

# Employer Benefits and Costs of English@Work Participation



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for the Study of Human Resources

 **TEXASLBJ School**  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs

September 2017

# Employer Benefits and Costs of English @ Work Participation

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**September 2017**



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This report was prepared with funds provided by the Texas Workforce Commission via the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas to the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the University of Texas at Austin. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not represent the positions of the funding agency or The University.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank The Texas Workforce Commission and our partners at the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas for their support of this project. Literacy Coalition staff, Courtney Salcedo, Assistant Director and creator of *English @ Work*, was particularly helpful in sharing her insights into the survey instrument construction, and contacting Austin area employers to introduce the research project: bridging the gap between RMC staff and potential employer participants. Jackie Aguilera, *English @ Work* Project Manager for the Houston Center for Literacy, introduced RMC and this project to Houston employers. Austin and Houston employers who have implemented the *English @ Work* program provided invaluable information regarding program cost and benefits to employers.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Ray Marshall Center staff members who helped with this project, Susie Riley, administrative manager, and Charles Demakis, graduate research assistant.

## ABSTRACT

The *English @ Work* program is based on the premise that English language speaking skills are learned more effectively in the context of the workplace a person functions in through curriculum customized to the workplace and to students' job descriptions, and delivered in the workplace. This evaluation of the *English @ Work* program focused on the benefits and costs of *English @ Work* services to employers participating in the evaluation. Participating employers overwhelmingly report they have experienced numerous benefits from their experience with *English @ Work* services in their workplaces. Further, *English @ Work* can be seen as an important asset for employers in developing a more inclusive workplace and promoting a culture of inclusion in an increasingly diverse workforce in Texas.

## INTRODUCTION

### **English-language Programs in the United States**

Programs to help those with limited-English-speaking ability acquire language and related skills have been around for decades in the United States and have an even longer history in Britain dating to the colonial period (for example, see Nieto, 2009). Modern efforts were introduced into federal policy in the United States with the passage of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and have continued to the present with the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), which was reauthorized as Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014.

Under AEFLA, states receive adult education grants to support programs that, among other things, help adults become literate and obtain the skills they need to get jobs and become self-sufficient. Performance metrics for these state grants are aligned with WIOA as part of its common measures and focus almost exclusively on participant outcomes. Nearly half of all participants in adult education programs are enrolled in English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) services (Coffey and Smith, 2011).

The research on adult education and its outcomes suggests that, with some exceptions, e.g., the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training or I-BEST program (Prince and Jenkins, 2005; Zeidenberg et al., 2010), the services as traditionally delivered in classroom settings have not been very effective for participants. Research is lacking on how well these programs work for the employers who employ or ultimately hire program participants.

### ***The English @ Work Model***

*English @ Work* was launched in Austin in 2005 as a response to the pressing demands for English-language skills in hospitality workplaces and the perceived lack of effectiveness of traditional ESL approaches to deliver them. It was based on the premise, echoing I-BEST, that English could be learned better in the context of the workplace a person was functioning in through modules tailored to this context and delivered on site. The program expanded over several years into healthcare and other sectors, typically with



some employer buy-in, and adopted and utilized outcome metrics for program objectives that ranged from student English-proficiency gains, student confidence improvement using English, and breaking the cycle of poverty to creating safer workplaces, increasing workplace communication and saving businesses money (*English @ Work*, 2012).

For recent immigrants, learning English-language skills is essential not only for adapting socially but also for gaining access to jobs and progressing to jobs further up the ladder that offer opportunities for real career advancement and family-sustaining wages and benefits.

*English @ Work* features a unique approach to teaching English-language skills by contextualizing and customizing them and providing them in the workplace. Early results indicated that this approach substantially outperformed more traditional approaches that rely heavily on classroom instruction, provide few hours of actual instruction per week and/or fail to contextualize and tailor instruction in the setting and language of the workplace (*English @ Work*, 2012). Students made larger gains on various literacy measures more quickly than these more traditional approaches. Students also indicated that they felt more motivated to learn in a cohort of their peers that was situated within their workplace.

*English @ Work* merged with and became part of the larger Literacy Coalition of Central Texas (LCCT) in January 2014. After three years evolving and growing under the auspices of the Literacy Coalition in Austin, the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Site-based Workplace Literacy Project provided grant funding to scale up *English @ Work* in Austin and expand it to the Houston area from May 2016 to June 2017. The \$799,901 grant from TWC has supported literacy and career services for more than 700 participants and planned to provide credentials or certificates of completion for around 490 of these participants over the grant period.

The TWC grant also provided funding to support a small-scale evaluation of the program that would focus on the benefits and costs of *English @ Work* services to participating employers. Ray Marshall Center researchers at the LBJ School of Public Affairs of The University of Texas at Austin conducted the evaluation.

## Organization of the Report

The body of the report is organized into five (5) main sections. The following section briefly describes the evaluation approach used for measuring employer benefits and costs. The third section presents the main findings from the evaluation, followed by the fourth section that offers a number of concluding observations based on these findings. The fifth section provides recommendations for improving state policy and the *English @ Work* program based on the evaluation findings. The body of the report is followed by a list of references and two appendices, which provide copies of the employer interview guide and online survey.

