Strengthening Collaboration & Alignment between WIOA Services and Refugee & Immigrant Populations

CWA Meeting of the Minds

Wednesday, September 7, 2022

Presentation Team:

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Agenda & Learning Objectives

Agenda

- Overview of Refugee Support and Employment Services
- Serving Immigrants and Refugees with WIOA: Key Strategies and Practices
- Case Study: King County WDB

Learning Objectives

- Increase foundational knowledge about California refugee populations and the employment services they receive through Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)
- Take away specific steps your team can take to increase your capacity to serve immigrants and refugees in your WIOA Title I program
- Build your understanding of what has and has not worked as WDBs embark on this work

California Context

- There are approximately **11 million immigrants in California**
- California has historically been one of the **largest refugee resettlement states**
- As a **border state**, California is especially connected to migrant communities including **asylum-seekers**
- These populations typically quality as **Priority of Service Populations** under WIOA

Refugee Support Services

Abdi Abdillahi, Chief
CA Department of Social Services | Refugee Programs Bureau
Policy and Programs Section
September 7, 2022

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Agenda

- Guiding Authorities
- Populations Served & Employment Services
- Refugee Impacted Counties

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Guiding Authorities

- Refugee Act of 1980
- Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 400 – Refugee Resettlement Program
- Welfare and Institutions Code Sections §§ 13275 – 13286 (Administration of Refugee Social Services and Refugee Cash Assistance)
- Manual of Policies and Procedures § 69-200 (Refugee Resettlement Programs)

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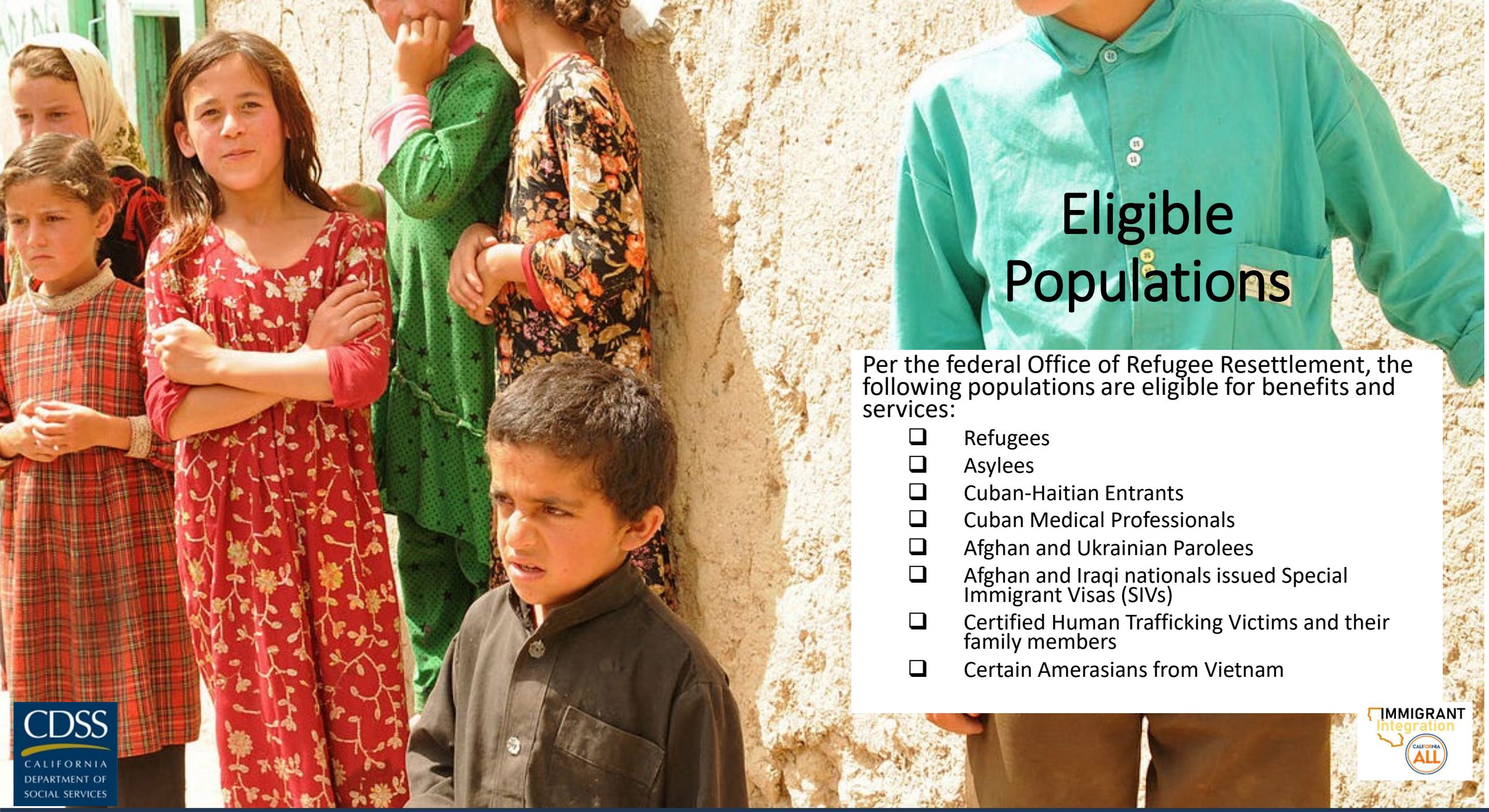

