Qualitative Evaluation Report

FY2015-2016

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Consortium for Worker Education

Qualitative Evaluation Report FY 2015-2016

This is the fifth qualitative evaluation of Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) adult education and training programs submitted to the New York State Education Department (NYSED). The evaluation supplements the quantitative data provided to NYSED each year on all CWE funded programs.

The NYSED funding source for CWE programs was established in 1992, with legislation authorizing Employment Preparation Education (EPE), defined as: Such programs conducted by the consortium for worker education . . . . with the goals of enabling adults who are twenty-one years of age or older to retain employment or improve their work skills capacity to enhance their opportunities for increased earnings and advancement (Section 2 of Chapter 756). This legislation also recognizes CWE’s unique relationship to work, workers, unions and employers: “It is also the finding of the legislature that training conducted by groups directly involved in the workforce may be the most appropriate and efficient means of ensuring training necessary for individuals to meet current and future needs of a dynamic workplace (Section 1, Chapter 756).

As agreed in CWE’s evaluation proposal to NYSED, the annual evaluation includes a representative program from each of the three types of programs that receive CWE funds: Employer and Union sponsored Building Trade and Apprenticeship programs; Labor-Management training programs in other industries; and community-based organizations that provide job training.

Qualitative indicators of program outcomes (see Appendix) were established and reported to NYSED in March 2012, and these established the framework for both data collection and evaluation. Data collection includes:

- Classroom observations;
- Interviews with program administrators;
- Interviews with instructors;
- Interviews with or letters from employers of program participants;
- Focus groups with participants
- Review of program documents

The qualitative report submitted by CWE annually provides evidence and illustrative examples of how CWE funded programs align with the legislative purpose of EPE funding, which includes helping participants obtain jobs, maintain employment and acquire the skills and credential to advance in their fields. Programs profiled in this report include:
CWE funded programs benefit not only from NYSED support, but also from how this funding is leveraged with City Council funding for employment training and education through Jobs to Build On (JTBO). Initiated in 2007 by the City Council’s Black, Latino and Asian Caucus, the JTBO program is operated by CWE and administered by the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS).

The CWE is the workforce development arm of the New York City Central Labor Council of the AFL-CIO, representing 1.3 million workers in the metropolitan region. CWE funds upgrade training that assists unionized workers in a range of economic sectors, and also serves the needs of other New York City employed and unemployed workers with training, education, job readiness and job placement services.

JTBO is a citywide, neighborhood-based employment partnership of community based workforce development providers. At these organizations, New Yorkers can access free job training and placement services that connect them to jobs in a wide range of sectors, such as transportation, information technology, healthcare, construction and hospitality.

During the 2015-2016 fiscal year, 1,975 JTBO participants were placed in jobs, bringing the total number of placements since JTBO’s inception to 17,669, according to CWE’s JTBO Deputy Executive Director Glenda Williams. JTBO was founded after the Community Service Society released a 2003 report that documented high rates of unemployment among the African-American and Latino male population in all five boroughs of New York City. That report helped identify a list of zip codes showing high rates of unemployment within African American and Latino male populations in the City. JTBO’s mandate requires that 80% of its funds serve participants in these zip codes. Williams says that organizations funded through JTBO “have to be able to work within the community, develop the jobs, place people and train people.” There are currently 29 community-based organizations who receive JTBO funding.

An April 2015 assessment of the spending impact of CWE’s JTBO program conducted by the Fiscal Policy Institute found that the participants, their families, their communities and the City all benefitted from the increase in wages that participating workers experienced as a result of increased training. Because much of this income was spent in communities where the workers lived, FPI estimated that their wages generated an increase of about $4.6 million in local economic activity, including two million for local workers and small businesses.
In a review of JTBO’s performance from 2012-2014, the Fiscal Policy Institute found that among its 13,146 registered participants:

- The average hourly wage after 12 months was $14.13; from 2014-2015, this rose nearly 9% to $14.84.
- Retention was 74% at three months and 60% at six months.
- Ninety-five percent of the workers placed were persons of color; 58% were between the ages of 18-34; and 61% had a high school diploma or less. Skills training increased the chances of placement from 34% to 46%.
- Health services accounted for 30% of all placements in 2014-2015.
- The highest average wage after 12 months on the job were in government ($20.33 per hour and construction ($20.12 an hour).

(All data above is from the JTBO website: www.jobstobuildon.org)

As always, these outcomes take on meaning when attached to the stories of those whom the numbers represent. The website of HOPE (www.thehopeprogram.org), a JTBO community partner, recounts the story of Earl, a participant who had struggled with addiction and served time in prison. After completing HOPE’s twelve week training, Earl served as an intern in a nonprofit, and then secured a full-time job with benefits and a competitive salary at another nonprofit. Earl says of his initial nine months on the job: “My family feels great about my new job. It’s great to have them back in my life.”

HOPE’s statement about the importance of work in the lives of its participants summarizes both the individual and citywide impact of workforce development funding, and underscores the impact of training for all New Yorkers:

“When our graduates reconnect with the workforce, they dramatically increase the financial and social wellbeing of their families and communities. Those who are gainfully employed are substantially less likely to commit crimes and recidivate; the children of working parents perform better in school, have fewer behavioral issues and are less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system themselves; and employed New Yorkers help businesses grow, pay more taxes and rely less on government supports, contributing to stronger and more secure communities.”
The Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills
The Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills:  

Building Futures for New York City’s Next Generation of Skilled Construction Professionals

“The skills involved in creating New York City’s breathtaking skyline and network of roads, bridges, tunnels and other infrastructure require the best-trained, safest construction professionals in the world. Construction Skills provides the training and access to the exciting and rewarding careers available in unionized construction. Our graduates are not only helping to shape New York’s skyline—they are building bright futures.” Building Futures in the Construction Trades, Brochure by Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills, 71 West 23rd St., NY, NY: page 1.

“Construction Skills is the most successful construction industry pre-apprenticeship program in the country, based on a review of placement data of pre-apprenticeship programs in other cities.” (Ester Fuchs, Dorian Warren and Kimberly Bayer, Columbia School of International and Public Affairs, “Expanding Opportunity for Middle Class Jobs in New York City: Minority Youth Employment in the Building Construction Trades,” Executive Summary page 1: March 2014).

Most job training programs, though full of good ideas and hopeful participants, do not consistently result in careers with lifelong employment or family supporting wages and benefits. In contrast, the New York City unionized building trades offer apprenticeship training that pays workers while they learn and results in lifetime careers when they complete their apprenticeship. Work in the industry comes with middle-class wages and benefits, and in some building trade unions, programs with the State University of New York offer low-cost opportunities for college education through special programs for members. For this reason, apprenticeship is sometimes referred to as “the other four-year degree.” In the context of the rising student loan debt assumed by Americans desperate to get a leg up in the job market, the lifelong learning benefits of members in the unionized building trades stand out as an investment in the skills and knowledge of American workers that pays off for them and their employers.