## EVALUATION APPROACH

### Measuring Employer Benefits and Costs

Evaluations of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs have traditionally focused on the benefits of the particular interventions for *participants*. They have addressed such issues as the effects of participation on academic grade gains in reading and math. Moreover, these evaluations have mainly looked at ESL as typically delivered in classroom settings via adult education programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. For the most part, evaluations have found that ESL delivered in traditional classroom settings and with the usual pedagogical methods is largely ineffective (for example, see Young et al., 1995; National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008).

As noted, *English @ Work* addresses limited-English issues in a very different way. It is an employer-based model that seeks to improve the English-language skills in the context of the workplace and is tailored to particular sectors including hospitality, healthcare and retail sales with a goal of helping recent immigrants advance into better jobs in their workplace and beyond. In part this goal is achieved by improving the productivity, safety and possibly other dimensions of the employment relationship that benefit the employers of these participants.

Two questions guided the current evaluation of *English @ Work*, focusing almost exclusively on the effects of participation on employers:

- What are the effects<sup>1</sup> of *English @ Work* instruction on employers?
- What is the return-on-investment (ROI) of *English @ Work* instruction for participating employers?

### **Combination of In-person and Online Surveys**

We measured employer benefits and costs from participation in *English @ Work* by first conceptualizing potential benefits and costs based both on the limited literature available and on discussions with program staff and several employers who had had prior experience with *English @ Work* and/or other ESL-related programs in the past. We then developed and piloted a draft survey that could be administered either via in-person interviews with knowledgeable employer personnel (e.g., human resources directors, direct employee supervisors) or via a structured online survey. Based on our successful experience with the pilot survey and discussions with *English @ Work* staff, we finalized the employer interview guide and survey instrument (see Appendices A and B).

In addition to gathering basic descriptive information about the participating employers (e.g., industry sector, size, prior use of ESL services), the guide/survey sought to obtain employer input on the effects of *English @ Work* participation on a number of key domains, as follows: communications; customer service; comfort in the workplace; workplace safety; employee timeliness and retention; cost savings; meeting business expectations/goals; and personal and professional development; as well as other unspecified benefits they may have experienced. It also sought the employers' input on the costs of *English @ Work participation*, including: direct participation expenses (e.g., materials, fees, books); and lost productivity for participating workers and others during training.

### **The Employer Sample**

In working with *English @ Work* staff, it became clear that we would need to

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<sup>1</sup> In the original proposal, we proposed estimating employer impacts from participation, i.e., the value added of E@W participation versus either no or limited participation. A far more complex evaluation design and a much larger budget and sample size would have been required to estimate impacts. We have measured employer-related outcomes instead.

interview/survey employers in several waves since some of them had recently completed their engagement with the program, while others were just beginning their program participation. Thus, we opted to conduct in-person interviews with Austin-area employers who had already completed their engagement with *English @ Work* by mid-to-late spring 2017 and to conduct on-line surveys with Austin- and Houston-area employers who were slated to wrap up their participation in *English @ Work* by sometime in the summer of 2017. The sample of participating employers is described in more detail below.

### ***Sample Characteristics***

Seventeen employers from the Austin and Houston metropolitan areas provided input for this evaluation: nine were interviewed in person, and eight responded to an on-line survey for a 45% response rate overall. Responding employers represented seven different industries: manufacturing, hospitality, janitorial, food service, apparel service, construction, adult training, and senior living. Employers ranged in size from small independent, locally owned businesses with as few as 14 employees to global corporations employing over 1,000 individuals locally. Employers varied in the number of limited-English-speaking workers they employed, ranging from 8 to 90 percent.<sup>2</sup>

The languages spoken by limited-English-speaking employees was predictable in one sense, with sixteen of the employers reported employing mainly Spanish speaking staff, while at the same time quite varied: five hired Arabic speakers; four, French speakers; and three, Vietnamese speakers. Other languages spoken by employees identified by two or fewer employers included: Amharic, Burmese, Farsi, Russian, Nepali, Chinese, Swahili, Somali and languages of South Africa.

Most responding employers (10) learned of *English @ Work* services through the Literacy Coalition's outreach efforts and their presentations or announcements at various industry coalition meetings. Two learned about the program from other employers, and five of the respondents were unaware of how their organization learned of the program. Since some of the respondent employers first instituted *English @ Work* as early as 2006, staff turnover and the lack of this type of knowledge being carried over to new staff can

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<sup>2</sup> One training center included in the study provides training for area refugees, and 100% of their students are limited-English-speakers and participate in the *English@Work* classes as a course requirement.

be expected, though a few of the employers who are new to the program were also unaware of how their organization learned about *English@Work*. Only three of the 17 respondents reported having used other English-language training services in the past with mixed reviews.