Eligible Populations

Per the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, the following populations are eligible for benefits and services:

- ❑ Refugees
- ❑ Asylees
- ❑ Cuban-Haitian Entrants
- ❑ Cuban Medical Professionals
- ❑ Afghan and Ukrainian Parolees
- ❑ Afghan and Iraqi nationals issued Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs)
- ❑ Certified Human Trafficking Victims and their family members
- ❑ Certain Amerasians from Vietnam

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Refugee Support Services

- Employability Assessment
- Training and Job Development
- Vocational Training and Skills Recertification
- Job placement and Maintenance
- Social Adjustment
- English Language Instruction
- Interpretation and Translation
- Child care
- Citizenship and Naturalization

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Service Priorities

- New arrivals in their first year in the U.S.
- Refugees who are receiving cash assistance
- Unemployed refugees who are not receiving cash assistance
- Employed refugees in need of services to retain employment or attain economic independence

Refugee Impacted Counties

- Received at least 400 refugee arrivals for the past five years. Afghan arrival final destinations in CA include:
  - ☐ Alameda
  - ☐ Contra Costa
  - ☐ Los Angeles
  - ☐ Orange
  - ☐ Sacramento
  - ☐ San Diego
  - ☐ Stanislaus
  - ☐ Santa Clara

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County Refugee Coordinators (CRCs)

- Refugee-impacted counties are required to designate a representative to serve as the County Refugee Coordinator (CRC).
- CRCs are responsible for planning, organizing, coordinating, and overseeing the delivery of public social services to assist refugees in becoming self-sufficient.

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Resettlement Agencies & Ethnic Community Based Organizations

- 23 RAs currently active across California
  - International Rescue Committee
  - World Relief
  - Jewish Family Services
  - Catholic Charities
- 20+ ECBOs
  - Somali Family Services of San Diego
  - Lao Family Community Development
  - Pars Equality Center

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Thank you!

