
3 & 4. Workshop participants complete workshops	200	199	99.5%

**Goal #5**

Within the 18-month project period 40 employers (20 in each city) will receive outreach from project Job Developers to acquaint them with the benefits of hiring refugees, and to encourage use of some alternative assessments and tests in the application process. In addition, 100 beginner and 200 intermediate CASAS level refugees will receive instruction on the cultural meaning of application assessment questions and how to respond appropriately.

*Twice as many employers as originally targeted participated in the program.*

Performance Measures	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
5. Employers receive project outreach	40	83	207.5%

**Goal #6**

Within the 18-month project period 100 beginner and 200 intermediate CASAS level refugees (total of 300) will receive instruction on the concept of career paths and how skills they acquire can help them gain access to jobs with better pay and more responsibility. Performance

Performance Measures	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
Participants receive cultural application instruction	300	314	104.7%
Participants receive career path instruction	300	314	104.7%

## Project Measures and Accomplishments

### Measure 1: Outreach- Vocational ESOL

140 individuals will be recruited and assessed for participation in Vocational ESOL

Grant target	Actual	% of Target
140	146	104%

### Measure 2 - Vocational ESOL Enrollment Rate

78% - 110 individuals (of the 140 recruited and assessed) will enroll in the 7-week Vocational ESOL classes

	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
Enrolled	110	126	115%
Enrollment rate	78%	86%	113%

### **Measure 3 - 90% of enrolled participants complete the 7-week training**

100 of the 110 individuals enrolled will complete the 7-week Vocational ESOL classes

Slightly less than anticipated enrollees actual completed the seven week course. Note, a number did not complete because they obtained jobs during the class period.

	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
Complete 7 week curriculum	100	98	98%
Completion Rate	90%	78% <sup>2</sup>	87%

### **Measure 4 - Job Placement**

20 of the 100 individuals completing Vocational ESOL will be placed in jobs within 60 days of completion

Even though the program placed 3 times as many participants within 60 days as originally planned, it is important to note that another 40% were placed after the 60 day period. Staff report that overall, a 75 day period for placement might be a better expectation.

	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
Placed within 60 days	20	63	315%
Placed after 60 days	0	41	
Total placed	20	104	520%

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<sup>2</sup> A number of participants were placed before completing the 7 week curriculum and saw no reason to finish.

**Measure 5 - Average Wage- Vocational ESOL**

The average wage of the 20 participants placed in jobs in the first 60 days following completion of Vocational ESOL will be \$7.50

	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
Av ESOL Wage	\$7.50	\$9.41	125%

**Measure 6 - Outreach- Work Readiness & Computer Literacy Workshops**

At least 250 individuals from Portland and Lewiston will be recruited and assessed for participation in the Work Readiness & Computer Literacy Workshops

	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
Workshop Participation	250	249	100%

**Measure 7 - Work Readiness & Computer Literacy Workshops Attendance**

200 individuals (of the 250 recruited and assessed) will visit the computer lab and attend at least one employment workshop, and receive job placement assistance from the Job Developer

	Grant target	Actual	% of Target
Workshop Participation	200	199	100%

### **Measure 8 - Job Placement - Work Readiness & Computer Literacy Workshops**

50 of the 200 individuals receiving assistance from the Job Developer will be placed in jobs

	<b>Grant target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>% of Target</b>
Workshop Participation	50	63	126%

### **Measure 9 - Average Wage - Work Readiness & Computer Literacy Workshops**

The average wage of the 50 participants placed in jobs will be \$7.50

	<b>Grant target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>% of Target</b>
Av Workshop Attendee Wage	\$7.50	\$10.10	135%