All classes were delivered on site. Some employers offered two classes at different geographic locations for the convenience of employees working at various company locations. Sixteen employers offered classes twice a week, two hours per class, typically either: before work, or at the beginning of the work day; or after work, or the later part of the work day. Days and times of classes were often determined by supervisors and, for some employers, posed the greatest challenge in organizing the class. Classes ranged in size from 9 to 20 employees and twelve employers reported an overall course completion rate of 71 percent.<sup>3</sup>

In response to the question of whether or not employing limited-English-speakers poses a problem in the workplace, employers gave varying responses dependent upon the range of English-language communication that is required for employees to effectively complete work tasks in their business. For example:

- Are employees required to communicate with English-speaking customers?
- Do they work on bi-lingual work teams?
- Are work tasks of a nature where a person skilled in the trade can complete the task with limited English instruction?

Also, some employers coordinate evening work teams, including supervisors and employees who all speak the same language, who have no customer contact and little need to speak English to accomplish tasks. All but one site had direct supervisors who spoke at least one of the native languages of the staff they supervised. Employers reported also relying upon others to assist with translation: co-workers, team leaders, professional translation services, and, for employees receiving refugee services, case managers. Some employers reported using online translation services or created

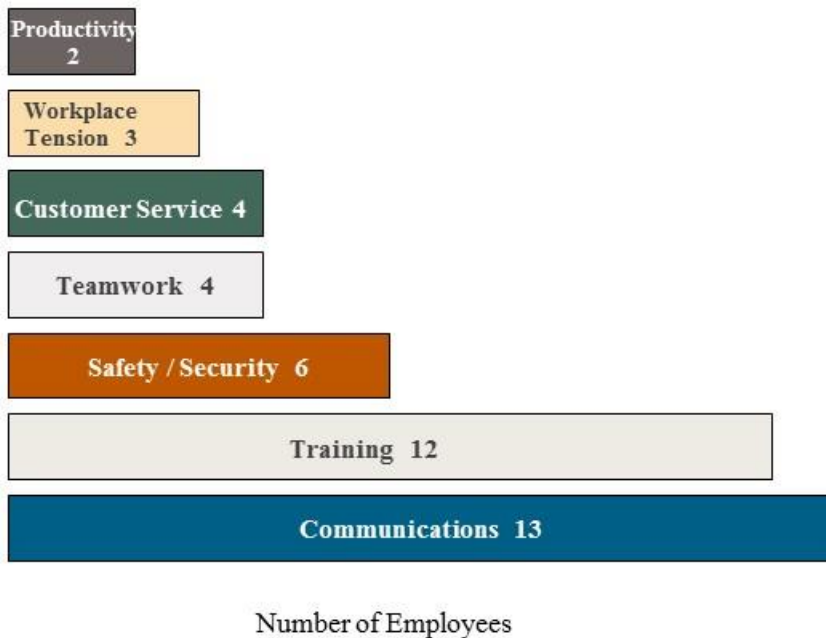
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<sup>3</sup> This completion rate, 71%, represents information provided by twelve of the seventeen evaluation respondents and may vary from completion rates reported by the *English @ Work* program.

employee work-guide notes that provide the translation of typical English work orders into the different languages employees speak. One additional area that some employers identified as particularly challenging when working with limited-English-speakers is the explanation of employee benefits: medical benefits in particular.

Figure 1 presents workplace circumstances affected due to the lack of employee English-language skills. Both staff training and communication were identified as areas most impacted.

**Figure 1. Lack of English Skills Impact on Workplace**



## **Employer Response Rate Analysis**

Thirty-eight Austin- and Houston-area employers from various industries partnered with the Literacy Coalition to offer their employees *English @ Work* services. Of these 38 employers, 22 represented three industries: hospitality (10), manufacturing (7), and food and beverage (5). Only nine of these 22 employers participated in the study. Other industries offering employees *English @ Work* services included: distribution, landscaping, apparel service, staffing, construction, adult training, government services, janitorial, senior living, and healthcare (representing 16 of the original 38 partners and 8 of the total study participants).

Ten out of the 38 partners were located in Houston. Only three of the Houston-based employers participated in the study (30%). Twenty-eight were located in Austin, of whom 14 participated. (40%).

### ***Responding Employers: Partner status and funding***

All seven partners who are both currently partnering with the Literacy Coalition to offer employees *English @ Work* services and have offered the service in the past participated in the study.<sup>4</sup> For the remaining 10 employers who participated, all but one were current partners. Thirteen of the 17 study participants reported receiving *English @ Work* services through the TWC grant.

### ***Non-responding Employers***

Among the 21 employers who did not participate in the study, nine were identified as previous partners and nine were current partners.<sup>5</sup> All current partners reported receiving *English @ Work* services through the TWC grant and all previous partners paid for the service.

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<sup>4</sup> Current partners offered *English@Work* services during the summer of 2017.

<sup>5</sup> For three of the non-responding participants it is unknown if they were current or previous partners.

## FINDINGS

### ***English @ Work Benefits/Effects***

Employers were asked to identify the degree of benefits or effects experienced in specific areas of the workplace: communication, workplace safety, employee timeliness and retention, cost savings, meeting business expectations and goals, and employee personal and professional development. Some of the questions relied upon a 1-5 Likert scale for responses with one being not at all and five being a lot.