The Edward J. Malloy Initiative For Construction Skills (CSkills) is a pre-apprenticeship training program built on the contractual labor-management partnerships that are the hallmark of unionized construction in New York City.1 CSkills prepares senior high school students and qualifying adult residents of Hurricane Sandy affected areas who

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1 Edward J. Malloy was President of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York when the Initiative was founded in 2001 as “Construction Skills 2000.” The program was renamed in honor of his commitment to its goals.
are New York City residents age 18 and over to enter unionized apprenticeship programs. These programs use the same combination of hands-on and classroom learning that makes work in construction profitable not only for building trade union members, but also for industry employers. Building trade members continue to learn throughout their careers, as they adapt to changes not only in building technologies but also in environmental regulations and requirements, and new knowledge in their trades.

Gary LaBarbera is the current President of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, an organization that includes local affiliates of 15 national and international unions that together represent 100,000 working men and women in New York City. Under LaBarbera’s leadership, union membership in building trades has continued to diversify; as of 2012, 75% of members were residents of the five boroughs and 65% were minorities. Contributing significantly to this diversity, the Construction Skills program is a partnership that includes organized labor, union construction contractors, the New York City Department of Education, New York City School Construction Authority and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

In their 2014 research report on minority youth and the construction trades, Fuchs, Warren and Bayer found that close to 90% of CSkills graduates at that time were black, Hispanic, or Asian. They also note that 82% of CSkills graduates, or 1,443 individuals, were placed in unionized apprenticeship programs between 2001-October 2013. These CSkills participants had an 80% retention rate as apprentices, a figure much higher than the national retention rate in apprenticeship programs (see full reference on page 1).

Gary LaBarbera’s commitment to Construction Skills is exemplified by his ambitious negotiation of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) with the City of New York and the New York City School Construction Authority. As well, LaBarbera has helped to bring some $25 billion dollars worth of private sector work under PLAs in New York City, resulting in continued employment for unionized construction workers and new apprenticeship opportunities. By working with both the public and private sectors, LaBarbera has increased the demand for well-trained, skilled construction workers prepared by CSkills, insuring that all New Yorkers share in the monumental projects that define their City.

Under LaBarbera’s leadership and as a result of his active role in expanding opportunities for Construction Skills participants, unionized construction in New York City is now more inclusive than ever. LaBarbera has forged alliances between organized labor and activist community groups such as ALIGN and New York Communities for Change. He is the founder and still chairman of New York City Helmets to Hardhats, which has placed over 500 veterans in construction careers in New York City since 2013. Mr. LaBarbera is a strong advocate for worker safety for all construction workers, union and non-union, and works tirelessly to ensure that those who build the City receive wages and benefits that reflect their contributions to its magnificent infrastructure. He currently serves as a vice president of both the New York City Central Labor Council and the New York State AFL-CIO. Under his

leadership, Cskills has provided opportunities for workers in communities impacted by Hurricane Sandy to enter the program and participate in rebuilding their communities: “The very same people that were really devastated are now finding career paths and rebuilding their communities. It’s a real silver lining.”

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Construction Skills Overview

“The purpose of direct entry programs in the building trades is to extend these opportunities to communities that historically were not able to access them.” Nicole Bertran, Executive Vice President, Construction Skills.

Nicole Bertran is currently the Executive Vice President of Construction Skills (CSkills), and oversees program operations, budgets and contracts, as well as the implementation of direct entry into unionized building trades for CSkills participants. She is responsible to the Building and Construction Trades Council (BCTC), and manages the relationship between CSkills and apprenticeship directors. As well, she oversees implementation of direct entry into the building trades for CSkills participants. Bertran also manages reporting and data collection related to the program. Previously, she was the Director of Training at NEW (Non-Traditional Employment for Women). For her Masters thesis project at Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Bertran focused on the role of Construction Skills in increasing diversity in the unionized construction industry.

Under CWE's Apprenticeship Training Initiative, CWE is the training provider, and CWE staffers Darly Corniel (Program Manager) and Jim Dorvil (Program Coordinator) work with Bertran to hire instructors, design the training curriculum and schedule and oversee the CSkills training classes.

Construction Skills was founded in 2001 to take over the career pathways program formerly run out of New York City Vocational High Schools. The name was changed in 2006 to the Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills (CSkills). CSkills is a non-profit created to manage the selection and training process of the program, as well as the placement of program completers as registered apprentices in NYC unionized building trades. Participants are typically recruited from New York City Career and Technical Education (CTE) High Schools and Workforce1 Career Center (WF1). New York City public high school students interested in CSkills enter an introduction to building trades course in the Spring of their senior year that provides an overview of the construction industry, as well as related health and safety training and math. After they complete these courses and graduate from high school, they enter CSkills classes that prepare them to apply for direct entry into union apprenticeships in the building trades.

The direct entry provision is a key feature of CSkills. Typically, to enter the unionized building trades, would-be apprentices wait for the announcement that a union is looking for apprentices and then stand in notoriously long lines, very often overnight and in all weathers, to apply for consideration as new apprentices. If chosen, their names are entered into a lottery from which new apprentices are selected. Those who wait in line endure this because they know that the trades offer career opportunities with lifelong security, benefits, ongoing learning, and challenging roles in building New York City. CSkills participants who
successfully complete the program and meet the entry requirements of trades that are hiring are exempt from recruitment by lottery. This is based on the judgment of CSkills staff, as well as the evaluation of their instructors, who are all current or former building trade workers and instructors.

While CSkills was initially designed for New York City High School graduates, increasingly there is demand to offer the program to adult workers. In 2006, when New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) funded training for adult residents of its housing projects, CSkills placed 250 NYCHA residents in apprenticeships. The Sandy Build it Back Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, as mentioned by LaBarbera above, has provided three cycles of training of adult participants affected areas as of this writing. Bertran tells me she is working to diversify funding for adult CSkills training, because there is such a need. Entry requirements for adults include TABE test scores of 9th grade or above, an interest in working in the building trades, and meeting other industry specific requirements.

Asked about the training content, Bertran says, “Our pre-apprenticeship training prepares both youth and adult participants for the industry and provides them with the information and the habits to be successful. Whenever you ask a participant what they learned in construction skills they’ll say, ‘I learned math, I learned how to hang sheet rock, etc.’ And I say yes, but what’s going to make you successful is that you also learned how to conduct yourself, how to show up on time. It’s built into our training, which is a sort of subliminal way to get people to start developing these habits.”

