



Latino Pathways: Testing Sector Strategies with Immigrant Workers

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MDC's mission is to help organizations and communities close the gaps that separate people from opportunity. We have been working to create positive change in disadvantaged communities for 40 years by conducting research and demonstrating effective programs at the community level. We focus on three areas: education, economic and workforce development, and asset building and strategic philanthropy.

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By Colin Austin

Introduction

Do sector strategies provide an effective career advancement model for immigrant workers? In this paper I examine the key characteristics of sector strategies and how they apply to Latino immigrant jobseekers. I analyze a recent demonstration project, Latino Pathways, and describe what worked and what fell short. As a comparative study, I review and apply lessons from *Targeting Industries, Training Workers and Improving Opportunities*, the final report of the Sectoral Employment Initiative, and add new findings that relate to the immigrant workforce. This paper is a report from the field about how sector strategies are being applied in today's labor market.

My conversion story

I first heard about sector strategies in 2002 at a Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute. Interested in new approaches to workforce development, I was looking for models that made a stronger connection between people and decent jobs. I walked into a session on sector initiatives presented by Blake Walters, from the National Economic Development and Law Center (now the Insight Center for Community and Economic Development.)

The session galvanized my thinking. I saw power in its systematic approach to research and design. Actions were driven by data, with full considerations of industry growth, wages, and paths to self-sufficiency. The methodology was logical and sleek. Each step was a precise decision cutting away the blind alleyways of low-wage work and shining a light on jobs that really help people get ahead. I felt eager to begin to try the techniques.

Sector strategies were presented as different from existing employment programs in the following ways:

	Traditional Jobs Programs	Sector Strategies
Purpose:	Prepare people for jobs through skills development and education.	Create industry change that strengthens the target industry and improves job quality and job access for low-income people.

Customer:	Individual jobseekers.	Low-income individuals and industry.
Focus:	General job readiness.	Targeted jobs in a specific industry.
Planning:	Often guided by intuition and general observation.	Guided by rigorous research of industry, demographic data, and employment training resources.
Geographic Focus:	Local	Regional
Community Partnerships:	Sometimes	Always
Goals and Outcomes:	Funder-driven	Industry and community-driven.

(National Network of Sector Partners, 2002)

What appealed to me about sector strategies was the linkage of workforce and economic development efforts. Employment training was no longer a shotgun approach of general preparation for a variety of jobs, but targeted to particular growth industries. Community partnerships would organize the wide array of supports and services for individuals and businesses. The employers that would eventually hire people who would help guide the process.

So what were the actual strategies, the actions to be taken? Key strategies include the following:

- Outreach – Establish relationships between employers and community-based sites, develop new recruitment systems, and package supportive services.
- Training – Offer accessible training/education to upgrade language, literacy and workplace skills in a target industry.
- Career Pathing – Develop curriculum that builds skills along a career path and work with employers to help workers retain their jobs and move up the industry’s career ladder.
- Advocacy – Identify problems and issues for action, build coalitions, and organize efforts to change industry practice, work conditions, employment training systems, or public policy.

(National Network of Sector Partners, 2002)

MDC, Inc. was at the time formulating ideas for responding to the rapid growth of the immigrant population, especially first-generation Latino immigrants in the South. MDC research tracked this growth and implications, and concluded that the region would need new immigrants to fill a gap in our aging workforce and boost the economy. (MDC, 2000) Could this sector strategies approach be a way to respond to the new demography as well as promoting industry growth? What Blake Walters and others at NEDLC had so intelligently packaged seemed very much in line with the MDC mandate to advance both equity and competitiveness.

Jack Litzenberg, a Senior Program Officer at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, sums up the attraction:

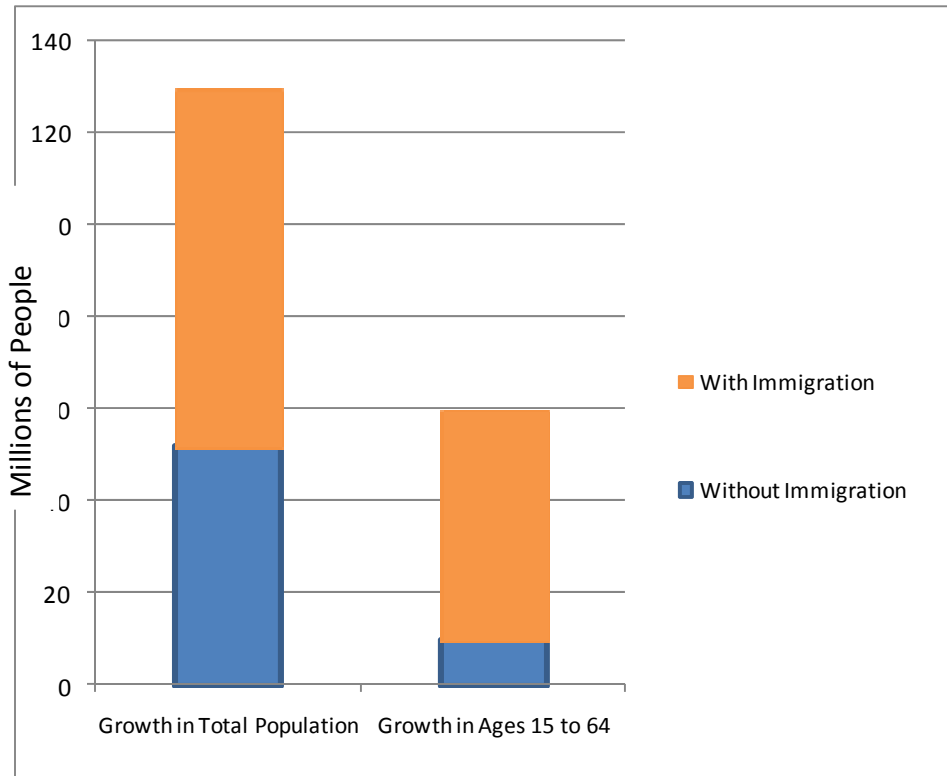
“Sectoral programs, by their very design, train workers to meet the specific needs of industry, which can dramatically improve outcomes for both. They acquire a deep knowledge of employers and industries; provide supports that help people stay on the job; and recognize the importance of long-term commitment to participants.”

(Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2006)

What's the problem?

The challenge of training and advancing immigrant workers is a major issue of our generation. Demographic trends in the United States tell us that immigrants are a primary resource that will be critical to maintaining economic growth.

**Projected Effect of Immigration on U.S.
Population Growth, 2000 - 2050**



Source: Congressional Budget Office, 2007

How much do we depend on new people? This chart shows how the population is expected to grow. The left column indicates that the population of the United States is expected to grow by over 120 million people by 2050, largely due to immigration. Equally important is the right-hand column. Growth in the working age population is almost entirely driven by immigrants. In other words, our future workforce is very immigrant-dependent.

Are we prepared to maximize the contributions of these new workers? Half of adult workers without a high school diploma are foreign-born. Three quarters of workers born in Mexico and Central America are employed in occupations with minimal educational requirements (Orzag, 2007).

The facts from North Carolina reflect these trends. The Latino population in North Carolina grew from 76,726 in 1990 to 533,087 in 2005. Many of the first immigrant arrivals were migrant farm workers who worked in the fields harvesting tobacco, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, and apples. Some of these farm workers left the migrant stream and brought their families to settle down more permanently. These early groups of immigrants set the stage for what was to happen in the 1990s. Attracted by an economic boom in many sectors, hundreds of thousands of Hispanics moved to North Carolina. This single event changed North Carolina's demographics and workforce in profound ways.

In order to understand the impact of these changes, MDC gathered additional data and interviewed many individuals connected with Latino organizations, community colleges, and the workforce system. The data confirmed that the Latino population was growing rapidly in North Carolina. At the same time, educational attainment was on average very low for Hispanics, with only 50% obtaining a high school degree. Income for Latino workers was, correspondingly, about half of per capita averages for the state. As the North Carolina State of the Workforce 2007 report stated:

“One-half of the state's estimated 276,000 Hispanic adults do not have a high school diploma or equivalency. This in turn poses significant challenges for the state's community college and public workforce system. This group represents an important opportunity for filling the state's labor force shortages, especially for skilled and semi-skilled professions. However more than one-third of this group speaks limited English, so education and training responses must be adapted to respond to the needs of a very different linguistic and cultural group.”

(North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development, 2007)

What are the barriers that Latino immigrants face when trying to move up in the labor market? An early group interview of Latino and workforce leaders conducted at MDC identified the following four factors as the major obstacles:

- Language
- Low education
- Cultural expectations
- Lack of connection to labor market services and networks

In order to address these barriers, MDC began constructing a pilot project that would challenge selected sites in North Carolina to respond by building new combinations of services and programming. Local partnerships could plan and implement efforts that would combine

language and skills training, reach more deeply into the immigrant community, and increase access to the workforce system.

These ideas became a Theory of Change for the project:

If we build a community partnership and provide them with data, coaching, and seed funding, then they will design and implement a program to:

*Create new economic opportunities for Latino immigrant jobseekers; and
Support industry growth sectors.*

(Appendix A – Latino Pathways Logic Model)

An initial set of outcomes was designed to set a standard for the project and provide funders with a clear idea of what the project aimed to accomplish. The outcomes were intended to cover both programmatic success as well as deeper structural change.

Latino Pathways Project Outcomes

Outcome #1	Latino Pathways workforce development programs begin operation in at least two occupations with career paths and connections to employers.
Outcome #2	The program trains and supports career advancement for 200 workers. 90% of program graduates are placed in employment with retention and advancement support. Program graduates increase their incomes by 30%.
Outcome #3	Employers increase their understanding of the cultural and language differences facing the Latino population and adopt practices to hire, retain, and advance Latino workers.
Outcome #4	The workforce system changes significantly to support the created pathways. As a result, students enrolled in English as a Second Language classes at the community colleges are connected to vocational and academic offerings. The local One-Stop Centers serve greater numbers of Latino clients and hire bilingual and bicultural staff.
Outcome #5	The Latino Pathways partnerships become permanent civic resources for their communities and continue to generate innovative ideas and proactive approaches to occupational integration and other broader social issues.

Sector strategies were a perceived way to achieve these outcomes. The sector methodology allowed the project to address the needs of both industry and low-wage workers who wanted to move up. A new project based on four key sector strategies (outreach, training, career pathing, and advocacy) was launched.