**“We want staff to learn English not just for their jobs but for their general wellbeing and lives.”**

### ***Communication and Workplace Comfort***

Table 1 reports employer responses to questions regarding the extent to which they observed specific benefits or experienced effects as a result of *English @ Work* services for limited-English-speaking workers in regards to communication and employee comfort in the workplace. All employers reported observing that communication among coworkers, between workers and supervisors, and customer communication had at least somewhat improved.

All reported observing somewhat of an improvement in limited-English-speaking workers' ease in the workplace, while none reported experiencing any tension between the limited-English-speaking employees and English speakers regarding the benefit of *English @ Work* being made available to limited-English-speakers without a comparable benefit being offered to English-speaking staff.



**Table 1. *English @ Work* Effects on Communication and Workplace Comfort, n=17**

<b>o what extent have you observed:</b>	<b>1 not at all</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3 somewhat</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 a lot</b>	<b>unk*</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>Total</b>
a. Improved Communication Among Coworkers	0	0	6	5	5	1	0	17
b. Improved Communication with Supervisors	0	2	4	5	5	1	0	17
c. Resentment Among English-Speaking Coworkers who are not Eligible for Comparable Training	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
d. Improved Customer Communication	0	2	4	5	2	1	3**	17
e. Limited-English-Speakers More at Ease at work	0	0	4	6	7	0	0	17

\*The interviewed individuals had not had an opportunity to observe or receive reports on these effects.

\*\*Employees working in jobs without any customer communication.

### ***Workplace Safety***

Lessons in the *English @ Work* curriculum address workplace safety training and procedures, signs, safety equipment, accident reporting and related topics. Employers were asked to identify the extent to which they feel their workplace had become safer as a result of *English @ Work* services.

Thirteen respondents reported that workplace safety has improved at least somewhat as a result of *English @ Work* services.<sup>6</sup> Specific areas of safety improvement identified by respondents are reported in Table 2. Improvement in the ability of workers to understand and communicate about safety issues was reported by 10 employers.

**Table 2. Improvements in Workplace Safety, n=15**

<b>In which of the following areas do you feel safety has improved in your workplace?</b>	<b>Reported Improvements</b>
a. Better handling of potentially hazardous chemicals or other materials	4
b. Improved ability of workers to understand/follow safety procedures	10
c. Fewer on-the-job accidents	1
d. Improved ability of workers to express safety concerns or ask questions	10

### ***Other Benefits or Effects of English @ Work Services***

Other benefits or effects of the *English @ Work* services identified by employers are presented in Table 3. Most employers reported observing none or little effect of *English @ Work* on employee absenteeism or retention. Respondents stated that their pool of employees was either very stable, with low turnover, or unstable with high turnover; neither appeared to be affected by the availability of the *English @ Work* services. About half reported cost saving or greater efficiencies as a result of the program. Most reported that the *English @ Work* program at least somewhat supported the expectations and goals for their business, while at the same time supporting workers in expanding their personal or professional development.

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<sup>6</sup> Two employers reported that the safety questions were not applicable to their work environment.

**Table 3. Other Benefits or Effects of *English @ Work* Services, n=17**

Benefits or effects experienced as a result of <i>English @ Work</i> services for limited-English-speaking workers.	1 not at all	2	3 somewhat	4	5 a lot	unk	Total
<b>Employee Timeliness and Retention:</b> a. Have you experienced reductions in absenteeism by limited-English-speaking workers since accessing <i>English @ Work</i> services?	9	2	3	1	0	2	17
b. Have you observed improvements in employee retention among limited-English-speaking workers since accessing <i>English @ Work</i> services?	7	1	4	3	1	1	17
<b>Cost Savings:</b> To what extent has your business experienced cost savings or greater efficiency as a result of <i>English @ Work</i> services?	3	5	3	2	3	1	17
<b>Meeting Business Expectations/Goals:</b> To what extent have <i>English @ Work</i> services for your workers helped you in meeting your expectations or goals for your business?	0	0	5	5	7	0	17
<b>Personal and Professional Development:</b> a. To what extent have <i>English @ Work</i> services helped your workers expand their personal or professional development by enrolling in classes or other actions?	0	1	4	8	4	0	17
b. To what extent have <i>English @ Work</i> services increased your or your supervisors' awareness of the personal or professional goals, aspirations and capabilities of your workforce?	2	2	1	9	2	1	17
c. To what extent has participation in <i>English @ Work</i> improved employees' opportunities for promotion?	1	2	3	9	2	0	17

Employers identified additional benefits from their participation in the *English @ Work* program including: increased self-confidence of staff as they increased their use of the English language; improvements in team camaraderie, employee morale and staff cohesion. Some employers indicated that their participation in *English @ Work* promoted an overall culture of inclusion that is important to their organization and appreciated recognition received from customers and perhaps the larger community for their efforts. One employer discussed the benefits of *English @ Work* to the larger

***“English @ Work supports the general culture our organization is promoting.”***

community, while many discussed the benefits to employee families regarding improved communication with schools and medical service providers.

## **Main Costs to Employers**

### ***Direct Expenses***

Ten of the 17 respondents reported the company incurred some direct expenses to support *English @ Work* including: the total cost of the training (up to \$6,500), staff wages during their participation (ranging from \$12 to \$15 per hour), refreshments (approximately \$100 per class), and employee incentives. One employer offered participating workers \$15 per class when they attended at least 20 of the 24 classes.

