



**NEW  
AMERICAN  
WORKFORCE**



**NATIONAL  
IMMIGRATION  
FORUM**

# SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR THE NEW AMERICAN WORKFORCE

A contextualized English language training program for the retail industry

## THE NEED

An estimated 1 in 10 working-age adults in the United States has limited English skills, which limits career advancement and business growth. The retail sector alone employs about 11 % of all limited English proficient workers — nearly 1.5 million.

## THE PROJECT

**500 EMPLOYEES**  
**3 PILOT CITIES**  
**3 MAJOR RETAILERS**

In 2016, the National Immigration Forum launched Skills and Opportunity for the New American Workforce, in partnership with Miami Dade College and the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education. This groundbreaking initiative supports the integration of limited English proficient retail employees into the company's workforce by aiding with industry-specific vocabulary and communication, with the overarching goal of improving worker upward mobility. The training uses an original curriculum that is delivered 40 percent through in-person instruction and 60 percent online. In its pilot phase, the project reached over 500 employees of major retailers in three cities: Kroger in Houston, Whole Foods in the New York City metro area and Publix in Miami. Instruction is provided by community college partners, both at the work site and on campus, over 3 months.



**This English class is so valuable! It really helps my work in the store, especially when assisting customers.**

-Dora Castaneda, Food Preparation Team Member, Whole Foods Market



**In observing the participants, I've noticed more self-confidence, and stronger communications skills when they are talking to their peers, customers and store leadership."**

- Mark Wilkins, North East Regional Trainer, Whole Foods Market

# IMPACT



## IMPROVED ENGLISH SKILLS

as demonstrated by pre & post test scores

Miami 83% Houston 91% New York 67%



## ENHANCED EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES REPORTED PROMOTION

Miami 20% New York 11% Houston 19%

### ON TRACK TO:

Promotion 79% Higher Wages 83%



## INCREASED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Improved interaction with customers 89%

Increased confidence on the job 91%



## INCREASED EMPLOYEE LOYALTY

70% "Very Satisfied" at work

90% Increase in morale

100% 30-day Job Retention



## IMPROVED BUSINESS OUTCOMES

95% Participants reported improved job performance

88% Managers reported increased store productivity

# LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

## Training updates

**Further customization:** For 2017, our contextualized curriculum will be revised to better accommodate mixed proficiency level classrooms and further customize class activities to specific retail job functions.

**Computer literacy:** When surveyed, a majority of instructors felt that not enough time had been devoted to individual or group instruction on digital skills. In addition, at least 10% of participants had never used a computer, and those who had, lacked basic skills. In response, we will develop and incorporate a computer literacy component into our curriculum, to improve our participants' online learning experience.

## Technology updates

**Improved online experience:** 82% of employee participants reported a desire to feel more comfortable using the store's technology and equipment, including computers. We therefore plan to improve our online learning platform hosted on Blackboard, and develop a more user friendly interface.

**Mobile platform:** Since the majority of participants reported using their cell phones for text messaging and social media every day, we are expanding our learning platform to include a mobile application that will enable increased access for participants.

Project Funded by



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