

# CALIFORNIA'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS: AN ACCESSIBILITY ANALYSIS

## Executive Summary:

California's Workforce Development Boards (WDB) oversee the state's workforce development at a local level. However, their involvement has not been effectively evaluated for several years. This report is an effort to visualize the WDBs' impact and accessibility to its immigrant communities, particularly with respect to work authorization and language access. Because WDB's seek to serve California at a local level, this report will evaluate each one based on the unique population demographics of its zone. Furthermore, this report hopes to evaluate ways in which the WDBs can improve their programming to meet the diverse needs of immigrant Californians. Out of 45 workforce development boards, 25 responded to our requests for information.

## Obstacles facing access:

- **Don't know where services or programs are, or even that they exist**
- **No programs in their immediate area**
- **Scheduling barriers**
- **Not eligible due to immigration status**

## Statewide Look at Median Wages by Demographic:

### Appendix A – Aggregated Statewide Performance Report

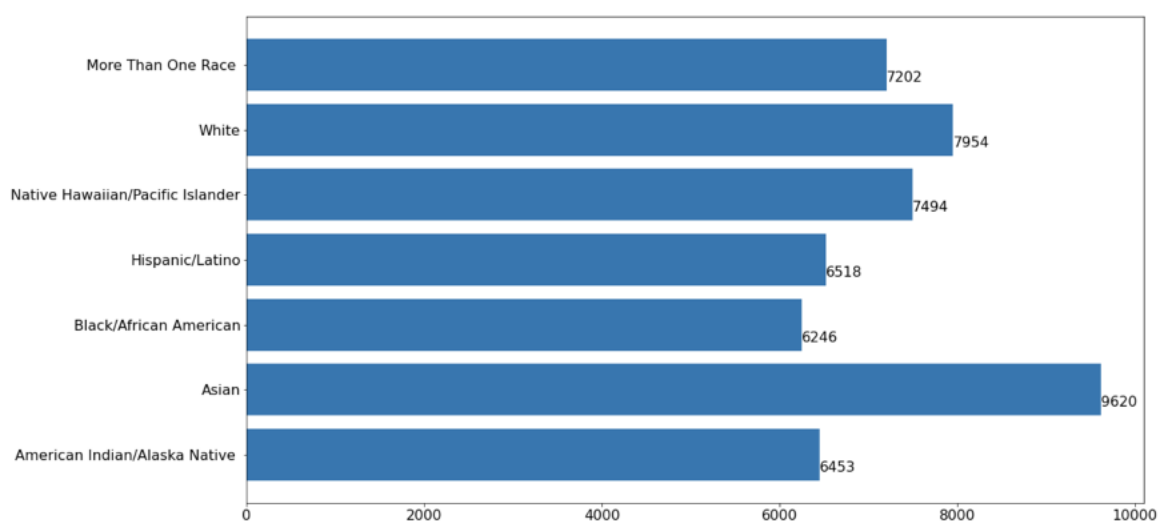


Fig. 1.1

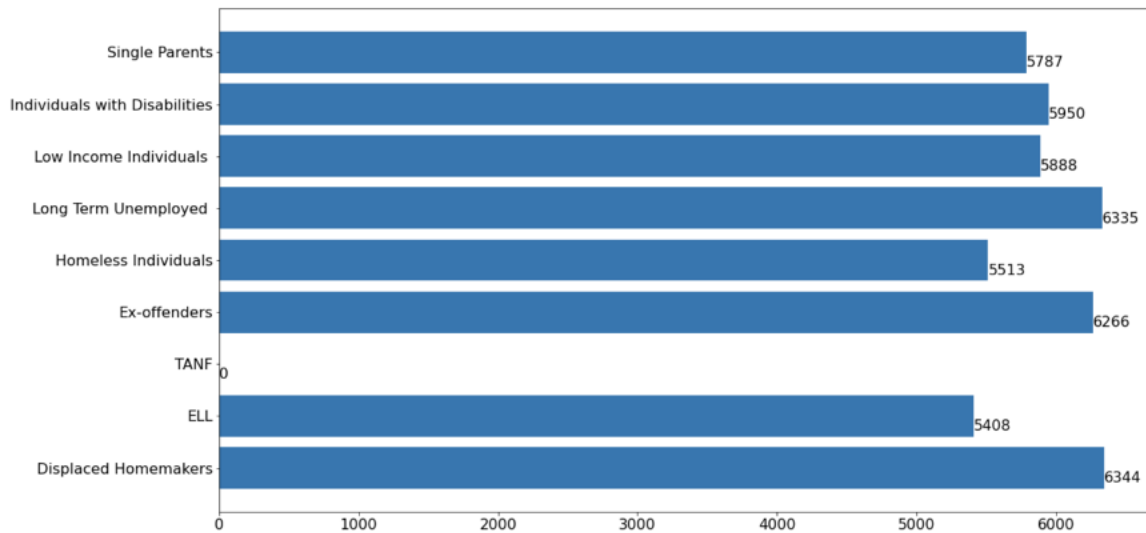


Fig. 1.2  
**Statewide Look at the Number of Served Participants in Workforce Development Board:**  
 Appendix A- Aggregated Statewide Performance Report

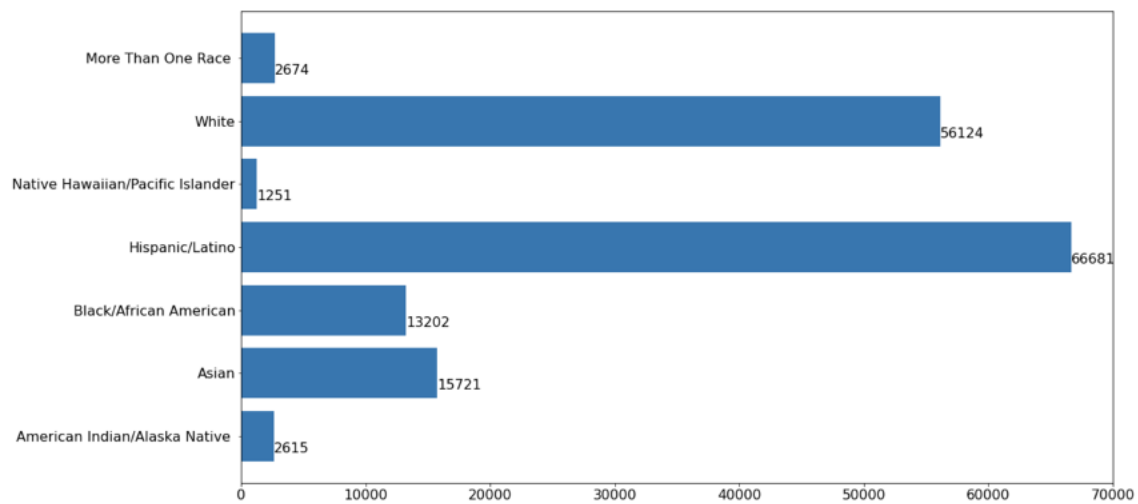


Fig 2.1

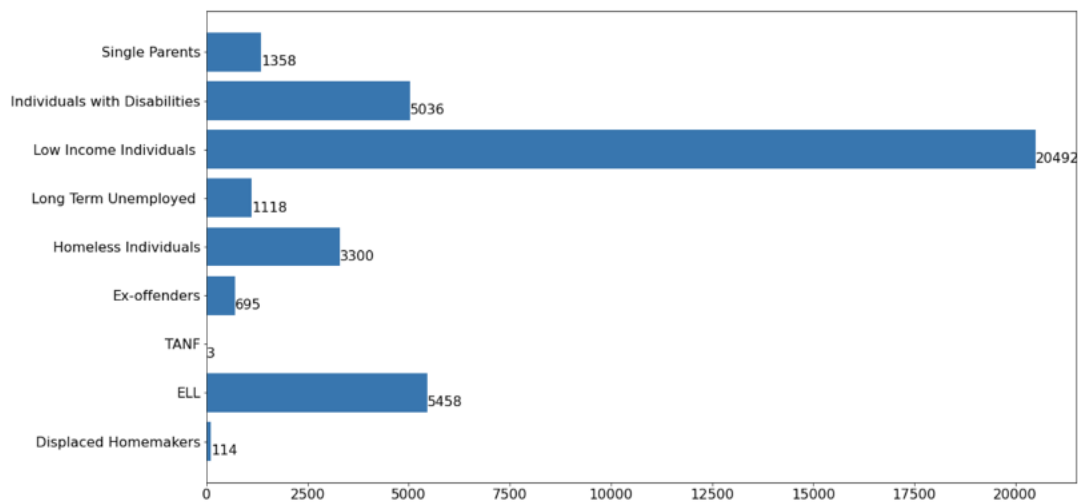


Fig 2.2


Currently, Hispanic/Latinx and Black/African-Americans<sup>1</sup> are making the lowest median wages even after receiving help from a WDB. However, Hispanic/Latino clients make up the bulk of participants in the WDB system. Furthermore, the highest employment barrier for participants is low income status. Based on this data, we can see that most WDB participants are low income and non-white.