Applied Sectoristics

How did the sector strategies play out in Latino Pathways? In order to implement the more complex and multi-faceted sector strategies, MDC and the local partners spent considerable time and energy in planning and design efforts. The teams digested large amounts of demographic and industry data, conducted interviews, and visited model sites. Partnership agreements were painstakingly constructed, with many rewarding results. In what follows I will provide a brief report on each key strategy and describe what succeeded in our project.

I will also identify mistakes. The concept of learning from mistakes is embraced in the business world but often avoided in nonprofit work, especially for difficult projects that attempt to address significant and messy social problems. Robert Giloth at the Annie E. Casey Foundation has developed an approach for this kind of thinking that is relevant for community economic development practitioners. Giloth writes that the most useful mistakes are “constructive failures” that:

“... somehow defy the best theories, past experience, and sound advice; they can call into question basic assumptions. Constructive failures can provide invaluable insights into problems and solutions and can, in theory, lay the groundwork for the next generation of investments.” (Giloth, 2007)

My intent in this section is to lift up some of the remarkable achievements of Latino Pathways, while shaking the rug a bit to unloose a few of the stubborn obstacles we were not able to overcome.

Outreach

Initial activity at both the Charlotte and the Greensboro sites included convening a set of partners to design and guide the project. The partnership groups coalesced from Latino-based and community agencies, community colleges, Workforce Development Boards, civic leaders, along with a Chamber of Commerce and a few corporate representatives. These critical partners established the basis for the project outreach efforts.

On the community side, the Latin American Coalition in Charlotte and the Centro de Acción Latino in Greensboro provided a connection to the broader Latino population and people that were looking for better employment. Naturally, their meeting rooms and offices were gathering places for immigrant workers. Here, individual jobseekers were willing to be

interviewed and fill out intake forms. Input from the community was important as the partners began making choices about industry sectors. For example, in Greensboro, a set of individual and group interviews revealed that health care was a desirable field of work, although knowledge about the requirements of particular occupations was needed. As the project moved into implementation, the community-based partners were able to advertise training through fliers, Spanish-language newspapers, and radio. In Charlotte, the Latin American Coalition staged workshops and gave Latino Pathways a place among the services that they offered. In Greensboro, the Welfare Reform Liaison Project, the local community action agency, provided leadership for the project and reached new participants through its own network and services. These community-based organizations opened an important gateway for a population that was not always comfortable with government employment agencies.

The community colleges at both sites also proved to be important vehicles for outreach. As the Chair of the Greensboro partnership noted, the English as a Second Language (ESL) programs were natural places to recruit potential participants. The ESL students had already demonstrated some commitment to upward mobility by attending the classes. Making the connection to additional training opportunities was a logical step. While the colleges did not have deep roots in the Latino community, the ESL classes were attracting thousands of English language learners.

On the demand side, some inroads were made with employers and industry. During the research process, partnership members met with industry leaders and received information about hiring needs, wage levels, and career possibilities. These conversations became important later in the project when connections were needed for job interviews. One of the desired outcomes from the industry outreach was to attract more employers to the partnership team. Unfortunately this did not occur, even with health care employers that expressed great interest in bilingual hires. Meeting once a month with the partnership teams was too far beyond their usual business practices. However, outreach to employers did succeed in making sufficient ties to allow for follow-up and trouble-shooting for individuals after job placement.

Once planning and design was finished, the Project Coordinators led outreach activities. As the projects entered the implementation stage, the partnership teams at both sites hired a Project Coordinator to lead the work on the ground. The Project Coordinators presented information sessions, conducted intake and follow-up, identified and coordinated services from various agencies, and often made contact with employers. For example, the Project Coordinator in Charlotte interviewed an individual interested in health care and helped her enroll in a Nurse Assistant course at the college. When that individual graduated, the Project Coordinator set up

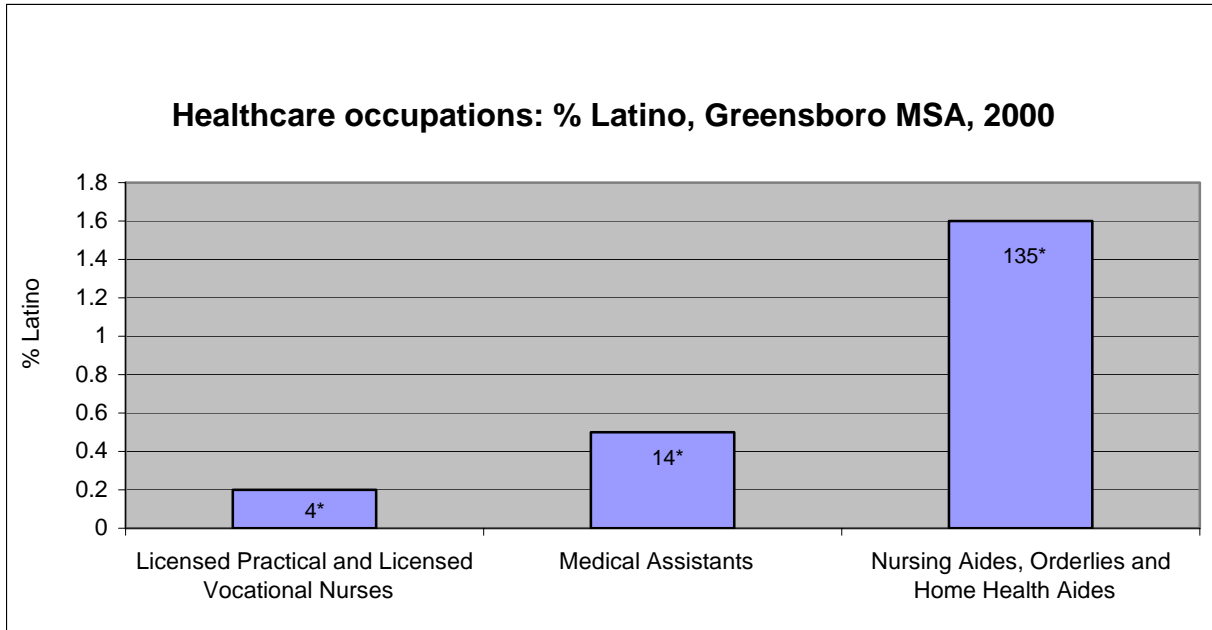
an interview with a local hospital. The individual was hired. A month after the hire the Project Coordinator received a call from a supervisor at the hospital, saying that the new hire was not working out because her English skills were limited. The Project Coordinator asked the hospital to give the individual more time, and related how she was still taking language courses and was eager to learn. Through follow-up over the next few months the Project Coordinator found out that the hospital had retained the individual, now one of their model employees. This story demonstrates how the Project Coordinators were a principal interface for project participants that used the network of partner organizations to make connections.