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Serving Refugees & Immigrants with WIOA: Key Strategies and Practices

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

Aligning WIOA and Refugee & Immigrant Clients: Build the Foundation

- **Identify who** within your WDB team is going to drive and champion this work
- **Landscape analysis** – resettlement agencies and other organizations serving the target population
- **Information gathering** – your County Refugee Coordinator and/or local immigrant collaborative(s) are a great start
- Host an **initial meeting** and remember to:
  - Prioritize listening and learning
  - Take the time to explain the basics about your programs, services, eligibility, limitations, and performance goals
  - Decide on a plan for next steps so you don't lose momentum
- **Regular (monthly or quarterly) meetings with relevant stakeholders** are important to making progress and will provide a space to solicit feedback on timely and emerging challenges and opportunities

Culturally and Linguistically Accessible On-Ramps

DO

- Ensure that your **web presence and outreach materials** are available in relevant languages
- Hire **Career Navigation staff** that bring key language and cultural skills
- Make sure that AJC **staff know how to access interpretation, are encouraged to do so**, and have been trained on how to serve a customer while using an interpreter
- **Allow these customers to have a navigator/other support** to help them through the process of getting connected to services and continue to communicate with that navigator
- Collaborate with refugee and immigrant-serving organizations to **co-develop proposals that offer intentional, responsive service delivery** models and career pathways that work for the target population

DON'T

- Assume that doing **"business as usual"** will result in these customers walking in your door
- Have **complex, online-only registration** and eligibility procedures that customers must complete independently before even being considered to receive services
- Tell refugee-serving organizations to simply **"make more referrals"**
- Assume that as long as you provide accessibility in **Spanish**, you should be fine
- **Refer all ELL individuals to ESL classes** and assume eventually, they will find their way back

Braiding Together ORR-Employment Services & WIOA

- Consider **sequencing**– core ORR employment services focus on the first months post-arrival
- ORR RES funds can and do support **vocational ESL services** – consider opportunities to integrate this work with industry or sector specific initiatives in the region
- WIOA has significantly more access to **training funds** than ORR employment funds so consider co-enrollment to open the door to occupational skills training + individual employment coaching and supportive services
- **ORR discretionary grants** – including Career Pathways and Employer Engagement – offer special opportunities to collaborate on key program models and partnerships

WIOA Training Funds

- Collaborating on **training funds** is a great best practice
- **Review the processes, timeline, and requirements** you have in place for customers to access ITA funds and pay attention to common pain points:
  - "Policy" that accessing training funds requires a HS diploma/GED and/or specific level of English
  - Opaque timelines and/or waitlist processes
  - Title I Career Navigation Services eligibility/enrollment bottlenecks
- Consider **opportunities for prioritization**, either within or outside of a specific project or initiative
- Keep lines of communication open with refugee-serving partners and remember, expending these funds on immigrant customers is usually **a win-win** for organizations, clients, and even performance metrics!

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Meeting of the Minds

CWA Presentation | September 7,2022 |Marisol Tapia Hopper

Seattle – King County Region

Refugee Population

- Washington welcomes more than **30 different nationalities** annually
- Over the last 10 years, more than **30,000 refugees from over 70 countries** have resettled in Washington State
- More than **6,500 Ukrainians** have resettled in Washington since 2010
- More than **4,000 Afghans** have arrived in Washington between 2021-2022

Our Region's Workforce

- 2.3 Million
- 15th Largest Metro Area in the US
- 25% Foreign-Born
- 1/3rd of Washington Workforce
- 41% of Total Jobs in Washington State
- 35,000 job seekers served during the last program year

OUR NORTH STARS

Equitable Economic Recovery

- Recovery as an Opportunity to Rebuild Better
- Centering Racial Equity
- Re-Envisioning Workforce Development

Job Quality

- Livable Wages
- Benefits
- Workplace Safety
- Career Advancement

Immigrant and Refugee Strategies

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System Coordination

- **Need**: build stronger partnerships with workforce system partners
- Workgroup formed with the WA State Refugee Coordinator's Office.
- Immigrant & Refugee Summit
- Afghan Arrivals Coordination meetings

Increase Language Access & Advocacy

- **Need**: equitable language access services
- Workgroup formed Emergency translation for UI insurance
- Operator Contract – Increase access to translation and Interpretation services
- Electronic Job Seeker Referral Form