## LOCATION

Workforce Development Boards host the vast majority of their services in their offices or through America's Job Centers of California. In some zones, WDBs have several smaller offices. However, most WDBs only have one office.

Fig 3.0

<sup>1</sup> Demographic labels used are the ones provided by California WIOA Performance Reports and are not necessarily in line with demographic terminology that CIPC uses.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Link to map: <a href="https://arcg.is/1bn8zi0">https://arcg.is/1bn8zi0</a></li> <li>● Click on border to find WDB zones</li> <li>● Shaded areas are the estimated counts of undocumented immigrants in a particular area</li> </ul>	<p>count</p>  <p>&gt; 71,351 - 412,522</p> <p>&gt; 37,581 - 71,351</p> <p>&gt; 17,812 - 37,581</p> <p>1,749 - 17,812</p>
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Location serves as a barrier to career services. Along with that, clients must take the effort to travel to unfamiliar neighborhoods, find and possibly pay for parking, for perhaps 30 minutes of help.

A simple solution is to instead go to neighborhoods. Offering services in areas of significant importance with community leaders can increase access to job services. Examples may be,

- Religious Institutions: churches, mosques, temples, etc.
- Schools
- Community grocery stores and long standing local businesses

These places should have two characteristics: places where people naturally gather and places where certain communities easily gather. For example, to branch out more to non-English speaking communities, it would be impactful to reach out to heads of non-English speaking community organizations and leaders. Furthermore, events and time offerings should be at the same time community members gather. For example, for a religious service offered at 11am, a workforce training could be at 10am or 12pm to accommodate those who can already attend.

Examples of workshops that should be hosted:

- Training Programs for Youth
- Information sessions on new state policy initiatives
  - Entrepreneurship grants for undocumented workers
  - Support for domestic violence workers
  - How to apply for the Cal EITC credit

### ***REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE***

Not all clients may be coming off unemployment and might be trying to improve their careers on the off hours of their part time jobs. Most jobs low-income individuals take have odd hours and do not have set schedules every week, and the WDB office's strict 9-5 service is a barrier.

Recommendations:

- Providing remote opportunities through phone services
- Opening up hours to 6am and 11pm
- Opening on the weekends
- Collaborate with local nonprofits or organizations meant to service marginalized communities

Community organizations already have locals who are experienced in identifying these important areas and know how to develop trust. At the same time, these organizations can help fill in gaps that make service difficult.

Some of these gaps may be: <sup>[1]</sup>

- Including undocumented voices
- Record cleaning/free legal assistance
- Translators (especially with lesser spoken languages and dialects)

Hiring those from the local community working in community centers creates trust between the government and marginalized communities. Furthermore, those from the local community are passionate about helping their neighbors, and they would ensure that every part of California can help contribute to the state economy.

### *Website Accessibility*

Another place that some workers can access workforce development services is online. Most WDB websites, however, have issues with common user accessibility, confusing graphics, and unavailable information. Those who are unconfident in their reading and English skills would find the WDB websites difficult to navigate.

Recommendations

- Creating a unified graphic design and website policy for all 45 WDB websites
- Offering easily accessible website translation and audio services

*Creating a unified graphic design and website policy for all 45 WDB websites*

A unified graphic design and website policy requires significant investment. However, WDB should see an uptake on user accessibility as well as information dissemination. Currently, WDB websites are cluttered, filled with complex jargon, and difficult to navigate. Those who seek WDB services may not have the time nor the ability to go through hundreds of pages searching for basic information. Furthermore, future participants would feel the WDB process is too complicated (which it is).

In many ways, WDBs are autonomous with individual focuses on their respective areas. However, WDBs must be unified, when possible, to promote a more inclusive message to the public. This is because few know and even fewer understand their local WDB. For a government agency created to help the public, this failure exhibits a significant accessibility barrier.