Accordingly, Bertran says: “The primary training is showing up on time, paying attention, and getting used to learning in the trades.” Summer training for recent high school completers is thirty-five hours a week and participants attend four weeks in either July or August. For the Sandy Build It Back and NYCHA classes, training was 35 hours a week for 5 weeks. For weeks one and two, the training consists primarily of an introduction to the building trades, trades math, reasoning and spatial relations. Week three to five focus on and hands-on learning, which is designed to simulate the workplace environment. Bertran says, “Following orders quickly and accurately is what contributes to success in this industry…. So that’s a big part of completing the training. They are leaving with a real world understanding of how to do that, and of workplace culture in the industry.”

All participants who successfully complete CSkills training have earned the right to direct entry into trades that are currently taking in apprentices, Bertran tells me, adding: “And the reason that’s a big deal is because the lines are not only long, but they only get you participation in a lottery from which a relatively small number of names will be drawn; so you stand in line to get an application to be in a lottery!” Those who come into the trades through direct entry still have to pass the tests and interviews given by each union for its incoming apprentices, which may include a written aptitude test and a physical exam that reflects the demands of the trades.
CWE’s primary role is as a training provider for CSkills classes. According to Bertran, “CWE is responsible for the implementation of both the classroom and the hands-on CSkills training. They recruit and pay the instructors, and we use their training facilities at Maiden Lane. The summer program happens at different sites around the city and CWE organizes the hands-on work at non-profit organizations that have basic building projects that need to happen. DC9 (The Painters and Allied Trades Union) always provides the hands-on training space during the rest of the year. Summer sites have included Build it Green in Astoria and in Gowanus; Build it Green is a non-profit organization that salvages building materials to repurpose. They have a warehouse of material and they usually need it to be organized. We’ve built storage units, shelving and things like that to help them organize their materials.”

The number of individuals served per year by CSkills is typically 20-150, based on industry demand. This fiscal year, 91 have completed their pre-apprenticeship so far and 57 have already become union apprentices. The remainder have been referred to apprenticeship opportunities and will begin their careers once they successfully complete the entry process. Previous CSkills graduates are currently working as union carpenters, painters, roofers, metallic lathers, ironworkers, and plumbers.

Each CSkills participant is asked to rank their first, second and third choice of building trades apprenticeship programs they hope to enter after completing CSkills. Individuals need to meet all the requirements of the trade they enter, so choice is also based on their qualifications. For example, Local 3 of the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) requires a year of high school algebra with a minimum classroom grade of 70%. An informal forecast from apprenticeship directors that projects how many new members they expect to take in, based on anticipated need in the trade, also impacts class size. In the end, Bertran says, “It's my job to say, you do not qualify for this trade, but here are other opportunities...but usually, participants get into their first choice, if they're qualified for it.”

Asked to talk about the role of CWE in CSkills, Bertran says, “We wouldn't have a training program without it! They organize it, administer it, and assign instructors who come out of the trades to teach it. CWE is also a labor organization, so the partnership is also important for that reason. They've always been the training provider for CSkills, so it’s a longstanding partnership. In terms of curriculum design and implementation, CWE wears that hat.”

The Adult CSkills program is funded and administered by New York City’s Department of Small Business Services (SBS). Interested Sandy-impacted residents must go to a Workforce1Career Center and register in order to apply. Screening for adult CSkills applicants differs from the process for youth. According to Bertran, “We're not looking at their HS transcripts, we are looking at their previous employment, their qualifications. Our adult participants are largely long-term separated from any kind of educational opportunity... They apply because they are looking to change careers, or they have been working in the non-union sector and have been looking for a way to enter unionized construction, or they are people who have just not been able to find a good job that allows them to provide a middle class lifestyle for themselves and their families.”
Adult applicants seeking places in CSkills are interviewed, and must achieve a 9th grade reading and math level on the TABE. The education credential required is a HS diploma or a GED. Participants must be 18 years or older and legally eligible to work in the US. Bertran says, “Work history, the TABE score, and their commitment to this industry are all considered for their acceptance into the program. The CSkills Adult program is five weeks long, and includes two weeks of classroom and three weeks of hands-on training. At the end, participants are referred via direct entry to their preferred trade.”

Overall, 80% of all CSkills graduates complete their building trade apprenticeships and become journeypersons. Bertran says that currently: “89% of our participants are African American or of another minority population. We’re about 7% women, and looking to grow that number especially in our adult program. The opportunity that we provide here, and the reason I love this job, is that I run into people all the time who have been through CSkills, and their lives are different. Their lives have changed because they were able to access a career opportunity that provides training and education and long-term employment in an industry where you can make a lot of money. That’s not just rhetoric, it’s the reality of the building trades. This is a way to support your family, to make a life, and to have a middle class lifestyle where you are able to buy a home, have a car, go on vacation...The reality is that the building trades offer an unparalleled access to the middle class that you won’t find anywhere else.”

Bertran says one of the best parts of her job is hearing from employed CSkills graduates, who are so grateful for the opportunity they have had that they not only say thank you, but ask Bertran: “What can I do for you, what can I get for you?” She replies: “I don’t want anything for myself. I want you to finish your apprenticeship, become a journeyperson, and continue the legacy that CSkills has built.”

That legacy includes the good work that the participants do, as they continue building the world’s most famous skyline, and support the City’s growth as taxpayers. As one focus group participant currently enrolled in CS classes put it:

“I think this program is going to give a major return on investment to the taxpayers. Simply because it’s not just about the things that we learn, it’s about what we produce. Having a product out there that’s done properly, you notice that the construction doesn’t have to be done over, multiple times. It’s done one time and it’s done properly. That’s return on investment. Once that building is up, we’re moving on to the next one. And we’re also paying back into the pot of taxes, to provide for the people that want to capitalize off the opportunity that we was fortunate enough to have. So like our class is 30 people—next class could be 60, and then you keep multiplying like that until the City is the best city in the world.”
Construction Skills Classes:

Instructors, Training Content and Participant Voices

“I have a great outlook on life: I have a pension to look forward to, as well as an annuity, and work with the union, which gives a great living wage that you take home. For Christmas, my son wanted a helmet and a hammer just like me. It seems like he wants to be a carpenter now. It just makes you have so much pride, building something.” (Jamel Dickerson, CSkills graduate and member of NYC District Council of Carpenters).

As the training provider for CSkills, CWE contributes staff time for program administration and coordination, provides classroom space at Maiden Lane and pays the program’s instructors. CSkills Recruitment Sessions for participants begin with a presentation at their high school or at the Workforce 1 about CSkills and work in the construction trades.