Mistakes: The partnership groups were too broad for a demonstration project. During the planning and development work the number of partners ranged from 15 to 20. While the goal of trying to include important voices and key players was important, in practice it produced too many mixed agendas and confusion about roles. During implementation this problem was heightened as the Project Coordinators attempted to sort through the relationships and respond to multiple obligations. A better approach would be to limit the number of partners to the minimum necessary to achieve the objectives of the project (Giloath, 2004). In the case of a sector project focused on immigrants, those partners might include a community-based organization, a community college, the public workforce system, and employers from the selected industry sector.

A related mistake was to place too much outreach responsibility on a single staff member. The Project Coordinators were asked to be a primary liaison to the community, to employers, and various service-providing partners. The time and skill sets needed to work with and develop these constituencies stretched the Project Coordinators in too many different directions and resulted in reduced coaching for jobseekers and fewer strong connections with industry.

Training

The partnerships extensively reviewed demographic and industry trends in order to identify appropriate sectors for training. Health care was chosen as the initial sector focus at both sites. Data indicated that entry-level employment existed that could lead, over time, to advancement to self-sustaining jobs. And while 7% of the metropolitan populations were Latino, a relatively small number were employed in providing health care.



* actual number of Latinos employed

Source: Census 2000 EEO Data Tool

The gap that was identified was that immigrant workers needed better language skills in order to pass certifications for care provider positions and perform the functions of the job. On this issue, Latino Pathways achieved considerable success. During two years of implementation, three cohorts of nurse assistants completed training at each site. Graduation rates were higher than the regular nurse assistant classes, and the passing rate for certification was above average. What happened at the colleges and through Latino Pathways that produced these outcomes?

When Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) joined the Charlotte Latino Pathways effort in 2004 they were already working on ways to combine English language and vocational skills training. The Latino Pathways partners helped to fund and support an initial pilot for nurse assistant training. The first group of students was screened for a high-intermediate English language level and enrolled in a nurse assistant course. The students received supplemental language support through computer-based instruction in health care terminology and also took a short work readiness course. After the first pilot was completed, CPCC offered the same model in five additional industry tracks as part of their new ESL Technical Careers program.

In Greensboro, Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) adopted Latino Pathways as a way to move ESL students into further training. The college provided office space for the Latino Pathways Coordinator that was located close to the ESL classrooms. Over the course of the project over 400 of these students received services from Latino Pathways. GTCC recruited and

hired a bilingual instructor for a pilot course of nurse assistant training. English language training for health care was offered as a supplement. GTCC also adapted their Human Resource Development work readiness program for English language learners and included it as a component of the training.

While new doors were opened, larger political forces were closing other educational opportunities. During the build up to Latino Pathways, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) began to respond to intense political pressures to deny undocumented immigrants enrollment in curriculum courses. In 2005 a bill was introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly that would have allowed undocumented immigrants to be accepted at public colleges or universities and pay in-state tuition if they graduated from a North Carolina high school. The legislation was soundly defeated. In 2007, the NCCCS required colleges to admit undocumented students as “out-of-state” residents at a much higher tuition rate. By 2008, the NCCCS decided that undocumented students would simply be banned from admission. While the individuals that received Latino Pathways training were documented workers, the political climate created great confusion and a chilling effect that closed efforts to create further bridges into credit-bearing coursework. Generating institutional support within colleges for projects like Latino Pathways became much more difficult.

Mistakes: The Latino Pathways partnerships perceived health care as a clear path: Interviews indicated that there was a need for bilingual health care providers; Latino jobseekers were also very interested in health care. Through the project, several classes of nurse assistants graduated. But they moved onto a career ladder unfamiliar to immigrants, with uncertain workplace standards and expectations. The project prepared people for health care positions in high demand and assumed there would be opportunities to move up. But without change within the industry the project participants found themselves struggling to find their way. The project, with attention consumed by breaking new ground in training, failed to adequately consider and establish the support systems required when opening up pathways in a new industry.

