

68 West Kern Consortium

Plans & Goals - Consortium Approved

Executive Summary

Since its inception five years ago, West Kern Adult Education Network (WKAEN) started with a mission to “Develop and provide relevant educational opportunities for adults leading to increased employment and higher education resulting in greater financial stability.” Unfortunately, adult education services within western Kern County were fragmented or, in some instances, did not exist. Nevertheless, the Consortium made great strides and sparked a transformation in western Kern County. As we move into year three of our Three-Year plan, the Consortium continues to expand our programs to provide the opportunities necessary for student success. Using self-assessments and regional demographic data, WKAEN identified five goals for its Three-Year Plan: 1) Hire two part-time counselors to assist students with the development of long-term education and career goals; 2) Improve and redesign the student follow-up process; 3) Increase the number of HSE graduates to 50 per year; 4) Develop an onsite Career Readiness program for students to receive certificates recognized by local industries; and 5) Develop an ESL program that serves at least 100 active students. Significant achievements were made and WKAEN remained on track to complete these goals in program years 2019/20. In addition to adult basic education in high school equivalency preparation (GED) in English and Spanish, and English as a Second Language (ESL), WKAEN developed and implemented 16 new CTE/Workforce classes since 2018. These free, short-term training programs further strengthened the West Kern workforce. A comprehensive ESL program was also developed with three levels (Novice, Basic, and Intermediate). This curriculum aligns with our goals for 2021/22 and corresponds with State standards, ensuring our instructors follow all CASAS testing guidelines to track student success further. As we transitioned into 2020, previous WKAEN goals and plans halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These unprecedented challenges led to WKAEN prioritizing the health and safety of our students and staff. The Consortium decided to cancel classes and direct staff to work remotely while developing distance learning strategies that would benefit our target population. Like many people all over the world, our students faced many challenges. Further, barriers such as limited English proficiency, low income, low literacy, and unemployment exacerbated struggles in many West Kern households. At the same time, many WKAEN families were affected by the racial injustices ignited by the murder of George Floyd, with protests reaching our small community. The Consortium feels strongly that existing racial inequities must stop. Therefore, WKAEN will continue to strive to make all programs and services equitable for all students. Staff began meeting virtually with local organizations to determine the level of services available to the community leading to the development of a resource tool to address the needs of our students. This tool showcased the resources available within walking distance of our student population. Additionally, WKAEN distributed bus passes to those needing transportation assistance. The CDC released updated guidelines that allowed WKAEN to return to campus safely. Upcoming plans centered on how to provide instruction to our community as safely as possible. WKAEN administration began planning the implementation of a hybrid model to provide education virtually and in person. Our classes for GED, ESL, and some CTE courses have implemented these plans. Making instruction available to our most vulnerable students during this pandemic has been a priority for the Consortium. This goal led to the purchase of 50 new Chromebooks and laptops that students can check out to continue receiving instruction from home. Luckily, the Consortium showed financial restraint in previous years to ensure that our programs and services would be more adaptable when unexpected expenses occur. For example, WKAEN used surplus funds to purchase COVID-19 personal protective equipment and other supplies to ensure proper sanitation. Moreover, WKAEN will allocate additional excess funds that remained unspent toward developing a new location closer to where our most vulnerable students live. For the upcoming 2021/22 program year, WKAEN's primary goals focus on student success and measurable gains, as well as the accomplishing goals three – five. For goal three and five, WKAEN hopes to increase the number of GED graduates, ESL students moving to the next level (measured by CASAS), students enrolling in adult secondary education, employed students and increased parent education leading to children's success in school. Collaboration with local K-12 schools to target programming and services to ESL migrant parents will also aid in reaching goal five (serving at least 100 ESL students). Goal four is currently in progress with WKAEN creating a new Career Readiness program.