For classes for Sandy-impacted adults, a review of applications and TABE tests scores (participants must score at 9th grade level or above) generates a list of eligible participants. These individuals are called in to participate in a group interview and to assemble a puzzle together. Because teamwork is critical to the industry, staff evolved this format to assess how well applicants work with others. Applicants are then asked to comment on the group activity as well as to talk about themselves and their interest in the trades. They can also ask questions about the program or the industry. Following this assessment, Bertran, Corniel, Dorvil and other Building Trades representatives share their observations about the applicants and produce a list of those recommended for the program. Recommended applicants are invited to an orientation to prepare them for entry into CSSkills classes.

Group Interview

I observed a group interview of seven adult applicants, including one woman, on January 8, 2016. The first activity was the puzzle assembly exercise, done in two groups. Each group quickly devised strategies to complete the timed exercise; one focused on assembling the straight edged pieces to create the puzzle frame, while the other looked for colors and patterns to complete the assembly. The emphasis in the discussion that follows is on observations by Corniel and Bertran about how the participants worked together. For example, they commented on how the group that finished first immediately began helping the other group: “That showed great teamwork, and working with people you don’t know is key to completing tasks in construction.” Corniel noted that both groups were open to changing directions and listening to team members, while Bertran complimented the communication among them.
The group introduced themselves and shared why they decided to come. One participant from the Far Rockaways said, “Hurricane Sandy wiped things out. There were opportunities to build, money to be made, but not for folks who lived there.” The woman in the group, also from Far Rockaway, was a former city worker looking for a new career and for “non-traditional work.” Another heard about the program from Workforce 1 and said he didn’t want to “sit at a desk.” An applicant from Coney Island referred by Workforce1 Career Center said he wanted to “enhance my carpentry skills and get into the union.”

Asked about their expectations for construction work and what they hoped to achieve, one participant said: “To build my skill set with math, measuring, learning new things and applying it. Stretch my mind, make a good living. Construction and health care won’t go away; they have strong unions. We wouldn’t have what we have, like an 8-hour day, if it wasn’t for unions. I want to be part of something strong and honorable.”

Bertran clarifies that “pre-apprenticeship is designed to make you successful in a unionized apprenticeship, which it mirrors in combining classroom and hands-on training. CSkills provides you with the information you need to succeed in a unionized building trade. You’ll develop the habits of being on time, working safely, and working together. You won’t learn specifics, like welding. . . .The goal is to get the training and link you to an opportunity.”

Corniel engaged participants in describing what qualities make them good candidates. One person responded: “I’m the parent of a disabled child—so I need patience and looking at the other’s point of view. [I know how to] be open minded and learn from others.” Another said he had been doing construction work since he was 18 and that he was a hard worker and a fast learner. A participant without a background in the industry said she was “strong and structured to do a five day work week. I’m up at 5 AM every morning. I’m an early bird, not a party animal. I use time efficiently. . . . As a woman, I can do the job.”

Bertran cautioned: “As an apprentice you are the low person on the totem pole. You need to navigate that kind of environment. It’s a hard job, nothing easy about it.”

Next, Bertran explains that even after they complete the CSkills program, they have to pass an interview and a drug test: “All the trades do it. You have to pass to get in and remain in. You can be tested at any time on any job. . . . If you fail the test, you are out.” Dorvil asks, “How ready are you to hit the ground running? There is a professional culture that means if the foreman wants peanut butter and eggs, you are ready to go out there and get it—to show you are a good apprentice. You’ve got to give it all you’ve got.” Corniel goes over logistics, telling the group: “Classes are full-time for 5 weeks: 8AM to 3:30PM. If you are late, you will be sent home for the day. If you are absent twice, you’re done. There is very little room for error. Our attendance policy determines if you can be in the industry.” She informs them that classroom instruction includes building trades math and introduction to the building trades, while hands-on classes takes place at the DC9 Training Center (District Council 9 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades) or at a simulated work environment.
Orientation

I attend an orientation session on 1/22/16 for thirty-four participants (including three women) heading into the upcoming adult CSkills class. The overwhelming majority are people of color. Bertran tells them: “I won’t have to dismiss you, you are going to dismiss yourselves. I can’t say that enough. It’s up to you. You need to be fully committed and get here on time….Be here at 7 am the latest! Our expectations are that you will participate fully.” Other topics covered are dress code: plain white t-shirt or CSkills t-shirt, work boots with laces tied, jeans with no rips or holes, etc. “The dress code is designed for safety and a professional environment,” says Bertran. Next she answers questions, reviews other rules of the program, and outlines the class schedule and locations. She tells them that the last class had 100% placement.

Bertran concludes: “The uniformity of training is one of the best aspects of the building trades. You have the same training and earn the same money as others of your rank/year. The employer can hire apprentices at different levels confident of the skill set each level brings. For workers, the career ladder in the trades means that your wage goes up as your skills increase and improve.”

After a break and some case management and paperwork, a presentation by Urban Upbound counselors offered free personal as well as financial counseling to participants, helping them with debt management, food stamps, credit reports, tax services, etc. Corniel tells participants that CSkills trainees from former classes who have used the services have had good outcomes.

Dorvil passes out training handbooks, stressing that the class is as important as the hands-on training, and that it works as a team in which trainees are responsible for and to each other: “The focus is on the job-you have to be able to save your brother or sister from falling off the roof. As an active participant, your job is to retain and respond, give it back and stay awake! Your attitude, dress and body language are all important.” As the morning’s work concluded, participants completed their intake paper work.
Construction Skills Instructors, Training and Participants: Classroom Component

“The Edward J. Malloy initiative is really a win-win situation, because all the trades where we have placed apprentices have been helped by the program. It's a wonderful model.” Dennis Brown, New York City District Council of Carpenters member and Construction Skills Instructor.

Ralph Johnson is the one of the instructors for Introduction to the Building Trades and applied trades math, teaching adult CSkills participants on 2/2/2016 when I observe the class. Thirty-six men and three women attend. Johnson checks their attire: “Boots tied? Belt on? White t-shirt?”

The class focuses on measuring skills. Groups of five take turns using a 25-foot tape measure to answer the questions Johnson has provided related to this task. While they do this, Johnson reviews the previous day's work and the readings and lectures related to the work they will do today. As he circulates among those measuring, he responds to questions by prodding participants to remember what they discussed in class. The class moves on to adding and subtracting mixed numbers, and then does practical problems using these skills.