## Goals and Measures – Outcomes – Summary

Performance Measures	A Grant target	B Target Percentage	D Cumltv (YTD) Actual	E Cumltv % of Expctd (D / A)
ESOL (job class) # recruited and assessed	140	100%	146	104%
ESOL enrollment	110		126	115%
ESOL enrollment rate		78%	86%	
ESOL complete	100		98	98%
ESOL completion rate		90%	78%	
ESOL placed within 60 days	20		63	315%
ESOL placed after 60 days			41	
Total ESOL placed			104	
ESOL job placement rate		20%	106%	
ESOL Av hourly wage	\$7.50		\$9.41	124%
Workshop # recruited and assessed	250	100%	249	100%
# Workshop admissions	200		199	100%
Workshop admission rate		80%	80%	
Workshop participants placed	50		63	126%
Workshop job placement rate		25%	39%	
Workshop Av hourly wage	\$7.50		\$10.10	135%

**Curriculum Efficacy**

Glenwood Research developed an employment barrier scale for administration to job class participants. The scale was developed through secondary research of the current literature, and primary research with New Mainers staff in both Lewiston and Portland. It contains a list of issues known to hinder job acquisition and/or continued employment, particularly among immigrant and refugee populations. The scale was administered at the start of each job class, and again at the end of each class.

The scale purpose is to test, from the participant’s perspective, a) what issues they believe hinder their job search; and, b) how well the class curriculum acted to minimize self-identified barriers (copy is attached).

**Table 1** is a sort of the barriers by pre-test score. It demonstrates that at pre-test, the barriers most frequently identified as a problem were:

- Knowing how to do a resume;
- Knowing how to use a computer to find a job;
- Knowing how to find job openings;
- A lack of USA work experience and,
- Having enough skills for jobs in the area

50% or more of all respondents identified these five barriers as problems at pre-test. Knowing how to do a resume topped the chart at pre-test. Interestingly, this barrier demonstrated the largest decrease in score pre to post; with only 8% of respondents indicating it was still a problem for them after the seven week course.

**Table 1 – Barrier scale sorted by Pre Test Score**

Sort by Reported problem at pre test	% Problem at pre test
Knowing how to do a resume	67
My computer skills (knowing how to use a computer to find a job)	66
Knowing how to find job openings	64
My USA work experience	51
Having enough skills for the jobs in my area	50
Knowing how to fill out work application forms	49
Availability of jobs that pay enough money to support my family	48
Acceptance of my homeland education or training	44
My English language skills	43
Reliable transportation	43
Knowing how to get my credentials re-evaluated	33
My knowledge of USA work expectations – (like sick leave, being on-time for work; how to dress for work)	29
My work experience	24
Having reliable child care	14

**Table 2** identifies barriers as tested and provides the percentage of respondents who reported each barrier as a problem for them at pre-test. The third column contains results of the post-test administration on the same students. In all, 99 pre-tests and 74 post tests were completed.

Every tested barrier demonstrated a decrease in the number of respondents identifying it as a problem upon completion of the curriculum. This appears to indicate the curriculum, as delivered in the ESOL classes was effective.

**Table 2 – Barrier scale results - Pre to Post test**

Barrier	% Problem at pre test	% problem at post test	% change
My English language skills	43	20	-23
My work experience	24	3	-21
My USA work experience	51	23	-28
My knowledge of USA work expectations – (like sick leave, being on-time for work; how to dress for work)	29	1	-28
Knowing how to find job openings	64	15	-49
Knowing how to fill out work application forms	49	12	-37
Reliable transportation	43	18	-25
Acceptance of my homeland education or training	44	11	-33
Having enough skills for the jobs in my area	50	9	-41
Having reliable child care	14	8	-6
Availability of jobs that pay enough money to support my family	48	17	-31
Knowing how to do a resume	67	8	-59
Knowing how to get my credentials re-evaluated	33	19	-14
My computer skills (knowing how to use a computer to find a job)	66	14	-52

**Table 3** sorts the barriers by change score. The four barriers demonstrating the largest change at post-test (largest decrease in problem score) were:

1. Knowing how to do a resume
2. Knowing how to use a computer to find a job
3. Knowing how to find job openings
4. Having enough skills for jobs in my (geographic) area