### *Offering easily accessible website translation and audio services*

The figure below counts the number of websites with translation services.

Count of Website Translation Available

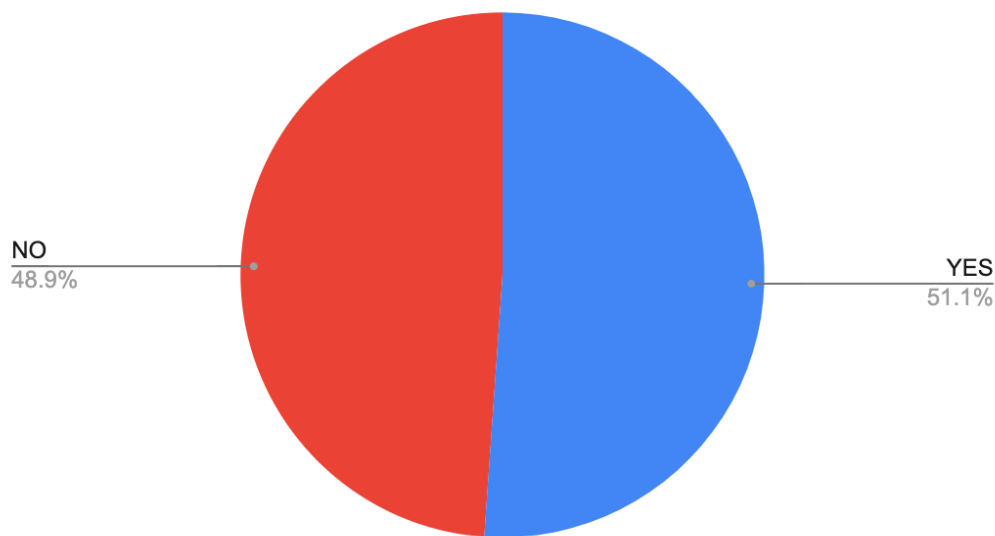


Fig 4.1

Only 23 out of 45 had any form of translation available on their website. To be considered as having translation services on the website, the home page had to have some translation button (see figures below). Not having website translation is an obvious barrier for non-English speakers.



Fig 4.2

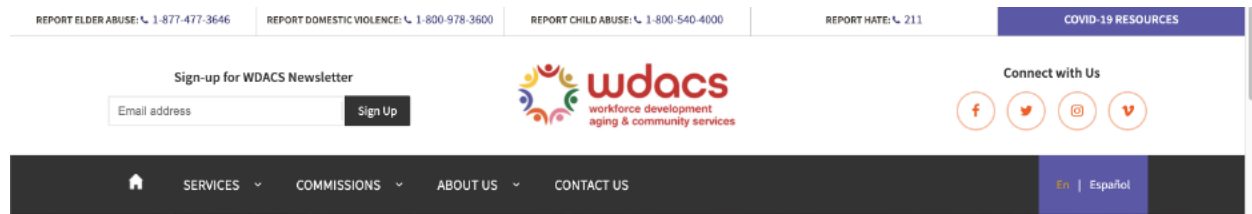


Fig 4.3

## INFORMATION

### Recommendation

- Put policy jargon in common language
- Make information on processes, eligibility, and program enrollment steps more widely known
- Translation Services

Accessing information for this report was notoriously difficult. While little less than half already had policy information on their websites, most had almost no policy documentation available to the public. When requested, 20 did not respond to our emails. Most had information available on PDF, not on the web page itself, and these files would be in dense, cluttered documents that required advanced level English. Only Orange County had policy information in an easily obtainable and understandable format on the website.

***“Even the flyers are only in English”<sup>[2]</sup>***

These conditions present several barriers to those seeking service from WDBs.

