

68 West Kern Consortium

Plans & Goals - Consortium Approved

Executive Summary

The core purpose of the West Kern Adult Education Network (WKAEN) is to develop and provide relevant educational opportunities for adults leading to increased employment and/or higher education resulting in greater financial stability. This purpose is accomplished through core values of: community involvement and awareness; respect and support shown students and employees; removing barriers and empowering students. The WKAEN board consists of members from Taft Union High School (TUHS), Maricopa Unified School District (MUHS), Taft College and Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS). In addition to adult basic education in the areas of high school equivalency preparation (GED) and English as a Second Language (ESL), WKAEN developed and implemented several SWF classes in 2018-2019. Building on their success, WKAEN increased the number of classes in 2019-20. County employer surveys indicated a need for more vocational training and certificates for the following areas: industry related training, soft skills, basic office skills training and test preparation for paraprofessional testing for the local school districts. Purposeful dialogue between WKAEN, local community members, employers and partnerships with industry revealed the need for new courses to support the vocational needs identified. WKAEN focuses on providing free short-term training that strengthens the West Kern workforce. Training provides students with the skills, knowledge, and certification(s) needed to gain or maintain employment. In collaboration with key partners, WKAEN is able to offer a variety of trainings that meet the needs of students and local industry. Special attention is given to labor market data and emerging labor trends to guide the implementation of new programs. In 2019/20, WKAEN offered 16 classes compared to three the previous year. Classes offered year round at WKAEN included Welders Helper, State Certified Security Guard Card, Home Health Aide, Para-Professional, Industrial Safety, state certified ServSafe Food Handler, Computer Skills, Office Skills, Forklift and CPR. WKAEN developed a comprehensive ESL program with three levels of effective ESL offerings; novice, beginning and intermediate. After an evaluation of current levels of ESL, WKAEN identified certain competencies needed in each level of ESL. Curriculum will continue to be aligned in 2020/21 to correspond with the content standards. In doing so, instructors will teach more effectively, ensuring student success. Primary goals for the upcoming Program Year focus primarily on student success, which is measured by: increased number of GED graduates; increased number of ESL students moving to next level (measured by CASAS); increased number of students enrolling in adult secondary education; increased number of students employed; and increased parent education leading to children's success in school. Challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, WKAEN responded by serving students in a distance learning environment and continuing to meet their learning needs, as well as protecting the health and well-being of the instructors and supportive staff. Instructors and staff worked remotely for several weeks but were able to re-enter the workplace following guidelines set by the CDC. Instructors began developing distance learning strategies that are effective for our targeted population. Administration began planning the implementation of a hybrid method of instruction that would serve, not only online students, but on-site students as well. These methods are being implemented in the GED and ESL classes and some CTE courses. Students faced many challenges, not only educationally but in their finances and families. WKAEN staff began meeting regularly with supportive organizations in the community to determine the level of services available. A resource tool was developed which could address the needs of the students through easy-to-access agencies located within walking distance of most families. Bus passes were distributed to those who needed transportation. WKAEN families were affected by the racial injustices ignited by the murder of George Floyd; however, this did not appear to impact the number of students seeking adult education in our region. Largely isolated in rural communities, WKAEN works diligently to make sure that students, without a high school diploma and having limited English proficiency, low income, low-literacy and/or unemployed, are targeted by outreach and encouraged to enroll in classes. WKAEN will continue to examine the issue of their role in addressing systemic racial injustices within those communities. Budget reductions challenged WKAEN administrative staff to closely evaluate which services might need to be reduced or eliminated. Because of the surplus of unspent funds from prior years, WKAEN was not forced to reduce staff or programs in 2020.

Regional Planning Overview

During the next program year, WKAEN expects to augment current courses by offering direct explicit instruction and curriculum to enhance learner's job skills and basic education proficiency. Professional Development / Trainings: develop