### ***Lost Productivity***

Most employers report little loss of productivity. They attributed this to scheduling classes outside of work time or during lower periods of productivity when it was easier for co-workers to cover tasks of the participating employees. One employer reported lost time on the production floor as a result of employee participation in classes, and another experienced lost time as employees transitioned from their morning classes to work tasks (Table 4). Some employers reported that, on occasion, the prioritization of work completion deadlines interfered with employees' participation in classes.

**Table 4. Loss of Productivity of Workers due to Their Participation in *English @ Work*, n=17**

	<b>1 not at all</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3 somewhat</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 a lot</b>	<b>unk</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>Total</b>
When your limited-English-speaking workers participated in <i>English @ Work</i> services, did you observe any loss in their productivity on the job?	12	1	2	0	1	0	1	17
When your limited-English-speaking workers participated in <i>English @ Work</i> services, did you observe any loss in productivity for other English-speaking workers on the job?	13	2	1	0	0	0	1	17
When your limited-English-speaking workers participated in <i>English @ Work</i> services, did you observe any loss in supervisors' productivity?	13	1	2	0	0	0	1	17

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Based on our interview and survey findings regarding the benefits and costs of *English @ Work* program participation, we offer several concluding observations.

**“We appreciate, the flexibility in scheduling the class on Saturday, the teachers' communication about how students are doing in class ... E@W staff are flexible, responsive, easy to work with...”**

First, *participating employers overwhelmingly reported they will recommend English @ Work services to other employers feel that they have experienced numerous benefits from their experience with English @ Work services in their workplaces*. These benefits range from improved customer service, communications and workplace safety to workplace morale to employee confidence. These are substantial benefits that likely lead to better worker retention and profitability over time, effects we were not able to quantify in the current study given the short timeframe and modest budget.

Second, *English @ Work can be seen as an important asset for employers in developing a more inclusive workplace and promoting a culture of inclusion in an increasingly diverse workforce in Texas*. Limited-English-speaking minorities — not just Spanish-speakers but also recent immigrants from Asia and Africa — are projected to constitute an increasing share of the Texas workforce in the decades to come. To the extent that programs like *English @ Work* contribute to better communications and a more positive workplace environment, they are real assets to the state's employers.

Third, clearly, although employer participation in *English @ Work* has been facilitated considerably by TWC's provision of funding, it is important to note that *many employers — 50 percent according to our interviews and surveys — say they would be willing to pay for such services to some degree in the future*. This reinforces the idea that participating employers have benefited sufficiently from *English @ Work* services that they would consider paying for it directly at least in part. This opens the door to program expansion and to the use of different models of paying for these services. Some large employers may be willing to pay the full cost of these services in their workplaces as was the case in the early days of *English @ Work's*

existence prior to the onset of the Great Recession in 2008-2009. Others may be attracted to a *cost-matching model* where TWC or some other entity offers services with say a one-to-one or two-to-one match basis. Another model to consider would be a *sliding-scale approach* where employers obtain the services at little or no cost in the first year but pay an increasing share of the costs in the following years.

Finally, given employers' highly positive responses to *English @ Work* services across the board and their openness to future efforts with the program, *English @ Work* might be able to play a role in strengthening employer engagement more broadly. Effective employer engagement is a challenge that workforce development and education programs have long struggled with, not always successfully. To the extent that this program meets employers' workplace needs and generates bottom-line benefits, it could become an integral part of the 'toolkit' that programs approach them with, particularly if key segments of their workforce are limited-English speakers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our evaluation findings, we offer two main sets of recommendations, the first for TWC as the agency responsible for administering Adult Education and Family Literacy Act services in the state, and the second for the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, which operates the *English @ Work* program. We also offer recommendations for future research.

### State Policy

This latest evaluation study adds to growing evidence that, in addition to helping limited-English-speakers gain language and literacy skills effectively, there are real benefits to employers from workplace-based, contextualized English-language instruction provided by the *English @ Work* program. ***TWC should:***

- continue to fund *English @ Work* services in Austin and Houston;
- expand *English @ Work* services to other regions of the State with high concentrations of limited-English-speaking populations of workers; and
- explore the use of alternative funding models to further leverage *English @ Work* service availability, including employer cost-matching, sliding-scale and possibly other models.

## **Program Modifications**

This evaluation and earlier research has provided more evidence that *English @ Work* is beneficial to participating workers and their employers in a variety of respects. There are a number of ways the program could be changed to further enhance its benefits. *English @ Work should consider:*

- expanding its offerings to include additional safety training and assisting staff to learn about how to communicate about important safety concerns as part of its regular training package for employers;
- expanding to include additional industry-related training on issues identified by specific employers they serve, and
- marketing its services throughout the state as an integral part of an effective employer engagement strategy for local workforce development and education programs.