Increase Access to Work-Based Learning

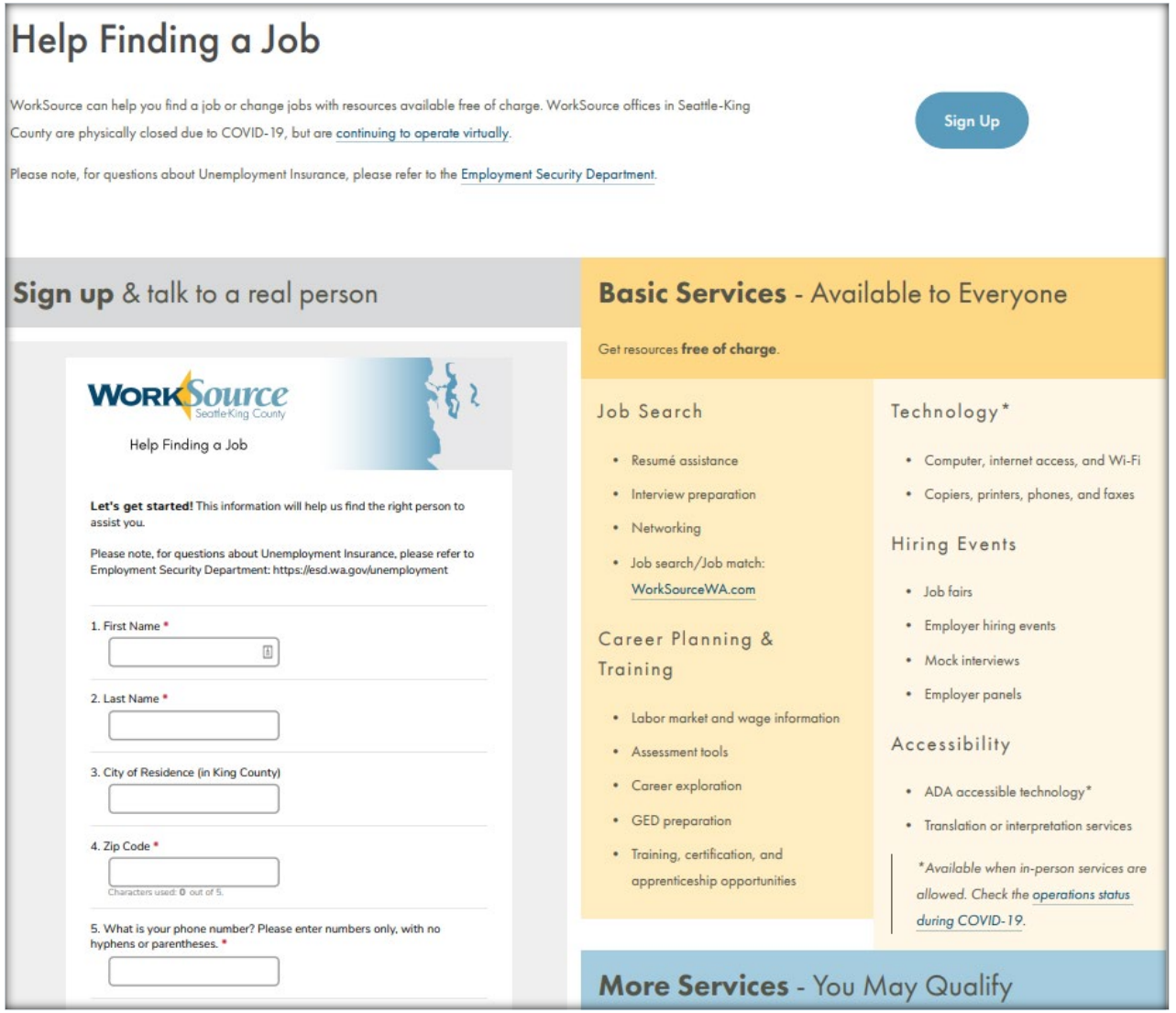
- **Need**: invest in, and scale up subsidized employment programs
- Connect high-skilled immigrants, and foreign-educated professionals to long-term careers
- WBL partnerships with state and local governments
- Braided funding – WIOA & Non-WIOA