Chad Strachan, a CSkills graduate who came to the program after attending George Westinghouse technical high school, was a guest speaker in this class. A DC9 member, Strachan worked as a painter and paperhanger and is now the first black Director of Organizing for DC9. He acknowledges that construction is a “tough business,” and that as a new member he worked overtime and on weekends: “In this industry, you don't turn work down. Take it! If you don't, they won't call you anymore!” He stressed how each worker builds his or her reputation: “Only you can mess it up for yourself. Companies invest in you; you make money for them.” He encouraged them to take advantage of every opportunity and to learn all aspects of the trade: “Once you have the skills and are trusted, you are a gold mine for the company. At DC9, apprentices start at $16.40 an hour and move to $38 over the four years of apprenticeship. Once they are skilled, they can make close to $47 an hour. Tapers, Glaziers and Bridge Painters (specialties within the union) can make close to $47 an hour, including benefits.” He advises participants to “Take advantage of this opportunity to better yourselves.”

He encourages CSkills participants to be active in the union and go to monthly meetings: “It's the best form of networking and keeps you working. I've had great years as a member of this union; it gave me an opportunity I wouldn't trade for the world. I have a house, my car is paid for, my family, my kids have dental and eye care, and doctor and hospital coverage.”

One participant then asks if working in construction makes it harder to be a parent. The Director of Organizing responds: “Kids make your determination harder. The people who love you will step up for you.” As an example, he points to his co-presenter, who lives in
Virginia and goes home on weekends. This man responds in turn: "Being in the union, it’s a ‘come-up.’ That gives you strength. People in your family feel that energy and they come together and do more because you’re doing more. Because they’re a part of that come-up. When I go home, we’re even closer.” The speakers finish with a presentation about the importance of safety and contrast the emphasis on safety at a union as opposed to a non-union site: “Working with a union, safety is everything.”

**Trades Math Instructors**

**Ralph Johnson, Introduction to the Building Trades**

Ralph Johnson says his main goal is to help CSkills participants get into the trades they choose, by teaching “all kinds of math.” In the first year he taught for CSSkills, he was shocked to learn that math teachers even in trade schools were not teaching how to read a ruler. As a result, Johnson has replicated a tool developed by Non-Traditional Employment for Women (NEW): a hands-on teaching tool that functions as a three dimensional, enlarged version of a tape measure, rendering it less abstract. Johnson, who is a retired carpenter and was one of the first CSSkills instructors, tells me that after seeing this tool at NEW, and he made four of them for CSSkills classrooms.

Johnson’s teaching philosophy explains the value of a tool like this: “I always tell them, a picture is worth a thousand words. I could say it, I could draw it, but when you get out there and physically do it, like we do in the hands-on training—that’s eye-opening. The world opens up and they see, ‘Oh, this is what he meant!’ ” In addition to using visuals combined with hands-on learning, Johnson shared another of his master teaching strategies: “Sometimes when you have an instructor trying to explain something, the ones trying to learn get nervous. . . . So I put the better students with the weaker students and let them converse together so they won’t feel nervous and most of them will say they get it.”

Johnson believes that investing in CSSkills is of “great value to the city, the country, and the participants. They get a union and know what it is to be in a brotherhood or sisterhood. . . . Once you get into a union, you connect with each other . . . You could go on the internet, meet others, and instead of hanging out on the corner, you can go to union meetings and maybe one day become business agents, foremen, supers, project managers, estimators. So it’s a career, and you can move up the chain of command just like everything else. And you can go somewhere. I tell them, I’m living proof.”

**Robert Lewis: Trades Math and Exam Prep Instructor**

I visited Lewis’s class on 2/2/16, as they worked on how to calculate heat loss as it occurs under different conditions, solving problems that varied inside and outside temperatures as well as the dimensions and materials used on walls. To bring both levity and
mystery to the task, Lewis created a problem based on a TV show familiar to participants, which revolves around a serial killer named Dexter. Participants worked in groups on the complex math involved in solving the problems. During the assignment, there was total attention on task, with lots of cross talk and comparing strategies and answers. Lewis stressed writing down the generic steps in the formulas used to solve problems and then plugging in the particular values in the questions.

The last assignment involved working on a blueprint for 15 duplexes in a small community. How the groups organized their work varied, with some assigning parts of the problem to individuals and then bringing their answers together and others doing each step together. The instructor tells them that group work is necessary to complete all four pages of the assignment, which would be “impossible” for any one person.

Lewis summarized the methodology for group work: "How do you organize the group so it works? Know each other's strengths and weaknesses. Share the work. Either let everyone do one page, or work on the same page and do each step. Start with the hardest problem and work backwards to the easiest. In the trades, if your crew is not done, no one leaves the job. There has to be agreement among the group regarding how the work gets done and when it is complete.” As the class ended, Lewis told them they would continue working in groups to develop better strategies and communication.

Robin Delk, Introduction to the Building Trades

Though a new instructor for CSkills, Robin Delk has a long history with the building trades. He completed his apprenticeship as a Local 28 sheetmetal worker in 1971. Delk, who worked as a deputy foreman in a Bronx hospital and at the Citicorp and IBM Buildings, says, “When the City of New York had only 500 sheetmetal workers, I was one of the 500.”

Delk was eventually selected to be a full-time instructor at Local 28 of the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation (SMART) Workers. He has a baccalaureate degree in labor economics and a Masters in Conflict Resolution. While in school, he worked on assignments for the SMART International and at the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). He was then asked by Local 28's president to come to the union’s Nicholas Malderelli Training Center as head instructor, where he eventually became the director of the Local 28 training program.

Delk says that CSkills participants are learning what they need to know to be successful in the construction industry and its unions. Asked how he will know when they have learned this, he answers: “When they can start teaching me! When they start asking critical questions, they're thinking critically. Once that happens, you can be pretty satisfied.” Asked why CSkills is a good use of training funds, Delk says, “If we invest in training, we are also investing in the future value of our real estate and our tax base.”
Adults CSkills Participants Speak

I conducted two focus groups on 2/24/16 drawn from participants whose classroom instruction I had observed. Below are a selection of their thoughts on why they entered the program, what they are learning and why the program is a good use of the public dollars that pay for the work of CWE staff and instructors.

**Tell me a little about your work history and why you decided to attend CSkills:**

“I chose this class because I’ve always been interested in carpentry, in construction, period. I’m good with my hands more than anything else. So I wanted the experience and I needed something to build a career out of it.”

“I had a few different trainings and certifications before I came here, but I don’t have hands-on experience, so I want experience. My main focus is to find a career in this field. Being that I’m a resident of Coney Island, a few different places had information on CSkills, but I got my information from Workforce 1…. I love the training! I wish it was longer.”

“Out of all the jobs I took, I actually had a connection with construction. I actually felt, yeah, I guess like a passion for it, like it was something I could actually see myself doing for my whole life. . . . What I like about this program: When I was doing the construction jobs, it was only about getting the job done. Here, you are actually learning why you are doing things certain ways.”