- Not enough time to read through all the pages to find simple information
- Limited English skills to confidently understand all information available
- Cannot understand English
- Reading off mobile devices where they cannot view PDF files
- Limited vision and electronic brightness to read through dense information
- Cannot read and rely on audio transcription services

Recommendations:

- Creating video guides on the processes and steps within WDBs
- Translate websites
- Add policy information in FAQs
- Add translated pages on important information

## **WORK AUTHORIZATION**

- Getting rid of E-Verify
- Getting rid of Work Authorization
- Grants through WDB
- Establishing CalJOBS as an option, not the only way to receive job opportunities
- [https://www.dropbox.com/s/89u29ckjyyhfdhw/LB-WD-AE-Policy-Dialogue-Notes.docx?  
dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/89u29ckjyyhfdhw/LB-WD-AE-Policy-Dialogue-Notes.docx?dl=0)



Authorization to Work Service Flow Chart		
Service	Triggers participation	Authorization to Work
Basic Career - Self-service and information-only activities, including program referrals, outreach, intake, orientation, eligibility determination	No	No
Basic Career – Staff-Assisted, including initial assessment, job placement, career counseling	Yes	<u>May</u> verify for activities such as initial assessment and career counseling
		<u>Must</u> verify for job placement assistance
Individualized Career	Yes	<u>May</u> verify for activities such as occupational career counseling, aptitude
		testing, mentoring, and group counseling
		<u>Must</u> verify for employment activities such as work experiences, transitional jobs, internships, and pre-apprenticeship training
Training	Yes	<u>May</u> verify for classroom training
		<u>Must</u> verify for employment activities

Fig 5.1

Workers want connections, training, and resources to obtain jobs. Employers want employees with skills for their needs. The gap between the two has been filled with a cacophony of various NGOs, nonprofits, and advocacy groups, and the WDB has been thrown in as one option.

**However, work is a human rights issue, the same way the economy is a public issue.**

The right to work in the United States is deeply tied to the status of citizenship. However, work is arguably a fundamental requirement to the United States' daily operations. Work fuels the economy and social status, and the economic status of an individual often determines the quality of life that individual can have or provide.

In California, a major limitation for advancing the economic status of immigrants is in the right to work, specifically undocumented immigrants.

The figures 5.2-5.4 highlight the count of WDB which required work authorization for each level. Though all WDB do have the option of not requiring work authorization for every level of service provided (as seen in figure 5.1), most choose not to.