## **More Rigorous Research**

As noted, the current study has addressed questions of the outcomes of *English @ Work* services for employers. More rigorous evaluation research designs and additional studies are needed to fortify the case for the program. These studies should address impacts and net returns for both participants and employers and make greater use of quantitative longitudinal administrative data as well as new qualitative data. At minimum, quasi-experimental designs featuring well constructed comparison groups of companies and/or participants could be employed. At best, experimental evaluations with randomly assigned employers and/or participants could be conducted.

TWC's adult education funding is largely focused on service provision for jobseekers and employers, not evaluation research. However, TWC could explore partnering with federal agencies (e.g., the U.S. Departments of Education or Labor) as well as with foundations with a mission and strong commitment to workplace education and evidence-based policymaking. The Laura and John Arnold Foundation and the J. P. Morgan Chase Foundation, both of which have a strong Texas presence, would be good candidates for such a partnership.



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**APPENDIX A: *ENGLISH @ WORK* EMPLOYER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## ***English @ Work Employer Interview Guide***

**Introduction.** You have been identified as a supervisor/employer with non-English speaking employees who may have been helped by *English@Work*, an English-language and basic skills training program supported in part by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). We are researchers with the University of Texas at Austin’s Ray Marshall Center and have been funded by TWC to evaluate *English@Work*’s benefits to employers, as well as their potential costs.

We have a series of questions to ask you. The interview should take no more than 30 minutes. Your responses will be held in strict confidentiality; any quotes used in the evaluation report will not be attributed to particular respondents. Finally, we would like to record our interview to help us capture the responses accurately if you don’t mind. Thanks.

### **Program Information**

First we would like some information about your particular implementation of the English @ Work program.

**PI1.** How many student enroll?

In past classes \_\_\_\_\_ In the current class \_\_\_\_\_

**PI2.** In the past, do you know how most students persisted to complete the entire course?

\_\_\_\_\_

**PI3.** What are the job titles of the participants and their level of communication with customers?

**PI4.** What is the English proficiency level of participants?

- **Level 1-Starting:** students initially have limited or no understanding of English. They rarely use English for communication. They respond nonverbally to simple commands, statements, and questions, rely on nonverbal context for understanding.
- **Level 2-Emerging:** students can understand phrases and short sentences. They can communicate limited information in simple every day and routine situations.
- **Level 3-Developing:** students understand more complex speech but still may require some repetition. They use English spontaneously but may have difficulty expressing all their thoughts due to a restricted vocabulary and a limited command of language structure.

**PI5.** What day and time does the current class meet?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Employer Profile**

**EP1.** In what industry sector does your company do business (e.g., healthcare, hospitality)? \_\_\_\_\_

**EP2.** Approximately how many workers does your company employ in the [Austin, Houston] area?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EP3.** About what percentage of these employees are limited English-speakers?  
\_\_\_\_\_ %

**EP4.** What languages do they speak? (List all.)  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EP5.** Do any of their supervisors speak the same languages? Yes No

**EP6.** On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does employing limited English-speakers pose problems in your workplace?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**EP7.** What types of problems does employing limited English-speakers lead to? (Check all that apply.)

- Poor communication?
- Workplace tension (native/nonnative)?
- Poor safety or security?
- Poor customer service?
- Low productivity?
- Difficulty training?
- Lack of teamwork/collaboration?
- Other? (List) \_\_\_\_\_

**EP8.** Have you used other English-language services in your workplace before? Yes No

**EP9.** If so, on a scale of 1-5, how helpful were these English-language services?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**EP10.** On a per-worker basis, approximately how much did you pay for these other English-language services, if anything?

Less than \$100    \$100-\$199    \$200-\$299    \$300-\$399    More than \$400

**EP11.** If you provided workers participating in these English-language services with some form of incentive, about how much were these incentives worth?

Less than \$100    \$100-\$199    \$200-\$299    \$300-\$399    More than \$400

**EP12.** Did participants in the English-language services experience any gains as a result of their participation, including:

- Increased pay?
- Increased hours?
- Promotion or other employment gains?
- Better opportunities for cross training?
- Other? (list)

**EP13.** How did you learn about *English @ Work* services?

- English @ Work* advertising/outreach
- Other employers
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Workforce Solutions/One-stop Center staff
- Other (Indicate) \_\_\_\_\_

**EP14.** When did your company first begin using *English @ Work* services?

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Month/Year

### ***English @ Work* Benefits/Effects**

Now, we would like to ask you about specific benefits you may have realized or effects you may have experienced as a result of *English @ Work* services for your limited-English-speaking workers.

#### *Communication.*

**B1.** To what extent have you observed improved communication between limited-English and English speaking co-workers in your workplace?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**B2.** To what extent have you observed improved communication between limited-English speaking workers and their supervisors in your workplace?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**B3.** Has the introduction of *English @ Work* services for limited-English speakers created resentment with English speaking co-workers who are not eligible for comparable training?

Yes    No

If yes, how was this issue addressed?

*Customer Service.*

**B4.** To what extent do you feel customer service has improved as a result of *English @ Work* services in your workplace?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

*Comfort in the Workplace.*

**B5.** To what extent do you feel limited-English speaking workers have become more at ease in the workplace as a result of receiving *English @ Work* services?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

*Workplace Safety.*

**B6.** Lessons in the *English @ Work* curriculum address workplace safety training and procedures, signs, safety equipment, accident reporting and related topics, in addition to offering English-language services. To what extent do you feel your workplace has become safer as a result of *English @ Work* services?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**B7.** In which of the following areas do you feel safety has improved in your workplace?