Digital Equity Work

- **Need**: to incorporate digital equity goals in workforce development
- Digital Navigators at AJCs
- Digital Equity Asset Map
- Digital Needs Assessment Tool

Electronic Job Seeker Referral Form

- Easier process to help job seekers get connected to the right person for services
- Form is available in Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese, Persian & Nepali
- Helps triage interested job seekers to resources across the system and bilingual staff



Serving ORR Populations Impacted by the Digital Divide

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF SEATTLE – KING COUNTY

Digital Equity Asset Map

- Support AJC staff, community partners and job seekers locate digital resources
- Advocate and advance digital inclusion efforts in our region
- Identify service gaps and lack of investments

Digital Needs Assessment Tool

- Create a standard process and coordination to assess the digital needs of job seekers
- Ongoing analysis of assessment results
- Target funding to support access to devices, the internet, and digital skills training

Digital Equity Survey

- Understand the digital needs in our region
- Help develop digital equity recommendations
- Inform policymakers about needed workforce investments

Digital Navigators at AJCs

- Partnership with Washington Service Corps
- AmeriCorps Digital navigators at AJCs provide digital skills training and one-on-one support to customers

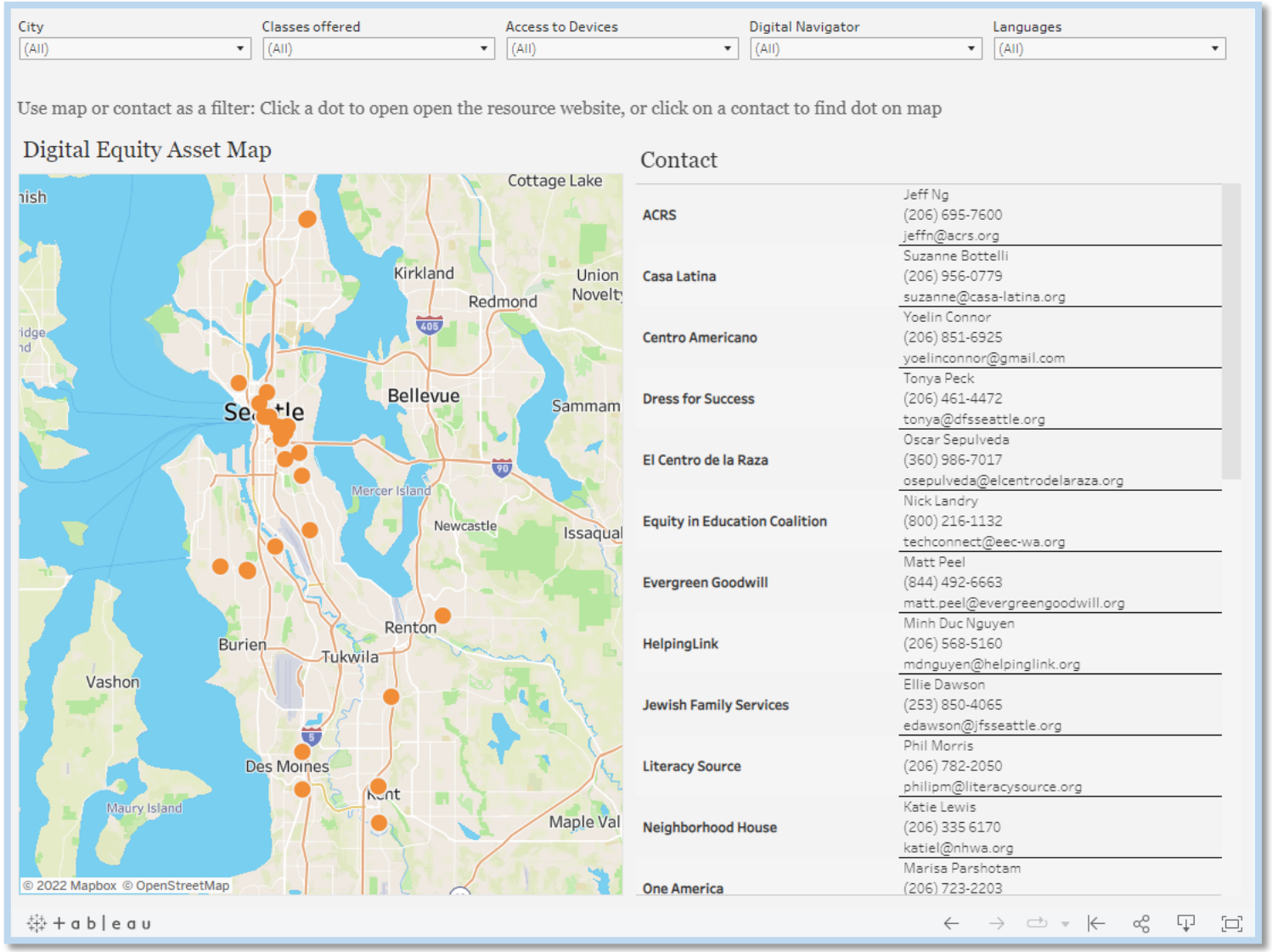
DIGITAL EQUITY WORK

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF SEATTLE – KING COUNTY

Digital Equity Asset Mapping

Goals of the map:

- Help frontline staff and community members locate digital resources
- Advocate and advance digital inclusion
- Identify service gaps



DIGITAL EQUITY WORK

Digital Needs Assessment

Goals of this tool:

- Create a standard process and coordination to assess the digital needs of participants.
- Ongoing analysis of the digital needs of participants.
- Target funding to support access to devices, the internet, digital skills training and other resources needed by community members.

DIGITAL EQUITY WORK

Digital Equity Survey

Goals of the survey

- Understand and assess the digital needs in our region
- Help develop digital equity recommendations
- Inform policymakers about needed workforce investments