“As far as learning, the hands-on aspect of it is way different from the classroom, ‘cause you’re actually able to picture it now instead of just imagining in your head.”

“The learning is good, excellent actually! Me, I like hands-on. . . . Once you get to interact and actually do something, it’s way different from just reading, or seeing it done. That’s why I like it, cause we are really learning it. As we learn, we enjoy ourselves. . . . The teacher is great . . . they want you to learn and get the job done and do it right. . . . and after that, your life is better! It’s life-changing.”

**Debby D’Amico (DD): Why should taxpayers invest in this kind of education? How is it a good investment for the people of New York State and New York City?**

“How having people be able to help with Hurricane Sandy work, and people trained to work the right way, being safe, to build back these neighborhoods. And just in case that happens again, you’ll have people that’s already trained, that know how to repair it, so your money is not going to waste because . . . that’s what we’re learning and working for.”

“I feel like it’s a good investment for taxpayers, because pretty much America, and especially New York, was built by unions and people building things together. It’s a good investment because I feel that the work we can keep here, Americanized and unionized, is for all of us and for futures to come.”
“Since most of this class is becoming carpenters, we will literally be building up NY. And since we are going to be unionized, it’s going to be up to a higher standard, safe.”

**Classroom Focus Group 2**

**DD: Tell me a little about yourself and why you chose to be in CSkills?**

“The reason I chose this program was so I could have a better chance of getting into the union. That’s basically my goal. I found out that Workforce 1 was helping people get into the program that would help people get into the union.” (DD: What does union mean to you?) “Union means security, job security, building a career and building a future.”

“I heard about it through Workforce 1. I worked non-union before and you don’t get benefits. You are not getting proper representation that you deserve. I want to be represented right and I want to build a future. I want my benefits and to have people fighting for me.”

“My main motivation is my daughter, because I want stability and to make sure that she doesn’t want for nothing and that she doesn’t have to focus on anything other than getting her education and things like that. I like the outdoors, so nothing is going to stop me.”

**DD: Talk about the way you are learning in CSkills.**

“The hands-on training was good for muscle memory, for your brain to see what you were doing with the measuring tape. So compared to going back to school with all classroom work which would get boring after a while--just thinking about it, doing it on paper--getting it into physical form was good for my brain. To brush up on fractions was good for getting into areas; perimeters was good because it’s been a while since I did that kind of thing. So overall the experience with the hands-on and the classroom was a thumbs up.”

“I noticed there’s a dynamic to the way they teach you. Everybody has a different way of telling you the same thing. So if you’re not a really good auditory learner and you’re a tactile learner, then you get just as much out of the teaching as the next man or woman. And this meeting here is a good way to reflect on what we’ve already established in class, because it gives us an opportunity to see what everybody else sees. If we didn’t see it, they saw it. Also we have a lot of competent instructors, people who have been in the field already, telling you exactly what happened or painting scenarios.”

“I like the combination of the classroom and the hands-on, because in the classroom it’s more individual, but when you do the hands-on, you learn how to work as part of a group and a team, so it’s what we are going to be doing in the building trades.”

**Asked how their work benefits New York City and State, sample responses included:**
“Basically, the public could benefit from this because there are 30 people in this program—30 years of unionized work! It’s not going to be non-union work where they could cut corners, not pay taxes. That could lead to deaths, loss of a lot of money. . . . With the union companies that we are going to be working for, they really can’t do something like that.”

“For the people who don’t know us, it’s just a good investment for society. We move on, we buy houses; we pay taxes. Now the next group that’s coming up, they benefit from our taxes, our social security. It just keeps the ball rolling. You might not see directly, the more people that work, the better off everyone is.”

Hands-On Instruction at CSkills: Learning at District Council 9 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT)

Painters District Council 9 has a versatile, organized and state-of-the-art training facility. Five trades train their members at the DC9 learning facility: Structural Steel and Bridge Painters; Glaziers; Metal Polishers; Painters; and Drywall Tapers. CSkills is able to use the training facility when it is free to offer an essential hands-on component to CSkills. CWE instructors assigned to teach at DC9, a team of enthusiastic and seasoned construction professionals, provide this aspect of the training. Below, they talk about their work with the CSkills initiative.

Hands-On Training Observation

I attended a hands-on training session at Painters DC9, which provides practice in skills such as measuring, drilling, assembling project materials, etc. Participants learn to work with sheet rock and practice framing as they add a door to a small room. Others were measuring and cutting to demonstrate adding wainscoting to a wall. Another group was measuring columns to build replicas of Johnson’s “magic inch” device for understanding the ruler, as described above (see page 15).

As part of these assignments, they checked baseboards to make sure the edges of floors to baseboards were even. They built a column, working on all 4 sides. They cut and installed walls on a frame to create a room. One group worked on a glass box, and another on a blackboard chalk ledge for the ESL class held at DC9.

CSkills participants also do hands-on work on projects requested by non-profits in the five boroughs. For example, they have constructed shelving for a thrift store and built cubicles for day care centers. During CSkills summer classes, participants visit non-profit sites to complete requested projects.

While at the DC9 site, CSkills participants discussed their efforts in their groups among themselves and with the instructors. The philosophy of the instructors is “all students in each group bring skills to the table. We give each person a chance to learn by doing.” Dennis Brown and James McCaulley tell me about work done for Hour Children, which works with incarcerated women and their children. These projects give CSkills participants multiple chances to learn by doing. They speak about these efforts with pride and enthusiasm,
relishing the opportunity to interact and contribute to the work of the City’s non-profit organizations and the communities they serve. They inspire me to visit Hour Children on a day they will be there to work with the CSkills participants on projects.

**Hands-On Instructors**

**Dennis Brown**

Dennis Brown has been a member of the NYC District Council of Carpenters union for 36 years, and has been training CSkills participants since the program began: “It’s a healthy thing to have a pre-apprenticeship program, because it helps to get people prepared for successful apprenticeship. When you get into apprenticeship, if you have some preparation, some guidance before getting there, you don’t just hit it cold—if you just come in off the streets, you are going to have to learn so much in terms of life skills, getting to work on time, and _early_, which is what we emphasize, not just being on time. Also to bring good habits to bear, to bring your pencil and pen and notebook, your nametag, your proper protective equipment, boots that are tied, not just hanging loose, jeans that are not hanging down, that have a belt. In other words, these are aspects to help get a pre-apprentice geared up so that when they hit the apprenticeship program, they don’t flunk out. We don’t want them to wash out. . . . We are the most satisfied when 2, 3, 4, 5 years down the road, we run into some of the hundreds who have been through this, that we have trained. . . . Every day I make a different person a foreman of the crew. Everyone has to get a chance to show that they have leadership skill development and they can get comfortable and familiar with it—the men and the women.”