**Table 3 - Sort by change score**

Sort by Reported problem at pre test	% Problem at pre test	% problem at post test	% change
Knowing how to do a resume	67	8	-59
My computer skills (knowing how to use a computer to find a job)	66	14	-52
Knowing how to find job openings	64	15	-49
Having enough skills for the jobs in my area	50	9	-41
Knowing how to fill out work application forms	49	12	-37
Acceptance of my homeland education or training	44	11	-33
Availability of jobs that pay enough money to support my family	48	17	-31
My USA work experience	51	23	-28
My knowledge of USA work expectations – (like sick leave, being on-time for work; how to dress for work)	29	1	-28
Reliable transportation	43	18	-25
My English language skills	43	20	-23
My work experience	24	3	-21
Knowing how to get my credentials re-evaluated	33	19	-14
Having reliable child care	14	8	-6

### Participant Comments (Focus Group Results)

Part of the process of triangulating to confirm and support observations and findings was completed by conducting focus groups with key segments of the project populations. Information as reported here was gathered during focus groups with participants during the program time-line.

In general, participants were found to be very positive about the program. Job Class participants in particular reported they are better prepared to get a job. Further they confirmed curriculum objectives being met by reporting they learned:

- How to prepare a job application
- What to expect for questions at a job interview
- How to answer interview questions (what not to say)
- Their English language skills improved
- How to locate job openings
- They met new people (instructors and classmates) who helped them locate available jobs
- They developed new, and/or strengthened existing computer skills
- How to prepare a resume and cover letter
- The job application process

Further, they reported after the Job Class they had the knowledge of how to find and apply for a job.

#### Additional comments by participants included:

1. The class was too short; 7 weeks was not long enough. They would have liked more time on language and computer skills
2. They would have liked more time on writing in English
3. They feel they need more work on English comprehension – they can speak and write, but still have difficulty with understanding what is being said.
4. They would like to be graduating into another program level – moving up to a more intensive English language and computer skills training segment.

#### Participants identified the following Job Class components as most helpful to them:

1. Practice in filling out applications
2. Learning to use the computer to find and apply for available jobs
3. How to complete a successful interview
4. How to communicate effectively on the job
5. The ability to continue to meet with the instructors after job class graduation if they felt the need for additional help
6. Time spent practicing their English by talking to each other
7. The practice interviews
8. The instructors

### Employer Comments

In November 2011, Glenwood developed a survey protocol for use with employers who had received program outreach. The purpose of the survey was to assist program personnel in identifying applicant (refugee or other) characteristics and skills employers valued. We used the skills as identified on the program Barrier Scale as variables on the employer survey. This was done because the Barrier Scale was being used to demonstrate program efficacy, from the viewpoint of the participants. The use of the Barrier variables on the employer scale was another part of the triangulation process to confirm observations, and provided us with a way to further test the validity of the constructs as included in the Job Class curriculum.

Nineteen employers provided survey responses.

#### Analysis

It appears that all tested constructs were considered by employers to be ‘important’. This appears to verify the program correctly identified potential barriers to refugee employment; and its curriculum was focused on the appropriate skills.

Six variables stood out as being ‘very important’ to ‘absolutely necessary’ for employers surveyed.

1. Having a high level of English language conversational skills (one’s ability to comprehend as well as speak fluent English)
2. Demonstrating knowledge of USA work expectations(i.e. sick leave; being on-time for work; how to dress for work)

3. Demonstrating a willingness to conform to the existing work schedule
4. Having realistic wage expectations
5. Having previous work experience in general
6. Having specific skills for the jobs being offered

Employer results are depicted below, sorted in order of “importance” score as reported by employers.