stronger relationships with local industry; expand and improve the outreach and marketing to target populations through increased community awareness of WKAEN adult educational courses; and aligning with the seven program areas designated by AEP. Increased awareness and marketing to target populations will be accomplished by means of published and social media, service clubs presentations, Chamber of Commerce activities, community event participation; and developing a more effective follow-up system to track student success. Data will reflect, for all programs, the number of adults served and those who demonstrated progress in job placement, improved wages, literacy skills, high school equivalency, post-secondary training, degrees or certificates to address the seven program areas for adult learners building on successful practices and continued examination of areas of need from the summary of recommendations of the AEP Consortium Planning Project. WKAEN's three-year plan included the following goals: 1. By June 2020, hire two part-time counselors to deepen engagement with students regarding their goals and long-term education or career plans. 2. By June 2020, improve/redesign the student follow-up process. WKAEN met goal 1 and 2 in June 2020. Two staff members, both credentialed, are working directly with students to develop their goals for long-term education or career plans. WKAEN enhanced the follow-up process from a primarily by phone process, which was challenging due to cell numbers changing. However, our calls show that at least 55 percent of the completers of our SWF courses are now employed and estimate that the number is larger than that. We are developing an app which will keep us in better contact with our students through text and messaging. 3. By 2022, increase number of HSE graduates to 50 per year. Although challenged with the COVID-19 quarantine, WKAEN formulated a plan to address, not only the "shut-down" but also the challenges students face daily. Instead of separating the English-speaking GED courses into two classes, WKAEN joined the classes allowing students to attend either class on-line or on-site. This will allow future students to access the class for the subject they are mastering, whether morning or evening. The Spanish-speaking GED course offerings were expanded to better serve the Spanish-speaking population. Outreach is being developed and implemented to serve the particular needs of this population. ESL courses were aligned to create a clear pathway into GED courses. 4. By 2022, develop at least two regionally recognized certificates in Industrial Safety and Office Skills leading to gainful employment. WKAEN implemented a recognized certificate in Industrial Safety and is developing an Office Skills course by working with local industry partners to ensure the curriculum has the highest potential employment in this job sector. 5. By June 2022, have an ESL Distance Program that serves at least 100 active students varying from beginner to advanced and hire two part-time ESL instructors to teach a morning, evening, and distance learning class. WKAEN hired one part-time instructor to teach an evening distance learning ESL class and is working with the local high school to develop a program targeting migrant parents of high school students.

Meeting Regional Needs

Regional Need #1

Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

According to our data, below is listed the current labor and demographic statistics: Located within Kern County, the West Kern Consortium is situated on the vast Midway- Sunset Oil Field, encompassing a 767-square mile area. The areas served in this diverse and rural population include Taft, Maricopa, Fellows, Elk Hills, McKittrick, and other census-designated places in West Kern. The communities of Taft and Maricopa are the primary population centers within western Kern County, and home to approximately 27,000 residents combined. Like many rural regions in California, adult education services within western Kern County were fragmented, and in many cases, non-existent. The consortium, however, made great strides and sparked a transformation in western Kern County to provide a pathway to greater career mobility, economic growth, and community development. In 2019-2020, West Kern Adult Education Network provided services to approximately 471 students, which is a 22% increase from 367 in 2018-19. The West Kern Consortia was initially expected to serve approximately 200 students, but has exceeded that number for three years in a row. The makeup of clients is approximately 54% female and 46% male. Clients seeking services range in age from 18-70; however, the majority of the students fall in the range of 18-31 years old with a strong concentration of youth 18-24 seeking services. About 43% of clients seeking services do not have a high school diploma, 45% only have a high school diploma, and 7% have a high school equivalency (GED). In 2019-20, about 49% of clients enrolled in a career technical education or workforce readiness program. Approximately 30% enrolled in the high school equivalency program. The English as a Second Language program had a 21% enrollment rate, an increase of 14% in 2010-20 due to staffing changes. Additionally, 6% of the clients enrolled are adults with disabilities. Transportation is a unique barrier for clients, while many report having a vehicle or access to a vehicle, many cannot afford to pay for additional gasoline. Therefore, many of the clients served cannot accept jobs outside of West Kern. Public transportation in the area exist, but

services are limited. Taft Area Transit, for example, operates the Maricopa to Taft route that runs three times a day and offers no weekend service. WKAEN provides free bus passes to students facing this barrier and attempts to schedule classes to accommodate the students living in outlying rural areas. WKAEN has also collaborated with several local industry partners who had previously been hiring the majority of their employees from Bakersfield. After seeing the training materials and visiting in-session classes training students, these employers are seeing the advantages of hiring the students as soon as they complete the classes. This provides the employers with a strong local workforce, as well as providing local employment to our clients removing the immediate need for their own transportation. In support of this goal, WKAEN instituted an annual Job Fair event which joins local employers with prospective employees. At the event, clients and employers are able to visit WKAEN booth and receiving information on the training courses made available though the consortium.

How do you know? What resources did you use to identify these gaps?

The Gaps in Service or Regional Needs were identified through our data, industry partners, local and state government agencies, strategic partners and current labor and demographic statistics.

How will you measure effectiveness / progress towards meeting this need?

For all programs, effectiveness and progress is measured through data reflecting the number of adults served, demonstrated progress in job placement, improved wages, literacy skills, high school equivalency, post secondary training, degrees, or certificates to address the seven program areas for adult learners building on successful practices and continued examination of areas of need from the summary of recommendations of the AEP Consortium Planning Project.