Regional Planning Overview

During the next program year, WKAEN expects to expand current student pathways by offering personalized student counseling, instruction, and curriculum to enhance learner's job skills and basic education proficiency. Additionally, WKAEN

hopes to target underserved populations by marketing our programs and services using social media. In addition to increasing WKAEN's online presence, representatives of the Consortium have been promoting program offerings and services to local service clubs, Chamber of Commerce activities, and other community events. Successful engagement within the community will be accomplished by tracking the number of adults served and social media engagement. Additionally, WKAEN will monitor progress and student outcomes such as job placement, increased wages, literacy skills, high school equivalency, post-secondary training, degrees, or certificates.

Meeting Regional Needs

Regional Need #1

Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

Reduce barriers in the West Kern area such as transportation and low-income.

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

Student intake data shows 59% of our clients reported having more than one barrier. This number increased to 70% in the 2020/21 program year, with low income and low literacy statuses plaguing many of our students. Subsequently, transportation has also been a barrier for clients. Although many students report having a vehicle or access to a vehicle, many cannot afford to pay for additional gasoline. Therefore, many clients cannot accept jobs outside of West Kern. Local public transportation options exist, but services are limited. City transit buses, for example, operate to outlying areas such as Maricopa three times a day but do not offer weekend service. WKAEN does its best to assist these students by providing free bus passes and scheduling classes to accommodate the students living in outlying rural areas. WKAEN has also collaborated with several local industry partners who have previously hired many of their employees from Bakersfield. After collaborating with WKAEN and designing the curriculum to meet the industry's needs, these employers see the advantages of hiring the students locally as soon as they complete the classes. This partnership provides local industry employers with a strong local workforce, alleviating the immediate need for transportation.

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

Effectiveness will be determined by monitoring student outcomes data such as job placement, improved wage earnings, and literacy skills. In addition, as students earn high school equivalency diplomas, post-secondary training, and degrees/certificates, outcomes are logged in TOPSPRO to update student records.

Regional Need #2

Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

Develop career readiness skills to increase gainful employment to West Kern community.

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

Currently, 43% of all students have enrolled in a career technical education or workforce readiness program, 30% go into a GED program, and 20% go into an English as a Second Language (ESL) class. In 2020-2021, West Kern Adult Education Network provided services to approximately 288 unduplicated students, a 70% increase from 203 unduplicated students in 2018 - 2019. Program fund allocations expect WKAEN to serve 200 students in one program year. However, the Consortium has exceeded that goal three years in a row. Once students have received their diploma or certificate, students require resources to develop career readiness skills that are necessary to obtaining gainful employment.

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

WKAEN will create a new Career Readiness program that offers certificates in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Typing, QuickBooks, and Food Handlers. The Career Readiness program will also provide workshops for resume writing, cover letters, and access to online employment. Effectiveness will be measured by monitoring student outcomes, job placements, and improved wage earnings.

Gaps In Service

New Strategies

Strategy #1

In 2020-2021, WKAEN identified that 70% of our students have one or more barriers. WKAEN has identified multiple areas that are barriers, one being transportation. WKAEN provides free bus passes to students facing this barrier and attempts to schedule classes to accommodate the students living in outlying rural areas.

Strategy #2

WKAEN has identified that 56% of our community is Hispanic/Latino with little to no education. To bridge this gap, WKAEN has developed an ESL program that provides three different levels of ESL, Civics, Citizenship, and Spanish GED. Additionally, WKAEN is working to secure a second location closer to the Hispanic/ Latino community to serve this population better and implement the immigrant integration framework (IIF).

Strategy #3

WKAEN's WIOA I grant request for refunding for 2021/2022 was approved to meet the needs of the students that are 18-24. In addition, WIOA has connected with local industries and has placed many students in a position that has offered them long-term employment.

Strategy #4

WKAEN has implemented counseling for each student to provide a clear pathway into post-secondary education and career readiness. WKAEN hopes to address these gaps in order to serve our rural population better.