*Instruction to employers - Using the 1 to 5 scale as provided, please tell us how important the following issues are for individuals (especially refugee / immigrants) seeking employment with your organization without regard to specific jobs – but in general, considering all job openings. 1 = Not Important and 5 = Absolutely Necessary.*

Tested constructs		Av Score
1.	Having a high level of English language conversational skills (one’s ability to comprehend as well as speak fluent English)	4.5
2.	Demonstrating knowledge of USA work expectations(i.e. sick leave; being on-time for work; how to dress for work)	4.4
3.	Demonstrating a willingness to conform to the existing work schedule	4.4
4.	Having realistic wage expectations	4.1
5.	Having previous work experience in general	3.9
6.	Having specific skills for the jobs you offer	3.9
7.	Demonstrating an ability to navigate your on-line application and screening processes	3.4
8.	Demonstrating computer literacy	3.4
9.	Having work experience specific to your industry (Example: if you are manufacturing, then previous manufacturing experience. If you are retail, then previous retail experience, etc.)	3.2
10.	Having previous U.S. work experience	2.8
11.	Holding to religious practices that do not conflict with the standard work schedules	2.7
12.	Having a professional resume	2.6

Employer participants were also invited to identify any other issues, skills, and/or concerns they considered to be important as they reviewed applications for employment. Additional items identified as ‘Other’ (none were listed more than once; and each was provided by a single employer) included:

- a. Reading is another thing that is needed so they know the difference between chemicals used for cleaning. Also, when they are trained they know what they are signing off on.
- b. It may be important for job class candidates to learn more of customs and protocol of U.S. practices such as handshaking and eye contact. Something else that should be emphasized is the importance of not bringing other people/family members to inquire about jobs.
- c. Having an interest in learning about plants, and valuing this knowledge
- d. A willingness to increase his or her efficiency in use of hand tools and harvesting.
- e. Prior experience in farming useful, but not necessary.
- f. Achievement orientation; Ability to commit to a job and company for 2 - 3 years; customer and team orientation.

**(Note:** Items listed in line b were provided by a single respondent. Items listed in line f were also provided by a single, but different respondent).

## Final Comments and Observations

Glenwood conducted final focus groups with staff and administrators from both program locations. Issues reviewed and comments of interest are included here. Project Goals are reviewed first, then project components. Staff comments are provided in italics.

### **Project Goals**

**Goal #1** – Within the 18 month project period 20% of all refugees served will obtain employment within 60 days of completing the intensive instructional program.

- *Consensus – 20% was realistic; and it could even be higher.*
- *There was a split in opinion on this point. Generally staff suggested 60 days was not sufficient, and that it required up to 90 days to complete placement primarily because the economic downturn had a noticeable impact on hiring.*

**Note:** Although program administrators believed the 60 days was adequate, they also conceded they *knew it might take longer and Portland would likely have more jobs available than Lewiston.*

**Goal #2** - Within the 18 month project period 100 refugees with beginner (CASAS Levels 2 & 3) language skills will develop a minimum proficiency in vocational English, basic work readiness skills, and basic computer literacy.

- *Although the goal was met (98 vs 100) finding students in the community with sufficient skills who can commit to the time required for this program has been a challenge.*
- *Barriers to training are the same as those for employment – if they do not have sufficient child care or transportation for employment, they cannot commit to the training.*
- *Although the program was English immersion, there was general agreement it was not designed to address general English language skills, as much as employment application and on-the-job language. There was some discussion about implementing English comprehensive testing to demonstrate student language acquisition progress, but other members of the staff did not believe the appropriate tests were available, or the program curriculum was a fit for this type of testing.*

**Goal #3** – Within the 18 month project period 200 refugees with intermediate (CASAS Levels 4 & 5) language skills will acquire work readiness skills through completion of workshops.

- *This was not an accurate reflection of the L/A area. Lewiston was asked to work to this goal despite the differences in its population from that in Portland. The L/A immigrant population presented with generally lower skill levels. Lewiston refugees have a high percentage of refugees who arrive illiterate in their native language.*
- *Perception – In Portland, the workshops worked well. However, some staff felt the program might have done better advertising them; and a better job working with the Career Center. Perhaps the Workshop concept could have been implemented better.*
- *Lewiston noted they received more students at the lowest levels of English competency skills; and therefore, Workshops were less relevant in that City.*

**Goal #4** – Within the 18 month project period 200 refugees with intermediate (CASAS Levels 4 & 5) language skills will acquire computer literacy skills through completion of workshops.