Career Pathing

Sector strategies are a systems approach to workforce development that attempt to make a particular segment of the labor market work for low-income people (Conway, Blair, Dawson, and Dworak-Muñoz, 2007). In order to accomplish this aim, many sector projects attempt to increase skills of jobseekers and create opportunities to move up a career ladder.

The Latino Pathways partnerships spent most of their time working on the first few rungs of the ladder. Immigrant workers are highly segmented in the labor markets, mainly into low-paying jobs without many prospects for advancement. The decision to pursue opportunities in health care was exciting because very few Latino workers were in those careers. At the same time, there were very few points of entry for immigrant workers. Many gaps would need to be addressed to even get people started along an upward path within the industry.

When implementation activities were under way, the partnerships became more aware that there was not even basic infrastructure in place for advancing immigrant workers. The question then arose if the project should be the pathway -- in other words, should the project itself operate the system from outreach all the way to job retention and advancement? The other model that was considered was the project as "stepping stones" that string together a few footholds. The pathway vs. stepping stones debate was resolved when the partnerships concluded that there were not nearly enough resources to operate a stand-alone pathway and that the project would need to leverage every available resource and work with them to make the changes and get into better alignment. This decision point was important as the partnerships recognized their limitations and began to focus on the gaps.

The Latino Pathways partnership in Charlotte found that many jobseekers in the Latino immigrant community were not aware of career possibilities or the process of career advancement. The project needed to step back and address cultural expectations and unfamiliar systems before working to connect people to training. The Latin American Coalition, as the community-based partner, designed a workshop called "Latinos en Asenso" to provide participants with information about careers in different fields and the process of obtaining combinations of training and work experience to advance to higher-paid positions over time. This workshop was supported by another program called "Taller de Trabajo" that teaches about the labor market and job search strategies. These short trainings and workshops have reached over 500 individuals.

Latino Pathways also worked to fill other gaps in the career path. The leap to training was made easier in Greensboro by co-locating the project offices at the community college. Support during the job search is another step. The One-Stop workforce centers in both sites made contributions by offering introductory job search workshops oriented to immigrant workers and qualifying individuals for WIA training support. The One-Stop Centers also added special services such as transcript evaluations and helped establish credentials received in foreign countries.

Making progress through career preparation and skills development required coaching and assistance from the Project Coordinators, helping individuals cross from stone to stone. During implementation it became clear that the Project Coordinators could not walk hundreds of participants from start to finish. And the attention paid to creating new systems of training left only limited time for helping individuals move through job advancement.

Much important and critical work remains with regard to post-employment career progression. Latino Pathways was able to help some individuals in a limited way through telephone follow-up. But to understand more about career pathing, Latino Pathways will need to develop better ties with employers and seek to create mentoring programs and supervisory trainings so that workers will be informed and encouraged to pursue efforts to move up.

Mistake: The major mistake was to attempt to create, operate, and sustain an entire career path. The attempt is understandable considering the numerous gaps in the system that need to be addressed for the immigrant populations. By choosing the “stepping stones” model Latino Pathways did shine a light on those gaps and helped partner institutions respond. But even that more limited approach was too much for a single staff member to manage with the relatively modest programmatic resources at play.

Organizing and Advocacy

Latino Pathways brought to the table leaders and organizations that were already working with the immigrant community and service providers and employers that were seeking to make new connections. These partners not only coordinated activities, but actively sought to create a workforce system for Latino immigrants. Although their central focus was building out career pathways, the partnerships also began to be recognized for their broader efforts of integration and creating equity. Through newspaper articles, interviews, and presentations, Latino Pathways was an example and a voice for integrating the immigrant community.

Changes in employment and training systems were the principal organizing impact of Latino Pathways. The outreach and coaching from the community-based organizations, the adapted curriculum at the colleges, and the new access at the One-Stop Centers are all examples of significant changes that organized a new pathway in the workforce system. As a pilot project, Latino Pathways demonstrated that these changes were possible and that they could function for individuals that were otherwise on the periphery.

The project did pursue an outcome of changing industry practice. During interviews with hospital representatives, mainly human resources staff, partners were told that only 1% of the health care workforce was Latino. The project established a new pipeline for hiring and encouraged a willingness to work with English Language Learners. The employers also made some accommodations for providing equipment and a clinical site required for the nurse assistant class. In addition, the Latino Pathways partners selected the health care sector because it also met a social purpose. The partners specifically discussed the need for higher quality and care for Spanish-speaking patients and the need to address health disparities. In the larger picture, a sector approach that moved immigrant workers into care positions could improve quality of life in multiple ways.

Given what the partnerships have learned, policy advocacy is important for immigrant workers. Timing is an important issue and currently in North Carolina the political climate is not favorable. Yet, the process of research, collaboration, and organizing a sector approach can be a powerful tool for creating a compelling model and working on the policy barriers that become clear when real people are trying to move through the workforce system. Latino Pathways demonstrates what can be accomplished at an institutional level and points to further possibilities.

