English Skills for Personal Success & Store Profitability

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Grant Goals:

1.) To identify the English language benchmarks for the retail/service industry. Knowing the needs of the industry will make it easier to prepare and assess potential immigrant workers wishing to enter the field.

2.) To develop an easy-to-administer and appropriate assessment tool that can be used by industry to measure the English language skills of potential immigrant workers.

3.) To partner with employer community to develop industry-specific curriculum and training that can upgrade the English language and occupational skills of eligible immigrant workers in an accelerated manner.

4.) To demonstrate proficiency in English as a key to retention and advancement in the retail sector.
Background on CUNY & BMCC

CUNY is:

• the largest Urban University in the United States
• serving 480k+ learners annually, and growing
• comprised of 23 campuses & professional schools
• a culture of collaboration on academic & workforce projects

BMCC is:

• serving 22,400 degree-seeking & 8,000 ACE learners annually
• delivering 13 A.A.S. programs, 5 A.A. programs and 7 A.S. programs
• where students from 155 countries come to learn, speaking 42 languages
• national leader in awarding 2-yr degrees: Latino & African-American students
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Four Approaches:

CUNY Campus:  BMCC  Strategic Partner:  McDonald’s

College of Tech.  CAMBA

Kingsborough CC  Grocers

LaGuardia CC  Duane Reade & Crystal Windows
Partner Responsibilities:

- Curriculum Development
- Employee Pre- and Post-Assessment for Placement and Success Tracking
- Instructor Hiring & Training
- Course Delivery
- Report to US Department of Labor
- Identify Training Candidates
- Compensate Training Participants at regular hourly wage
- May/May not be asked to host the training activity

Leveraged Funds = CUNY & Employers were required to contribute “in-kind” to the project at roughly $.60:$1
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Project Outcomes:

- 257 learners enrolled (107% of goal)
- 17 training cycles conducted (170% of goal)
- 76% of participants completed training (195 of the 257, vs. 80% project goal)
- 86% of completers showed growth (167)
- 39.5% grew 2 NRS levels or more (77)
- Learners' ethnic heritage: 62% Latino, 13% Chinese, 13% Eastern European, 8% Caribbean
- 2,720 instructional hours provided
- 41,120 hours dedicated to employee learning & development thru US DOLETA funding
VESL Project Timeline:

- **2Q06**: DOLETA Demonstrations Funding
- **3Q06**: Curriculum Development Begins
- **4Q06**: Recruit 1st Cohort
- **1Q07**: Conclude Pilot, Solicit NYS Funds to Sustain McDonald’s component
- **2Q07**: Expansion Funded
- **3Q07**: Recruitment Begins
- **1Q08**: Final 3 Cohorts to be trained
- **2Q08**: 3Q09
- **4Q08**: 1Q09
- **4Q09**: 1Q10
Lessons Learned in Effectively Engaging Employer Partners:

1.) Know the employers’ goals / metrics / intentions for getting involved
2.) Set their expectations up-front, then manage them throughout
3.) Be prepared for the “… you people do that?” dialogue, part of your sales pitch
4.) Be prepared to “coach” your partner throughout the process – on how our training programs function, on the adult learning process, on having patience, etc.
5.) Make sure the instructional staff respect the VESL approach, they are front-line relationship managers with the employer partner
6.) Focus on sector(s) where relationship-development is organic to your portfolio
7.) Work thru an intermediary, if possible
8.) Engage a labor organization, if appropriate
9.) Engage the local One Stop, whenever possible
10.) …in the end, they may not want to dance with you.