- *Projects like this should set apart and emphasize computer literacy skills. Students had strong interest and willingness to take on this computer literacy skill-building. Computer skills are very important to job search and acquisition.*
- *There was general observation that many companies have very technically difficult on-line applications – for any applicant, not just refugee / immigrant applicants. Only two employers were willing to modify their application materials to be more user-friendly to the refugee population. Working with employers to consider prescreening tool modifications would be a recommended change in the program.*
- *Participants were unsure that students obtained the skills, since Workshops were on a drop-in basis. Generally, staff felt drop-in participants did get what they needed. There was a general consensus that workshops be implemented, going forward, with more structure and procedures (not drop-ins) to facilitate being able to remain connected to workshop participants.*

**Goal #5** – Within the 18-month project period 40 employers (20 in each city) will receive outreach from project Job Developers to acquaint them with the benefits of hiring refugees, and to encourage use of some alternative assessments and tests in the application process. In addition, 100 beginner and 200 intermediate CASAS level refugees will receive instruction on the cultural meaning of application assessment questions and how to respond appropriately.

- *Lewiston – outreach was completed to more than 40 employers. However, outreach did not mean employers were hiring, or they were interested in hiring refugee and immigrant employees.*
- *Portland – outreach to over 40. Many did demonstrate positive receptivity to the program. Not all hired.*

- *It was suggested that perhaps the program could suggest employers use a program-developed common application (similar to college applications, which are generally the same).*
- *It was also suggested that changes to the applications may not be as important as working to have employers consider their hiring process in general. Companies might want to re-examine what type of assessments contribute to the hiring process.*
- *It was noted that many employers claim to want diversity in their work force, but were reluctant to open their hiring processes to actually become more diverse.*

**Goal #6** - Within the 18-month project period 100 beginner and 200 intermediate CASAS level Refugees receive instruction on the concept of career paths and how skills they acquire will assist them to gain access to jobs with better pay and more responsibility.

- *This effort worked well. Students did a great job in identifying and communicating their transferrable skills to employers.*
- *Volunteer work*
  - *Although recommended, participants found the concept of volunteer work when looking for a full time job to be a foreign concept. They wanted to spend their efforts on getting a job, not volunteering.*
  - *It was noted that the refugee population was reluctant to consider taking volunteer positions to gain resume-building experience. They were more interested in finding paying jobs.*
  - *As a concept, volunteer roles are considered important, and a good way to get in the door of an employer. It was suggested that employers need to follow through with valuing volunteers, and hiring from their volunteer corps.*
  - *Suggestion – for those organizations that seek and accept volunteers, program staff might want to contact them to recommend they look to their volunteers when looking to hire for positions.*

## **Project Components**

### **Component #1 – Marketing and Outreach**

- *Lewiston generally did not attract new referrals into the project from outside the existing social service system. Individuals they were seeing were already in the system – already working with a partner agency, i.e. Catholic Charities. They suspect there are people not plugged into the system, but are unsure of whether project outreach was effective in accessing them. However, they believe all possible partner organizations were included.*

- *In Portland, most of the referrals came in through Adult Education – again, people already in the system.*
- *Initially, each city had an advisory group. As the program progressed, a combined group became the de facto advisory group for both cities. Secondly, this group did not meet on a regular basis, but as needed since they found membership preferred to meet when necessary, but not regularly.*
- *Program design – was identical in each city despite the differences in the cities. There was general consensus that the communities need enough flexibility to vary from the standard design to address their unique circumstances. It was noted that as the group has proceeded to make application for other grants, planners did take note of differences in the two cities and made adjustments in programming to be offered, depending on location. Without the earmark grant, there was a question whether this would have been recognized.*
- *Consensus – the group felt the program did a good job reaching eligible individuals within the target population. By working with all the partners, the program did locate the majority of individuals in need of program services. Some folks may have been missed, but in general, the program did an excellent job in reaching the target population. It was noted the refugee population has an excellent informal communication network, and word of mouth notification appeared to work well in getting people to the available programming.*