Workforce Development Digital Equity Survey

Access to reliable, high-speed internet, a computer, and digital skills are basic necessities needed to pursue education, employment, and economic mobility. This survey is part of a collective effort among all 12 local workforce development boards to identify and understand the digital skill needs in our regions. The results will help develop recommendations, and inform policymakers about needed workforce investments that incorporate digital equity goals.

Definitions (From the National Digital Inclusion Alliance)

Digital Equity: is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

It is important to note here the use of "equity" vs. "equality." When we use the word equity, we accurately acknowledge the systemic barriers that must be dismantled before achieving equality for all.

Digital Literacy: Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this 5-minute survey. If you have any questions or would like to provide more in-depth information, please email us back at mtapiahopper@seakingwdc.org or amy.martinez@co.yakima.wa.us

Thank you,

Amy Martinez & Marisol Tapia Hopper

RESOURCES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF SEATTLE – KING COUNTY

Governor Jay Inslee's Directive: Designation of Additional WIOA Focus Populations
21-24 Workforce Training Boards (tmp).pdf (wa.gov)

Regional Strategic Plan – Immigrant and Refugee Strategies
https://www.seakingwdc.org/regional-strategic-plan

Seattle-King County Electronic Job Seeker Referral Form
https://www.worksourceskc.org/help-finding-a-job

Seattle-King County Digital Equity Asset Map

Seattle-King County Digital Needs Assessment Questionnaire
See attached PDF.

Workforce Development Digital Equity Survey
See attached PDF.

Digital Navigators at AJCs – AmeriCorps Posting
https://my.americorps.gov/mp/listing/viewListing.do?fromSearch=true&id=114242

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Key State Contacts
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/key-state-contacts

Thank you!

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF SEATTLE - KING COUNTY

Time for
Questions

Additional Resources:

WorkforceGPS Community of Practice Webpage

https://www.workforcegps.org/resources/2022/03/18/13/44/New_Afghan_Refugees_Resettlement