Seamless Transitions

New Strategies

Strategy #1

Collaborating with local industries will enable WKAEN to develop certificated courses that meet the need of the community. Students will be able to enroll, leading to part- or full-time entry-level employment and pathways into post-secondary credit programs offered at the local community college. Additionally, WKAEN will collaborate with the local high school and community college to bring new Workforce Grants to bridge high school students to adult education and post-secondary education. These grants cover various subjects such as health care, criminal justice, and education. WKAEN aims to ensure many of our CTE courses provide locally recognized certificates that lead to gainful employment which subsequently will be the key in building trust and credibility within the community. 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 2019/20 program year. GED students were offered individualized tutoring supporting their basic skills efforts. In addition, math and writing workshops are offered to our students and other community members who need assistance. In 2020/21, GED instructors expanded instructional hours to provide one-on-one tutoring for students struggling with subjects. For the 2021/22 program year, assessments will be implemented for ESL students during enrollment which will result in appropriate placement for successful outcomes. Additionally, WKAEN has prioritized counseling for all students as they progress through their educational pathway. Counseling services are aimed at encouraging students to pursue post-secondary education or career advancement. Due to COVID-19, WKAEN developed virtual CTE courses that had onsite labs. Students rotated through the lab to limit the number of

students onsite. On-site lab courses were designed to provide a safe and effective learning environment while meeting course standards. Taft Union High School plans to create concurrent enrollment course offerings for law enforcement with Taft College and West Kern Adult Education that leads to diplomas, certificates, and degrees. The consortium and the local high school value partnerships and this pathway will collaborate with seventeen local correctional facilities to ensure realistic workforce practices are followed. One central location will be used to provide multiple services and training.

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. Instructors are encouraged to attend CAEP, CASAS, and other State Adult Education trainings and webinars. Online training for instructors and support staff during the quarantine was required, resulting in increased knowledge of creative instructional methods as well as acquiring skills in such programs as Google Docs, Zoom, CareerHub, Canva, web, and more. WKAEN has developed many new strategies that were implemented in the classrooms to best serve the students. Professional Development has been the key to our continued growth in our GED, ESL, and CTE programs.

Leveraging Resources

New Strategies

Strategy #1

WKAEN hopes to increase partnerships with K-12 and the community college in educational and workforce pathways. These agencies provide valuable resources such as classroom space and instructors in the development of our CTE courses. We are expanding these relationships to become more effective as we work to benefit the adult learners in our region. In 2019/20, WKAEN used the classrooms at local education partners' facilities, as well as their instructors working in Health Careers, Law Enforcement, welding, industrial safety, Paraprofessional, and Culinary Arts. WKAEN also offered GED classes in one of our more rural area K-12 school districts from 2019 - 2020. Having access to their instructors and facilities allows economical use of space and use instructors that are already working in the field and on-site. In addition, WKAEN staff is involved with the regional CASAS to develop additional programs/certificates.

Strategy #2

With the closing of the local Westside Resource Center, previously funded by the local K-12 school system, students and their families were left without access to basic needs assistance. WKAEN partnered with local nonprofits to assist students with rent, 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 can provide additional services and meet the needs of students for them to attend and focus on classes. In addition, the "WIOA Youth @ Work" program offers students, between the age of 18 to 24, 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 where their work experience is conducted. 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 civics and citizenship, English as a Second Language (ESL), and workforce preparation, 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. 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 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. WKAEN is currently looking into implementing a certified pre-apprenticeship program and investigating possible future avenues in this program area to collaborate with local unions, ETR, and Workforce Development Board, to develop new program.

An approach to incorporating remaining carry-over funds from prior year(s) into strategies planned for 2021-22.

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 WKAEN's computer inventory, as well as tech support staffing, 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 has developed short-term CTE Lab courses which gave our unemployed adults in our community 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 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 to ensure staff and teachers are educated in best practices and improved student learning outcomes, including instruction on the use of technology. **Data, Testing and Assessment:** WKAEN found that the data inputs, testing, and assessment areas needed to be improved and expanded. Planning began on developing a more efficient area for testing and increasing the number of trained staff. **Module Development:** WKAEN is implementing Modules that allows WKAEN to obtain more services and outcomes in our data. WKAEN will be applying for WIOA II funding along with other funding sources to support the needs of our community. **WKAEN Expansion Project:** We expect 2020/21 unspent allocated funds to be used to acquire and renovate an additional location in the Hispanic/Latino community. Offering ESL, Civics, citizenship, and CTE course. This project will launch the fall of 2021.

Certification

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