Mistakes: Two related mistakes are worth documenting here. The first is to approach organizing an industry sector through a single employer. Early on Latino Pathways made a connection with a major retailer that was already working with one of the partners. Discussions were held at the highest executive levels about beginning to offer managerial positions to trained Latino candidates. A number of stores would be hiring and the company was willing to work directly with trainers and project staff. The Latino Pathways partners adapted an initial program design and made retail and warehousing a sector focus. Unfortunately, as the initial class was being formed, news came to the partners that the company CEO had been fired and interest in the pathways model was discontinued. The Latino Pathways partners had no control over this decision and considerable time, energy, and innovative design efforts were negated. The project had no close relationships with other retailers, so that particular sector development was put back on the shelf. This is not a good mistake, as it plainly violated the sector tenet that the whole industry should be considered. But it was a seduction that is worth noting as projects attempt to make close connections with often elusive employers.

A more general mistake of Latino Pathways was to proceed through implementation without sufficient buy-in from industry networks and decision makers. One of the advantages of the

sector approach is that it can bring industry influence to bear on making institutional or policy-related changes. Latino Pathways needed more partners that were making decisions about industry change and had the ability and will to address larger policy issues. While career ladder programs can raise skills and wages, they also need support from regulatory and workforce policies and possibly income subsidies. (Fitzgerald, 2006)

Findings and the future

What does Latino Pathways say about the sector approach and working with immigrant populations? Public/Private Ventures recently completed a ten-year study of sectoral programs called the Sector Employment Initiative (SEI) (Roder, Clymer, and Wyckoff, 2008). The SEI is a long-term study of nine organizations that implemented relatively large sector programs. The SEI studied the development of these programs over time and conducted interviews and follow-up with program participants and participating employers. The results present a picture of a broad range of sector activities and several common, underlying themes.

Many findings of the SEI are reflected in Latino Pathways. In the conclusions of the report the P/PV authors list a set of lessons that are highly relevant, with some modifications, to immigrant workers:

SEI Lesson #1: Sectoral employment programs face difficulties recruiting qualified participants from disadvantaged populations. Many participants fail to meet training program requirements or qualifications of employers. P/PV suggests that to expand their pool of candidates, sector training programs may need to offer preparatory tracks through Adult Basic Education and basic skills programs.

Latino Pathways demonstrated that many immigrant workers are interested in upgrading their skills. Almost all of the project workshops, trainings, and activities were fully attended with long waiting lists for the next opportunity. Most jobseekers, however, were not ready to jump directly into vocational training courses. Language ability was a screening factor and some applicants were sent back for additional ESL training. Completing a GED or high school equivalency degree was also desirable, especially for health care positions. And the issue of work authorization was, of course, a huge barrier for those without legal immigration status. The colleges did a good job at providing ESL and GED classes to all participants who needed further preparation. While some individuals did improve their basic skills and eventually make it into vocational training, many found that ESL and GED programs took too much time to complete. Programs that serve immigrant workers may want to attempt to change the training

and hiring requirements or find ways for people to upgrade their language and general skills while working.

SEI Lesson #2: Strategies need to be aligned with systems change goals. P/PV found that some of the sector programs they studied attempted to operate their own services – such as training outside of the existing educational system. Even if those stand-alone services were temporarily successful, they did little to change the existing employment practices and inhibited their goals for systemic change.

During the design stages of Latino Pathways, the partnerships learned that they needed to let each partner do what they did best. Limited resources also required the partners to rely on each other and leverage the services that each could provide. The capacities of the partners overlapped in some areas, and their organizational missions and cultures were different. But Latino Pathways did succeed in grafting together a set of services that changed some workforce practices. (See Appendix B – Partnership Agreement) The challenge for immigrant workers was that there was virtually no existing access to skills training and public workforce services, and the partners took on the responsibility of creating initial programs.

SEI Lesson #3: Build credibility in the industry to engage employers and advocate for change. For sector strategies to create broader change, they must establish credibility and knowledge of the target industry. This credibility can develop from demonstrated success at producing qualified workers. Staff with industry experience and dedicated time to work with employers also proved to be important.

Building credibility takes time. In Latino Pathways the partners went to great lengths to speak with employers and obtain information and guidance for program design. It was often difficult for employers to understand the request without seeing a program in operation. Most employers were looking for trained people that they could interview for jobs right away. Latino Pathways contracted with the Workforce Strategy Center (WSC) during the planning stage to help find the right language and approach with employers. The WSC provided workshops for both sites and helped them develop a tool called a “Term Sheet” that concisely listed program information, expectations for employers, and then the bottom-line benefits for participation (Appendix C – Term Sheet). The Term Sheet helped employers understand the offer, and was a good first step. But until the project produced results, the employers had little basis for trust or playing a role in the new project. Lack of familiarity and perceived complications with immigrant workers was an additional barrier. The Project Coordinators did an excellent job at

getting the program into operation, but neither had expertise in health care or the time to develop contacts and knowledge.