## **Component #2 – Orientation, Intake & Testing**

- *There was a strong orientation component to the Job Class. Workshops however, with the exception of the manufacturing workshop series, were designed as drop-in and therefore did not receive orientation. The manufacturing workshop series conducted in Portland was more structured, and included orientation and an ability to remain connected to participants. In the future, if drop-in workshop components continued, they might want to utilize the manufacturing series model and include an orientation experience for that group – i.e. a monthly orientation session.*
- *Challenge – follow-up. It was difficult to retain contact with Workshop people; very difficult to track them for job placement.*
- *It was noted that a special workshop group, the manufacturing workshop, utilized a participant contract, and a set schedule for workshop activities. This made it easier to track these folks.*
- *Without a more formal structure, it was also difficult for the Job Developer to assist Workshop people – having met them maybe just one time.*
- *Consensus – moving forward, workshops should have more structure*

### **Component #3 – Beginners: Vocational ESOL & Work Readiness Training**

- *General consensus - the seven week schedule was about right. We think we would have lost people if we went longer.*
- *Computer use classes were very important, and staff urged more of this.*
- *Examples of modifications to the curriculum*
  - *Lewiston also initiated social activities – particularly demonstrating to men participants that gender roles are not so structured in the US as in their home countries.*
  - *Portland and Lewiston also added ‘customer communication’ training which they felt worked well and was necessary.*

### **Component #4 – Intermediates: Work Readiness Training & Computer Literacy**

- *General Consensus – Job fairs / employment site visits – worked well and it was recommended that more of these be built into programming. It was noted however, that for some participants, the site visits were confusing – they could not distinguish between practice and actual job application activities.*
- *Portland staff suggested the program could benefit from increased access to computers for Job Class participants. Lewiston held the Job Class in the computer lab, and they believe that was very helpful, resulting in increased access to computers by participants*
- *Job Class participants voiced a desire for more computer skills training*
- *Lean manufacturing – was tested out in Lewiston and opinions were that it did not help any of their participants. It was noted that it might benefit some by allowing them to put this class on their resume. Portland reported their manufacturing workshop was well received and worthwhile. Further, employers remarked it strengthened program applicant resumes.*

### **Component #5- Job Development**

- *The Lewiston Job Class instructor felt Job Development might have worked better if the Job Class instructor had also participated in job development. He knows the community and the students, and believes he could have been a resource in this area. He did participate in ‘job coaching’ activities.*
- *In Portland, they also agreed that handing off Job Development may not have been the best way to do things. The instructors could have contributed. However, it was also noted that job placement support, and job retention interventions, which the Job Class instructor did handle, were very important and needed; and further, this work benefited from the instructors’ knowledge of and relationships with the students.*

- *Recommendation – instructors should also participate in job development, job coaching and job placement since they have valuable knowledge of the individual students.*
- *Tax Incentives – In Lewiston, one employer indicated the incentive was a deterrent because if you had to reward a company for hiring them, they must be very poor employees. Portland reported some positive and some negative response to the incentives.*
- *Consensus – moving forward it would help if the role of the Job Developer was more clearly articulated in relation to that of the Job Coach and the Instructors.*

### **Component #6- Job Placement**

- *Having instructors available for students after the Job Class ended who continued to provide ongoing support worked well.*
- *It was noted that at times, telephone communication issues arose with students. For example, when trying to get the student on the phone, one could encounter a family member with no English skills. It was suggested that additional instruction and support might be need to address this issue with students.*

*A Portland staff member noted need for an interpreter was most evident during the referral process, and she assumed it resulted in fewer students responding to program outreach.*