Brown sees his work in CSkills as taking “raw recruits” and preparing them to start as successful apprentices. He sees this a “tremendous service” to the trades as well as to the participants: “The Edward J. Malloy initiative is really a win-win situation, because all the trades where we have placed apprentices have been helped by the program. It’s a wonderful model.”

CSkills helps individuals to learn about and prepare for the work they will do, and Brown tells them it is as demanding as college: “In years past, people said, ‘Oh, you can’t make it in college, so get a trade.’ But if you couldn’t make it in college, you’re not going to make it that well in the trades, _because you have to use your minds_. The best tool we have is our minds and the second best is our body, and then the third is the tools we work with.”

Brown stresses that “attitude” is the most important asset CSkills participants can bring to the training: “If you don’t have skills and you don’t have knowledge but you have a good attitude, we can show you things, learn and pull it out, as in the Socratic notion that you can pull knowledge out of a person who has been absorbing and have them give it back to you. You look at their relationship to their surroundings, to their co-workers, to their instructors and to their tools and to the task at hand. And then you evaluate them constantly. So we’re looking for attitude, we’re looking for interest, that spark that tells you that someone is on the same page, and is following along.”
The impact of CSkills on diversity in the trades is something Brown acknowledges and welcomes: “Years ago it was father, son, uncle, nephew and it was closely held. It was all white, sometimes the same nationality . . . and that had to be broken up, so that people across the board would have equal opportunity. So CSkills is also a wonderful civil rights and social action type of program, too, and the way we’ve done it is with this pre-apprenticeship model. It’s open to everybody and it has really balanced the playing field. So that most of the apprenticeship program is no longer what would have been the minorities, the minority has become the majority. So it’s a way to even out past problems and also to help those who grow up affected by Sandy, by pollution, by sub-standard housing, by lack of adequate training and schooling and try to train them all over again. Take their strengths, build on them, explore their weaknesses and try to patch it up so that they can get on a level playing field.”

James McCauley

McCauley teaches hands-on skills to CSkills participants, and is a retired member of the New York City District Council of Carpenters. He enjoys his work with CSSkills, and says of the participants: “Most of them are looking to make a career for themselves. They’ve either worked dead end jobs or no job at all, and from what I understand, they are trying to put back into their own community. And it teaches them a trade. They need medical benefits and it affords them all that once they get into the trades.”

He and the other teachers come up with projects that require participants to build walls, then tape, spackle and paint them, as well as to work with molding and specialty products like gold leaf paint. He says, “Within the first couple of days, you see who is pretty far advanced. You can go from there and you try to help the ones that aren’t as far, try to bring them all up to the same level. Then from there, you’ll see who you can show something once and they’ll pick it up. Who you show 3 times and they still have trouble grasping it, that’s one you have to work with a little more. When you’re done, mostly all of them are on the same level. There will be 1 or 2 who excel . . . . The rest of them, if they stick with it, they should have no problem.” I ask if the faster learning of some has an impact on the quality of what they do, and McCauley tells me: “No, it might take some a little bit longer, but the quality is still the same. . . . Because they all want to learn.”

I comment that McCauley seems to love teaching for CSSkills. He responds, “If I didn’t, I wouldn’t be coming back here! It’s teaching these kids something . . . something that you’re always going to use in life. You’ll own a home eventually - It’s keeping the work here, keeping it in the state. . . . These people all live in the 5 boroughs and most will stay here and work here: so it’s New York money staying in New York. That’s my way of looking at it.”

George Kowalski

George Kowalski, who retired as a union carpenter after 38 years on the job, rose to head super at the company where he worked for 28 years. He retired eight years ago and now teaches hands-on skills to CSSkills participants. When former CSSkills participants who are
now working stop by to see the instructors and tell them about the jobs they are now working on, he says, “That’s what keeps me motivated!”

Asked about what he teaches, Kowalski says: “You’re really teaching them to follow directions, pay attention—and also about sheet rock and a little bit of electrical and plumbing.” For Kowalski, assessment is inseparable from teaching, observing and giving feedback on the hands-on work of participants:

“The 8 or 9 people in my group, they started out yesterday like a house on fire. This week . . . . I’m starting to see a lot of flaws I didn’t see in the beginning. Some of them just need a lot of direction. They got to stay focused and they need more experience. You have to tell them, bring it to their attention. . . . Spark them. . . . get them motivated!”

“If we get these young adults into a program like this, they become productive earners, taxpayers and New York State citizens. That’s about the size of it when you come down to it. That’s what we are looking to do. To tell you the truth, we have it down pat here. . . . It’s a good rapport and it makes for a better teaching mood and atmosphere, a good learning environment. The participants can see DC9 members doing things as they’re doing things; we can let them watch tapers, see some painters, watch how they work; it just broadens their horizons.”

**Youth CSkills Participant Focus Groups**

I asked participants how they found out about CSkills and why they chose to participate. In addition to a preference for doing hands-on work, sample answers included:

“What brought me here was the chance to get into the union. Mostly like a lot of people I want to be the person to say in a few years, I put the lights up or the motor, or anything that in the future I could just say that I contributed to something. Also, I fell in love with the craft, and I have an opportunity to be not just a regular electrician—but to say, ‘I’m a union worker.’”

“I had a teacher in my high school who always used to talk about the program, and how he got to see certain students get into a union. One of the unions I actually want to do is Steamfitters Union, cause I study HVAC.”

“The reason why I’m in this program is because . . . carpentry is one of the topics that I want to do and learn. I remember that one day, there was a group of 7 people that’s in this program already who came to the school and talked about how it affects their lives and everybody said everything positive about it . . . . After I researched carpentry I felt like this is something I really want to do. I like working with my hands, fixing things.”
“I heard about the program through my electrical teacher and my work coordinator at my school, George Westinghouse High School in Brooklyn. I’ve been pursuing getting into CSkills since I was in 10th grade. The first time I heard about it, I was still too young. So I finally got it and now I’m pursuing going into Local 3. What really led me here is that I been studying electrical engineering for like 4 years, that’s like a really big thing for me. To me, it’s not just about the money—I really, really love electrical. I’ve done some jobs outside of school and I really love it.”