Latino Pathways learned a great deal about adapting sector strategies for immigrant workers. Given the experience of Latino Pathways, these areas merit further research:

- ***Promoting community colleges as a central platform or hub for sector strategies.*** In Latino Pathways, the large ESL classes at the community colleges were clearly strong pools of candidates for additional skills training. The colleges were also unmatched among the partners in terms of resources, facilities, and ability to take efforts to a larger scale. A remaining question for the colleges is how they effectively partner with other organizations and industry to promote job retention and advancement.
- ***Finding ways to help immigrant workers move up within industries where they are already employed.*** Building career pathways for current employees would help businesses see the effect of sector strategies. An incumbent worker approach could also foster more innovation around retention and advancement supports, especially those that employers themselves could offer. The jump to a better job within an industry may be easier for immigrant workers that lack networks, understanding, and comfort in some high-growth sectors. Many industries where lower-skilled immigrants are employed (construction, food services, hospitality) are not heavily unionized, making the work of intermediary organizations even more important for addressing labor practices and work conditions.
- ***Developing a more streamlined sector methodology that addresses gaps.*** The approach taken by the Latino Pathways partnerships was too comprehensive. Immigrants face a number of unique barriers to the labor market and no single project should be expected to address them all. A focus on critical gaps could generate momentum for further reform and policy efforts. At the program level, staff time and energy could be conserved by adopting a coaching model rather than intensive case management, especially with highly mobile immigrant populations. Finally, the sector research method may need to be a looser, more flexible approach where learning occurs on an ongoing basis through the experiences surrounding project work on the ground.
- ***Defining a productive role for community-based organizations.*** Community-based organizations (CBOs) are safe spaces for immigrants. In Latino Pathways, the CBOs were a first point of contact for many interested participants. The CBOs also proved to be adept at offering basic job search workshops and career development presentations. The CBOs were reaching a somewhat different segment of the immigrant population

than the ESL classes at the college; the people going to the CBOs were often looking for immediate assistance, less likely to speak English, more likely to be undocumented. The CBOs were a key source of outreach to these more marginalized workers. The CBOs were less able to provide ongoing training or follow-up with individual participants over time. The CBOs were important advocates for immigrant workers and contributed critical information about needs and challenges, mainly within the partnership. An even greater role for CBOs would be as a voice for systems reform on a policy level. Sector strategies could do more to structure space for these kinds of community voices.

- ***Analyzing sector decisions in terms of cultural appropriateness.*** Cultural expectations and behaviors were important factors in Latino Pathways. Existing data sets did not give the partners much sense of the obstacles. While community interviews produced valuable information, they did not always capture how immigrants would respond to the many events and challenges that they face when participating in a new activity such as a sector strategy. The sector strategies field needs a better tool with which to gauge and understand the cultural issues at play.

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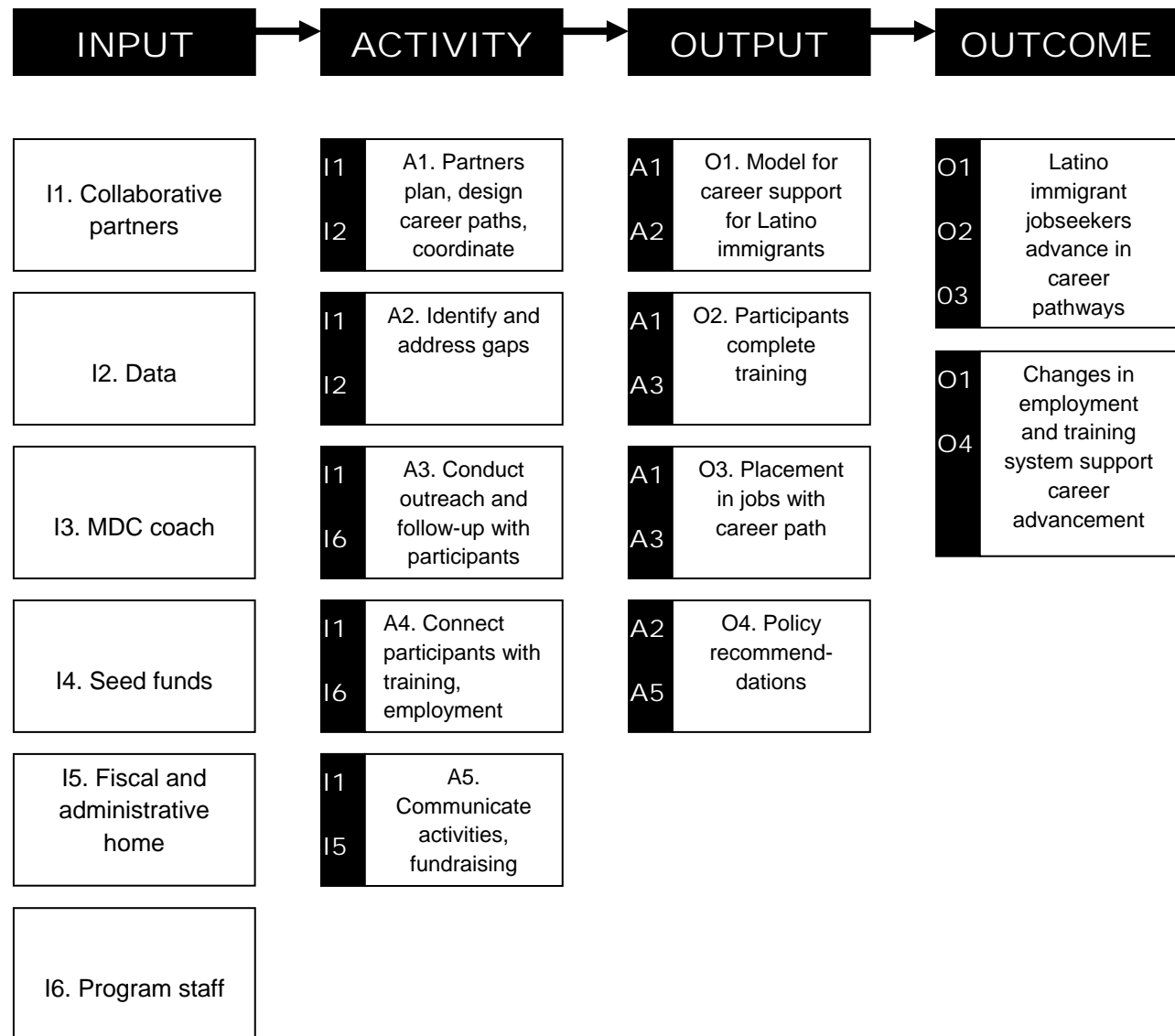
Theory of Change