Gaps In Service

New Strategies

Strategy #1

According to our data, current labor and demographic statistics: The West Kern Consortium is situated on the vast Midway Sunset Oil Field located within Kern County which encompasses a 767-square mile area. The areas served in this diverse and rural population include Taft, Maricopa, Fellows, Elk Hills, McKittrick, and other census-designated places in West Kern. The communities of Taft and Maricopa are the primary population centers within western Kern County, and home to approximately 27,000 residents combined. Like many rural regions in California, adult education services within western Kern County were fragmented, and in many cases, non-existent. The consortium, however, made great strides and sparked a transformation in western Kern County to provide a pathway to greater career mobility, economic growth, and community development. In 2018-19, West Kern Adult Education Network provided services to approximately 367, which is a slight increase from 351 in 2017. The West Kern Consortia expected to serve approximately 200 students, but exceeded that number two years in a row. The makeup of clients is approximately 55% female and 45% male. Clients seeking services range in age from 18-70; however, the majority of the students fall in the range of 18-59 years old with a strong concentration of youth 18-24 seeking services. About 50% of clients seeking services do not have a high school diploma, 33% only have a high school diploma, 4% have a high school equivalency (GED). In 2018, about 43% of clients enrolled in a career technical education or workforce readiness program. Approximately 37% enrolled in the high school equivalency program. The English as a Second Language program had a 14% enrollment rate, a decrease from 32% in 2017 due to staffing changes. Additionally, 6% of the clients enrolled are adults with disabilities. Transportation is a unique barrier for clients, while many report having a vehicle or access to a vehicle, many cannot afford to pay for additional gasoline. Therefore, many of the clients served cannot accept jobs outside of West Kern. Public transportation in the area exists, but services are limited. Taft Area Transit, for example, operates the Maricopa to Taft route that runs three times a day and offers no weekend service. WKAEN provides free bus passes to students facing this barrier and attempts to schedule classes to accommodate the students living in outlying rural areas. WKAEN collaborates with several local industry partners who had previously been hiring the majority of their employees from Bakersfield. After seeing the training materials and visiting in-session classes training students, these employers saw the advantages of hiring the students as soon as they complete the classes. This provides the employers with a strong local workforce as well as providing employment to our clients in a local setting, removing the immediate need for their own transportation. In support of this goal, WKAEN recently instituted a Job Fair event which joins local employers with prospective employees. In addition, at the event, clients and employers will be able to visit booths outlining the training courses made available though the consortium.

Seamless Transitions

New Strategies

Strategy #1

Strategies for 2020-21 include working with with local industry to develop certifications that meet the need and demand of the community and local industries. Students will enroll in industry related courses which will have a high potential leading to part- or full-time entry-level employment as well as pathways into post secondary credit programs offered locally. WKAEN is implementing a SWF course which provides a regionally recognized certificate in CIF Coaching Education Program leading to gainful employment locally. Creating regionally recognized certificates that lead to gainful employment will be key in building trust and credibility in the community and program. Local school and recreation departments have indicated a need for this certificate to supply trained coaches to work in their program. Other CTE and Strong Workforce courses are under consideration by the WKAEN Board of Directors.

Student Acceleration

New Strategies

Strategy #1

Strategies supporting accelerated student progress were developed and implemented in 2019-2020 program year. GED students were offered individualized tutoring supporting their basic skills efforts. In addition, open math labs were offered not only to our students but community wide. In 2020-21 GED instructors will offer Office Hours to provide one-on-one instruction for students struggling in particular areas of learning. ESL: Regular assessments were implemented for our ESL students resulting in appropriate placement for successful course work. ESL students sometimes struggled with leaving one classroom for the next level. WKAEN developed strategies to celebrate these successes. In the next year WKAEN will develop new strategies to encourage students in their progress. Strong Workforce courses were developed in time frames of two weeks or less in order to encourage enrollment and attendance. The challenge of providing on-line options for CTE and Strong Workforce courses is being overcome through collaboration with certifying agencies and partnering industries. Curriculum will be adapted to on-line standards as much as possible. On-site lab courses will be clearly defined to provide a safe and effective learning environment with course standards still being clearly met.

Professional Development

New Strategies

Strategy #1

Instructors and support staff consistently received professional development through periodic staff training events on-site. Planning is ongoing to institute professional development opportunities for instructors and other staff to ensure improved student outcomes and cultural sensitivity. Statewide and regional partner agencies who offer professional development activities were contacted. Instructors are encouraged to attend county based training. Online training of instructors and support staff during the quarantine was required, resulting in gain of relative knowledge in creative instructional methods as well as acquiring skills in such programs as Google Docs, ZOOM, CareerHub, CANVA, WEB and more. In the coming year WKAEN will develop new strategies to implement these training tools into the classrooms.