- Better handling of potentially hazardous chemicals or other materials
- Improved ability of workers to understand/follow safety procedures
- Fewer on-the-job accidents
- Improved ability of workers to express safety concerns or ask questions
- Other (Indicate) \_\_\_\_\_

*Employee Timeliness and Retention.*

**B8.** Have you experienced reductions in absenteeism by limited-English-speaking workers since accessing *English @ Work* services?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**B9.** Have you observed improvements in employee retention among limited-English-speaking workers since accessing *English @ Work* services?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

*Cost Savings.*

**B10.** To what extent has your business experienced cost savings or greater efficiency as a result of *English @ Work* services?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

*Meeting Business Expectations/Goals.*

**B11.** To what extent have *English @ Work* services for your workers helped you in meeting your expectations or goals for your business?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

*Personal and Professional Development.*

**B12.** Improved language skills may also be associated with enhanced personal and professional development for workers who are English-language learners. To what extent have *English @ Work* services helped your workers expand their personal or professional development by enrolling in classes or other actions?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**B13.** To what extent have *English @ Work* services increased your or your supervisors' awareness of the personal or professional goals, aspirations and capabilities of your workforce?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**B14.** To what extent has participation in *English @ Work* improved employees' opportunities for promotion?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**B15. Other Benefits.** Are there other benefits from *English @ Work* services that we have not addressed that you would like to highlight? (Please list and rate)

a)

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How important is this to your company?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

b)

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—

How important is this to your company?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

***English @ Work Costs***

Now, we would like to ask you about specific costs you may have incurred or other effects you may have experienced offering *English @ Work* services for your limited-English-speaking workers.

***Direct Expenses.***

**C1.** Did your company incur any direct expenses as a result of offering *English @ Work* services for your limited-English-speaking workers, e.g., materials, fees, books?

Yes      No

**C2.** If so, about how much did these direct expenses total?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

***Lost Productivity.***

**C3.** When your limited-English-speaking workers participated in *English @ Work* services, did you observe any loss in their productivity on the job?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very



**C4.** When your limited-English-speaking workers participated in *English @ Work* services, did you observe any loss in productivity for other English-speaking workers on the job?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**C5.** When your limited-English-speaking workers participated in *English @ Work* services, did you observe any loss in supervisors' productivity?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very

**Wrap-Up**

We have just a few more questions to ask you.

**WU1.** Based on your experience to date, would you consider accessing *English @ Work* services for your limited-English speaking workers again in the future?

Yes      No

**WU2.** If not, could you briefly say why?

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**WU3.** What challenges or barriers did your organization overcome in your efforts to implement the *English @ Work* program, if any? (Briefly list/describe)

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**WU4.** What is the highest per-worker cost you think your company would be willing to pay for services like *English@Work*?

---

**WU5.** Would you recommend *English @ Work* to other employers in your industry or others?

Yes      No

**WU6.** Do you have any further observations about *English @ Work* services you would like to share with us that we have not asked about, especially regarding possible benefits or costs?

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**WU7.** Thank you for your time in responding to our questions. This has been very helpful. We would be happy to share a copy of our final report with you when we've completed our work. Would you like to receive a copy?

Yes      No

**APPENDIX B: *ENGLISH @ WORK* QUALTRICS ONLINE SURVEY**

# English @ Work

## Default Question Block

Pl1 How many students were enrolled in the class?

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Pl2 How many students completed the class?

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Pl3 What are the job titles of the participants and the frequency of their communication with customers?

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	About half the time (3)	Most of the time (4)	Always (6)
Job Title (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job Title (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job Title (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job Title (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PI4 What was the English proficiency level of most participants?

- Level 1-Starting:** students initially have limited or no understanding of English. They rarely use English for communication. They respond non-verbally to simple commands, statements and questions, rely on nonverbal context for meaning. (1)
  - Level 2-Emerging:** students can understand phrases and short sentences. They can communicate limited information in simple every day and routine situations. (2)
  - Level 3-Developing:** students understand more complex speech but still may require some repetition. They use English spontaneously but may have difficulty expressing all their thoughts due to a restricted vocabulary and a limited command of the language structure. (3)
- 

PI5 What days of the week and time frame did the current class meet?

---

EP1 In what industry sector does your company do business (e.g., healthcare, hospitality)?

---

EP2 Approximately how many workers does your company employ in the [Austin, Houston] area?

---

EP3 About what percentage of these employees are limited English-speakers? (##%)

---

EP4 What languages do they speak? (List all)

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EP5 Do any of their supervisors speak the same languages?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

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EP6 On a scale of 1-5:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
To what extent does employing limited English-speakers pose a problem in your workplace? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

EP7 What types of problems does employing limited English-speakers lead to? (Check all that

apply.)