If we build a community partnership and provide them with data, coaching, and seed funding then they will design and implement a program to:

Create new economic opportunities for Latino immigrant jobseekers; and

Close the gaps in the training and employment system.

LATINO PATHWAYS LOGIC MODEL





Partnership Agreement (Sample)

Mission

Create and broaden career opportunities for Latinos in the region by initiating change in workplace culture and the workforce development system.

Partners

List partners here ...

As a partner, each of the organizations represented agrees to:

- Commit to the mission, vision, focus, desired results, and strategies that have been laid out in the implementation plan;
- Commit to planning and an understanding that the processes involved in creating the integrated system described above takes time;
- Acknowledge the other partners and their contributions;
- Conduct quality programs for Latino workers;
- Recruit new participants and new partners;
- Share resources, ideas, and programs with other partners; and
- Commit to participating in monthly team meetings.

Organizational Leadership

The Latino Pathways Partnership is led by an Executive/Administrative Committee that includes a Chair. Members of the Executive/Administrative Committee will abstain from voting and discussion on proposals that involve potential funding for their organization. The Partnership itself does not receive direct funding, but will recommend fiscal agents for particular projects.

The Partnership Chair:

- Convenes and presides over regular meetings of the Partnership;
- Is a public voice for Latino Pathways; and
- Leads the Executive Committee

Executive Committee members:

- Communicate regularly with other Committee members between Partnership meetings;
- Reviews project budgets and financial statements;
- Provides input, evaluation, and support for project staff;
- Helps with fundraising efforts; and
- Sets the agenda for Partnership meetings and activities.

Partnership: The role of the partnership is to provide strategic direction and accountability for the project. The partnership ensures that project activities are in alignment.

Focus Areas: Focus areas for Latino Pathways include Recruitment and Training, Job Placement/Retention/ Advancement, and Communications.

Lead Institutions: A lead institution is established for each focus area. The lead institutions create committees for their focus areas that include other partners. The lead institutions report back to the partnership and communicate with the Project Coordinator to keep her updated.

Partnership Agreement: The Partnership Agreement contains a project description, objectives, a work plan with a time table for each focus area, clear roles for partners, and other information as needed. The Partnership Agreement is an organic document and is revised on an annual basis.

Goals for Focus Areas

Recruitment and Training

Goals:

- Potential workers are aware, excited, and interested in Latino Pathways.
- Identify, screen and enroll qualified participants.
- The Latino community understands and informs the LP program.
- Identify training needs of target population and industry sector.
- Develop curriculum, instructional materials and strategies.
- Deliver, monitor and assess.
- Produce employable graduates.

Partners:

Job Placement, Retention, and Advancement

Goals:

- Obtain commitment of significant employers in targeted sectors.
- Work with identified sector to match graduates with employers in jobs with good wages and career potential.
- Work with graduates and employers towards retention.
- Promote vertical mobility within the sector and identify career paths.
- Support system of supervisor training and mentoring within industry.

Partners:

Executive/Administrative

Goals:

- Public face and voice for the partnership.
- Organize budgets, reports, and fundraising.
- Support and evaluate project staff.
- Maintain project brand and communicate performance.

Partners:



Healthcare Career Pathways Program Training and Resource Opportunities

What is Latino Pathways? Latino Pathways is a program of key community partners with a common goal to increase job entry, retention, and advancement for Latino immigrants. Over the past decade, _____ has seen explosive growth of the Latino population. However, segregation into dead-end jobs coupled with low educational attainment restricts the opportunity for Latinos to contribute more fully to the region's economic progress and to improve their personal and family well-being and security. Latino Pathways is working to expand career opportunities to overcome these barriers and meet the needs of the local economy.

Latino Pathways partners and investors: List partners here ...

Latino Pathways services: The Latino Pathways partnership will provide structural, logistical, and financial assistance for career training programs. These services are provided at no cost to participating employers.

Recruitment:	Identification of qualified Latino job seekers for program training.
Assessment:	Customized screening of applicants to meet employer standards.
Training:	Community college-level training customized to employer needs. Language training designed specifically for healthcare professions.
Funding:	Qualifying companies can receive up to \$4,000 per trainee to assist in job and language training costs.

Employer contributions: Participating employers will provide the following support:

- Consultation with partners on training criteria and course design (*4 meetings, approximately 2 hours each*).
- Feedback to partners on program logistics such as recruitment, placement, career ladders, etc. (*Approximately 10 hours of phone and in-person communications*).
- Participation in partnership (*Attend the Latino Pathways partnership meeting on a quarterly basis while participating in the program*).

Adaption of design by the Workforce Strategy Center.