Leveraging Resources

New Strategies

Strategy #1

Increased partnerships with local educational agencies are being developed in order to leverage resources. These agencies provide valuable resources such as classroom space and instructors in the development of our CTE course offerings. We are expanding these relationships in order to become more effective in benefiting the adult learners in our region. In 2017 in collaboration with the TUHS CTEC Department, WKAEN facilitated numerous CTE trainings. WKAEN uses the CTEC at the TUHS facilities and instructors in the areas of Health Careers, Law Enforcement, Computer and Culinary Arts. Taft College provides classroom and lab space for Welders Helper and Industrial Safety courses. Maricopa Unified School District provided classroom space for GED instruction and the Office Skills CTE course. This leverages current resources because no additional teachers need to be hired or facilities need to be rented. WIOA Out of School Youth will be served in 2020-21 through a grant with ETR. Outreach to these students was implemented and the intake process has begun. This will increase the services to this community through collaboration with WIB's and industry employer groups. In addition, WKAEN staff is involved with the regional WIB to develop additional programs/certificates.

Strategy #2

With the closing of the local Westside Resource Center, funded by the local school system, students and their families were left without access to basic needs assistance. WKAEN partnered with local nonprofits who are able to assist students with rent and utility assistance, food programs, clothing, household products, mental health counseling, homelessness prevention services, hygiene products and referral services. By partnering with an agency for basic needs assistance, WKAEN is able to provide additional services and meeting a need, which, if unmet, often affects the students ability to attend or focus on classes. In addition, the WIOA Out-of-School Youth (WIOA OSY) program offers students over 18 additional resources for basic needs to ensure they can continue to meet their educational goals and complete their paid internship with local businesses. The WIOA program helps students gain experience in an industry field of their choosing, often resulting in the student gaining employment at the business. By leveraging different funding, WKAEN increases the likelihood of success for students in pursuing educational and career goals.

Fiscal Management

A narrative justifying how the planned allocations are consistent with the annual adult education plan which is based on your CAEP 3-year plan.

The planned allocations are consistent with the annual adult education plan which is based on our AEP 3-year plan as follows:

1. Elementary and secondary basic skills, including classes required for a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate. GED courses in English and Spanish as well as subject directed tutoring.
2. Programs for immigrants eligible for educational services in citizenship, English as a second language, and workforce preparation, ESL, Citizenship and CTE courses.
3. Programs for adults, including older adults, for entry or reentry into the workforce. CTE courses offered in Welders Helper, Industrial Safety, Law Enforcement, Health, Education, Food Safety, Office Skills, Soft Skills.
4. Programs for adults, including older adults, to develop knowledge and skills to assist elementary and secondary school children to succeed academically. GED and ESL courses prepare adults to assist school-aged children to succeed academically.
5. Programs for adults with disabilities. Driver's Education Preparation is offered to the TC Transitional to Independent Living (TIL) students as well as Strong Workforce courses.
6. Short term career technical educational programs with high employment potential. Short-term CTE courses (less than 53 hours) are offered in increments of two weeks or less resulting in high enrollment and high employment potential.
7. Programs offering pre-apprenticeship training, in coordination with apprenticeship program(s), as specified. State certified pre-apprenticeship programs are not currently available in western Kern County. WKAEN is investigating possible future avenues in this program area and is collaborating with local union, ETR and WIB to develop a program.

An approach to incorporating remaining carry-over funds from prior year(s) into strategies planned for 2020-21.

Distance Learning: WKAEN developed a plan to implement Distance Learning component for GED, ESL and some CTE Workforce Readiness courses. Expenses for upgrading and adding to computer inventory, as well as tech support, technology and expanded internet services will add a need for funds that were not originally budgeted. Course Development: WKAEN incorporated remaining funds into the implementation of courses in all program areas. CTE Workforce Readiness: WKAEN is developing short-term CTE pilot courses which will give the unemployed adults in our communities with the skills to obtain entry level employment, as well as create pathways into post-secondary education and upper level Career Technical Education. Investing roll-over funds on the initial supplies and curriculum for these courses will ensure that the courses will be sustainable. Professional Development: WKAEN will also invest in the professional development of their instructors and support staff by providing ongoing training opportunities ensuring staff and teachers are educated in best practices and improved student learning outcomes. These trainings will include instruction on use of technology. We expect all 2019-20 unspent funds to be expended by December 2021. Data, Testing and Assessment: WKAEN found that the data input, testing and assessment area needed to be improved and expanded. Planning began on developing a more efficient area for testing and increasing the number of trained staff. WKAEN is considering the opportunity of applying for WIOA II funding along with other funding sources to support these needs. Classroom Space: Due to increased student enrollment and expanded course offerings, WKAEN is investigating the expansion of classroom space.

Certification

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08/15/2020 10:49 AM PDT

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08/14/2020 01:24 PM PDT

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