- Poor Communication? (1)
  - Workplace tension (native/nonnative)? (2)
  - Poor safety or security? (3)
  - Poor customer service? (4)
  - Low productivity? (5)
  - Difficulty training? (6)
  - Lack of teamwork/collaboration? (7)
  - Other (8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

EP8 Have you used other English-language services in your workplace before?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Skip To: EP13 If EP8 = No (2)*

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EP9 If so, on a scale of 1-5:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
How helpful were these English-language services? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

EP10 On a per-worker basis, approximately how much did you pay for these other English-

language services, if anything?

- Less than \$100 (1)
  - \$100-\$199 (2)
  - \$200-\$299 (3)
  - \$300-\$399 (4)
  - More than \$400 (5)
- 

EP11 If you provided workers participating in these English-language services with some form of incentive, about how much were these incentive worth?

- Less than \$100 (1)
  - \$100-\$199 (2)
  - \$200-\$299 (3)
  - \$300-\$399 (4)
  - More than \$400 (5)
- 

EP12 Did participants in the English-language services experience any gains as a result of their participation, including:

- Increased pay? (1)
  - Increased hours? (2)
  - Promotion or other employment gains? (3)
  - Better opportunities for cross training? (4)
  - Other? (5) \_\_\_\_\_
-



EP13 How did you learn about *English @ Work* services?

- English @ Work* advertising/outreach (1)
  - Other employers (2)
  - Texas Workforce Commission (3)
  - Workforce Solutions/One-stop Center staff (4)
  - Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

EP14 When did your company first begin using *English @ Work* services? (Month/Year)

\_\_\_\_\_

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B1/2 On a scale of 1 -5, to what extent have you observed improved communication between:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
Limited-English and English speaking co-workers in your workplace? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Limited English-speaking workers and their supervisors in your workplace? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

B3 Has the introduction of *English @ Work* services for limited English-speakers created

resentment with English speaking co-workers who are not eligible for comparable training?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
  - If yes, how was this issue addressed? (3)
- 

B4 On a scale of 1-5:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
To what extent do you feel customer service has improved as a result of <i>English @ Work</i> services in your workplace? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

B5 On a scale of 1-5:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
To what extent do you feel limited-English speaking workers have become more at ease in the workplace as a result of receiving <i>English @ Work</i> services? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

B6 Lessons in the *English @ Work* curriculum address workplace safety training and procedures, signs, safety equipment, accident reporting and related topics, in addition to offering English-

language services. On a scale of 1-5:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
To what extent do you feel your workplace has become safer as a result of <i>English@Work</i> ? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

B7 In which of the following areas do you feel safety has improved in your workplace?

- Better handling of potential hazardous chemicals or other materials (1)
- Improved ability of workers to understand/follow safety procedures (2)
- Fewer on-the-job accidents (3)
- Improved ability of workers to express safety concerns or ask questions (4)
- Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

B8/9/10/11 On a scale of 1-5, to what extent have you experienced:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
Reductions in absenteeism by limited-English-speaking workers since accessing <i>English @ Work</i> services? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improvements in employee retention among limited-English-speaking workers since accessing <i>English @ Work</i> services? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your business experienced cost savings or greater efficiency as a result of <i>English @ Work</i> services? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>English @ Work</i> services for your workers helped you in meeting your expectations or goals for your business? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

B12/13/14 Improved language skills may also be associated with enhanced personal and professional development for workers who are English-language learners. On a scale of 1-5 to

what extent have *English @ Work* services:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	4 (5)
Helped your workers expand their personal or professional development by enrolling in classes or other actions? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increased you or your supervisors' awareness of the personal or professional goals, aspirations and capabilities of your workforce? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved employees' opportunities for promotion? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

B15 Other Benefits. Are there other benefits from *English @ Work* services that we have not addressed that you would like to highlight? (Please list and rate how important this benefit is to your company)

	Not at all (1)	(2)	Somewhat (3)	(4)	Very (5)
Benefit (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Benefit (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

C1 Did your company incur any direct expenses as a result of offering *English @ Work* services

for your limited-English-speaking workers, e.g. materials, fees, books?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: C3/4/5 If C1 != Yes (1)

C2 If so, about how much did these direct expenses total?

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C3/4/5 On a scale of 1-5, when your limited-English-speaking workers participated in *English @ Work* services did you observe:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
Any loss in their productivity on the job? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any loss in their productivity for other English-speaking workers on the job? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any loss in supervisors' productivity? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WU1 Based on your experience to date, would you consider accessing *English @ Work* services for your limited English speaking workers again in the future?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: WU3 If WU1 = Yes (1)

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WU2 If not, could you briefly say why?

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WU3 What challenges or barriers did your organization overcome in your efforts to implement the *English @ Work* program, if any? (Briefly list/describe)

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WU4 What is the highest per-worker cost you think your company would be willing to pay for services like *English@Work*?

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WU5 Would you recommend *English @ Work* to other employers in your industry or others?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

---

WU6 Do you have any further observations about *English @ Work* services you would like to

share with us that we have not asked about, especially regarding possible benefits or costs?

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WU7 Thank you for your time in responding to our questions. This has been very helpful. We would be happy to share a copy of our final report with you when we've completed our work. Would you like to receive a copy?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

End of Block

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