### **Component #7- Follow-up and Retention**

- *Issues that arose included things like hygiene which came up frequently. Another area was people not working quickly enough; not working to employer standards. One Job Class instructor suggested instructors receive more training on how to deal with these types of issues.*
- *It was suggested that instructors / Job Developers maintain ongoing communication with employers to try to head-off problems before they pop up. In instances where they were able to maintain a relationship with the employer, it worked great because as issues arose, the employer would call to discuss and give instructors a heads-up.*

### **Component #8- Evaluation**

- *General consensus –*
  - *Barrier scales were helpful and did confirm the program addressed the correct issues, and was successful in addressing them.*
  - *Staff noted that consolidation of responsibility for collecting and reporting the data makes sense.*

## Other Comments / Observations / Recommendations Not Yet Discussed

What changes, if any would you recommend? In response to this question staff had a number of comments, listed below.

- *An instructor noted he would like to become more informed about issues students face in getting a job. For example, he learned some would lose important income streams or other support if they took a job. He felt he was not fully informed about these issues for individual students, but these issues did affect participant motivation.*
- *It was noted that having public assistance professionals address the students, informing them of what benefits they can keep should they obtain a job, was helpful in motivating students to gain employment.*
- *To improve on the readiness factor (student motivation), more time should be taken at intake to assess issues affecting the student.*
- Flexibility would benefit the program to allow each community to work in response to the specific conditions they encounter; rather than attempting to run the programs in identical fashion in both communities. Staff noted feeling restricted in terms of flexibility, based on DOL instructions. Recommendation - a program model allowing for local modification.
  - Example – participants who were struggling with stress and trauma - we could reach out and address those issues by adding and or modifying program components to address those them.
  - Example, the two communities ran their programs at different times of the day, and on different days to accommodate local immigrant population preferences.
- Engagement with employers (one to one), allowing them to engage with students, would be very helpful and useful to promote placements.

### Additional suggestions included:

- *More computers.*
- *More money for marketing the program to employers – i.e. building a program-specific web site, etc.*
- *General Assistance / TANF reductions*  
*Both cities reported that there were few people on the program receiving general assistance; and therefore, reductions observed were low. Portland reported they were still waiting on information from DHHS.*

- *Job Development – job placement, job counseling – initially the developers of the program had some difficulty in separating the roles of these positions. Consensus – the group could have done a better job in clarifying those roles at inception. It was noted that the job development and counseling did work well in practice.*
- *Relationship with Portland Career Center – initially the relationship was tenuous, and as the project progressed, they faded as a partner. As a result, the program had to rent classroom space for program activities they believed would have otherwise taken place in the Career Center. However, due to the fact the program was housed in the Career Center, the instructors felt the relationship with the Center improved as the program progressed – in terms of the Center personnel knowing who and what the program was all about.*
- *Tax benefits – observation – in Lewiston, were not really an incentive to employers. It carried a stigma that the program was dealing with less than quality employees. In Portland, they had mixed results – some positive and some negative.*

## **Attachment**

## **Barrier Scale**

Workshop Attendee \_\_\_\_\_ 7 Week training participant \_\_\_\_\_

## New Mainers Refugees Workforce Development Program

Today's Date is: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Please read each statement and tell us how much, if any, this issue is affecting you at this time. Place a checkmark in the box that tells us  your answer for each sentence.

Possible barriers to getting and keeping a good job	<b>This <u>is</u> a problem for me now</b>	<b>I don't know if this is a problem for me now</b>	<b>This <u>is not</u> a problem for me now</b>
1. My English language skills			
2. My work experience			
3. My USA work experience			
4. My knowledge of USA work expectations – (like sick leave, being on-time for work; how to dress for work)			
5. Knowing how to find job openings			
6. Knowing how to fill out work application forms			
7. Reliable transportation			
8. Acceptance of my homeland education or training			
9. Having enough skills for the jobs in my area			
10. Having reliable child care			
11. Availability of jobs that pay enough money to support my family			
12. Knowing how to do a resume			
13. Knowing how to get my credentials re-evaluated			
14. My computer skills (knowing how to use a computer to find a job)			
15. Other – please describe the problem			