Basic Career- Staff Assisted , initial assessment and career counseling

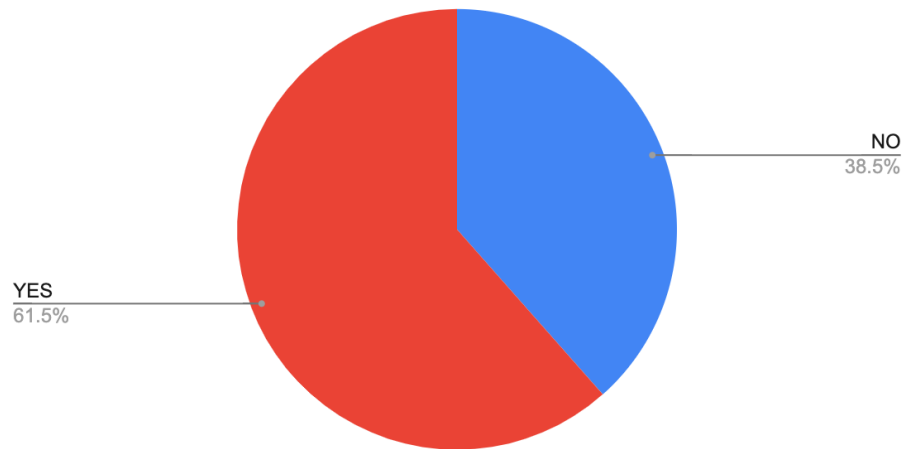


Fig 5.2

Individualized Career, occupational career counseling

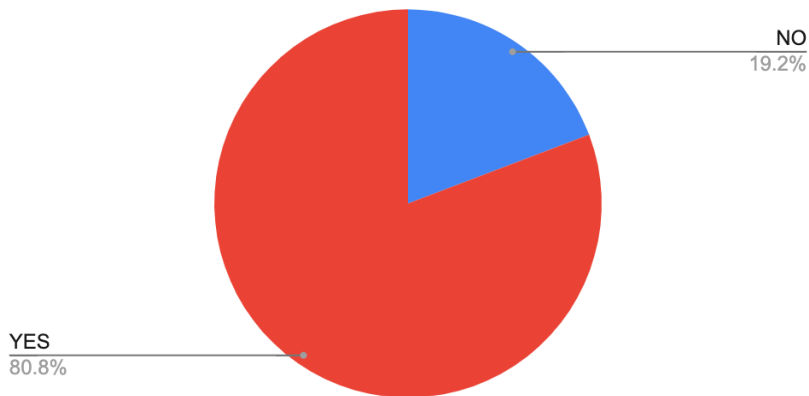


Fig 5.3

### Classroom training

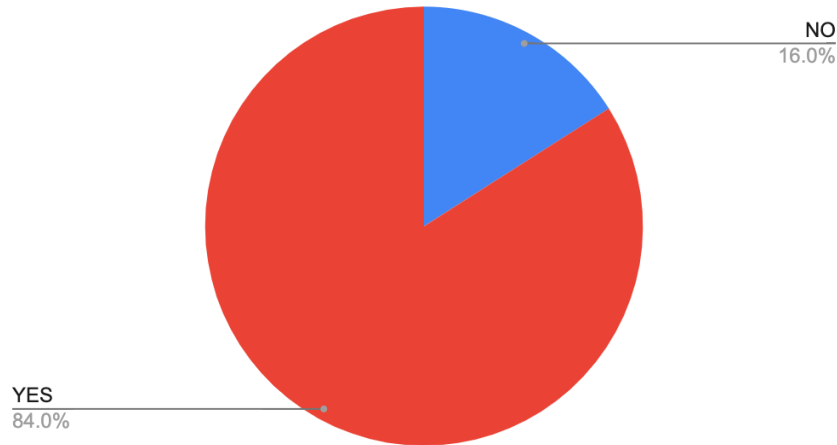


Fig 5.4

The individual reality of each WDB may be more complicated than stated above. Some choose to blend each stage of service into one large one to cut costs. Some do not have enough funds to offer additional training or services. Others primarily focus on uploading resumes to CalJOBS.

Though WDBs are required to verify work authorization since they are federally funded, it is important to recognize that the workforce authorization policy allows for some discretion and flexibility. Additionally, WDBs should take steps to ensure every person can be helped. The economy works because every person in an area supports the flow of money through purchases, sale and property taxes, and entrepreneurship. To deny work opportunity for participants in the economy, documented or undocumented, denies representation for those who have and will contributed to the recovery of California's market.

Furthemore, extra steps such as e-verify and work authorization require scanning services and extensive computer help to process. Not everyone has an iphone with free scanning services, and libraries may be inconvenient to travel to. Some may feel uncomfortable giving social security numbers in order to receive help. Eliminating e-verify and work authorization opens the door for both documented and undocumented workers to contribute to developing California's economy.

#### Recommendations:

- Advocate for Work for All, not require work authorization or e-verify to receive occupational help and workforce services
- Advocate for pathways to citizenship and/or work visas

## Notes on data:

- <4 was converted to 4 for manipulation purposes
- Any blank spaces were filled with 0
- For responses, only 25 out of 45 Workforce Development Boards responded to our requests for information
- Impossible to convert the pdf to excel without problems, so data entry was done by hand. As a result, errors most likely exist within the data set. Please email [linh.pham@yale.edu](mailto:linh.pham@yale.edu) if there are any errors.
- This evaluation was done with the 2019 Adult Performance CA Workforce Development Board Report
- Not all rows were included due to little to no data available. These rows were “Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers” and “Youth in foster care or aged out of system”
- Some classification tables will look empty due to little data available
- Negotiated Targets for salaries and employment rates were not included, but many zones accomplished their targets.
- This data is not meant to be incriminating, but rather a digestible understanding of WDBs in California. This data is intended to be used for identifying improvements.
- Policy information was provided in large reports, and often not easily answered. Answer interpretations may also be wrong. Please email [linh.pham@yale.edu](mailto:linh.pham@yale.edu) if there are any questions about the answer.
- Appendix: <https://github.com/linhtpham09/cipc>
- <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1JTpzjbGWyVLODdZMv5hOiDQSEqO-MPHLl1jI09scNws/edit?usp=sharing>

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<sup>[1]</sup> From the Statewide Workforce Convening Notes:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/43qy2c0t9t0331i/Statewide%20Workforce%20Convening%20Notes%2012.6.18.docx?dl=0>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.dropbox.com/s/89u29ckjyyhfdhw/LB-WD-AE-Policy-Dialogue-Notes.docx?dl=0>