I asked about the combination of classroom and hands-on training they were experiencing in CSkills, and how that compared to conventional classroom learning. Responses included:

“Theory training just gives you a lot of the terminology that you need. The hands-on allows you the chance to actually fix, identify and touch these things and handle them better, so it helps you to really understand what’s behind the work. ... So they both go hand in hand; it would be tough to have one without the other. “

“For me, I enjoy hands-on work because it makes you think more. I mean, if you’re just sitting around doing regular reading and writing, you mess up something, and that’s it. You just ignore it. But with hands-on work you are actually able to go back and see where you went wrong at, how you can fix it. I feel like you learn more from it, because you get the experience of how things work. Like you got the core of it. So ... whatever goes wrong is like a thrill to me!”

“What we learn basically is math, straight math. The difference is after we learn it, after we get a test, we go into groups and we get a blueprint. So each person gets they own set of numbers to do. Sometimes we have to trust each other to do the numbers, the fractions. And we have to do like each angle to figure out what the fraction is. So it relates when we do hands-on, and we got to do measurements around the room. So when we go out there and get the actual materials, it has to result in and be compared to how we actually did it on paper. So that helps me.”

Finally, I asked participants why funding CSkills it is a good use of tax dollars?

“I have like focus and respect for people that’s putting money into this program ... to not let them down. They are putting out tax money to get something out of it. When we work out in the field, they are depending on us to make things better for them. It’s like from generation to generation. It’s being passed on. I have full respect for that. They are giving all of us an opportunity. We know we have to implement it for them and pass it on.”

“I have huge respect for the people who fund this program. Because we are showing them it actually make sense to give money to programs like this for students who need to pursue a career that is what they want instead of sitting in a classroom for hours and learning
something that they don’t want to learn. Instead we are actually going to be doing hands-on work, and seeing the real world and how it works out for us.”

“I feel like this program is like a short period of time because we will be going into hands-on and after that, we go into the union. In college it takes 4 years—depending on what you are doing, it takes years. And for us, it’s taking months. . . . Some people get into a whole lot of debt and then they are sitting in their house. We are doing something that’s making us a whole lot of money, benefits. . . . When you in college, nothing is guaranteed. Sometimes, when people go to college, it’s like people was kind of lying to them. But like this program, they show us what we get and this is for us to pursue. In college, it’s not like that.”

“You are investing in young people coming up, in the future of the building trades. We’re going to be the ones repairing their houses, putting up new buildings in Manhattan, and I think that’s a great way to use tax dollars.”

**Constructions Skills Gives Back:**

**Construction Skills Community Projects**

“Our mission is to help incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and their children successfully rejoin the community, reunify with their families, and build healthy, independent and secure lives.” Hour Children

CWE has built-in opportunities for CSkills participants to “give back” to the City, by applying their skills as volunteers to projects at not-for-profit and community organizations. At these sites, CSkills hands-on learning takes the form of needed repairs and small construction projects requested by community based organizations.

Inspired by the enthusiasm of CSkills instructor Dennis Brown, I decided to visit Hour Children, where CSkills participants were building storage units near the organization’s offices and its adjacent residence for participating families. (www.hourchildren.org). Hour Children is a multi service not-for-profit founded in 1986 with the vision of ending the cycle of intergenerational incarceration in affected New York City families. Executive Director Sister Tesa Fitzgerald and four other Sisters of St. Joseph opened the doors of their Long Island City convent to children of women in prison over thirty years ago. Today, Hour Children offers a full array of services for formerly incarcerated women and their children, including transitional and supportive housing. At the offices and residence I visited, CSkills participants built storage cubbies for the facility. There were already several small bikes in one of the cubbies built during a previous CSkills cycle.

The work that CSkills participants do at non-profit community sites helps both the organizations that benefit from their skilled work and the CSkills participants who get real world experience. They have an opportunity to see how their skills contribute to the lives of
others, and the role their work can play in making the City more welcoming, more livable and more useful for all New Yorkers.

Qualitative Evaluation Results

“Construction Skills has opened doors to career opportunities in the building and construction trades through union apprenticeship programs and is helping to strengthen New York's middle class. The access to meaningful long-term careers that pay fair wages and benefits is empowering individuals and communities.” Building Futures in the Construction Trades, brochure by Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills.

Annual qualitative evaluation of CWE funded programs is based on indicators of program quality developed in 2011 during focus groups with directors of each of the three program types that receive CWE support: 1) Union-Based, Labor-Management Training Programs; 2) Building Trade Apprenticeship and Journeyperson Training Programs and 3) Community Based Adult Education and Training programs. Funding is awarded to programs that provide education and training that support employment and advancement on the job. The evaluation is based on qualitative data gathered during program and classroom/job site visits. The qualitative methodology includes observation of training; focus groups with participants; interviews with program directors, managers and instructors; as well as review of data, documents, articles and other relevant written or web-based material. This data is combined at the end of the fiscal year with quantitative data submitted by each program. Both qualitative and quantitative data are then reviewed to see how and whether programs meet the outcomes common to all CWE funded programs and the outcomes specific to their program type.

OUTCOMES COMMON TO ALL CWE PROGRAMS

CWE Workforce Development Services and Funds Save Jobs: In perhaps no other industry is the fit between jobs and workers so consciously considered and maintained, and the knowledge and skill of workers so frequently updated, as is the case in the building trades.

The City is in the midst of a building boom, as new skyscrapers transform our familiar skyline and reach from the Hudson to the East River. Construction Skills assures the unionized building trades that where there are construction jobs to be done, there will be New York residents as diverse as the City's population to do them safely and professionally. Construction Skills graduates who enter the unionized building trades will continue to have access to classes at their unions that upgrade their skills, keep their certifications current, and meet any new requirements set by the city, the state, the union or the industry. Because the building trades are based on longstanding labor-management partnerships, the
apprenticeship training programs that CSkills graduates enter will reflect the industry experience of both employers and experienced senior union instructors. This ensures a tight fit not only between the needs of the construction industry and the training provided to workers, but also between the jobs that need workers and the number of apprentices taken in by the unions, including the number of CSkills graduates.

**CWE Workforce Development Services and Funds Help Workers Acquire and Update Computer and Technological Skills:** All of CSkills participants have access to CWE’s free computer classes, offered at the Maiden Lane training site where the classroom portion of CSkills classes are held. CSkills participants use computer-generated blueprints in math and hands-on classes. As they enter the building trades, they will work with computers equipped with software related to construction and to the specific work of their trade. Some apprentices may choose to take classes in CAD (Computer Assisted Design) and all of them will learn to read computer generated blueprints to understand the work they do on job sites and how to coordinate the specs for the work of their trade with those of other trades working on the same site. CSkills participants who enter the trades will have access to computers and related technological training throughout their careers at their trades’ training facilities.

**CWE Workforce Development Services and Funds Transform the Life Chances of Individuals and Benefits Families and Communities:** In focus groups, a number of the CSkills participants described the opportunity that CSkills provides as “life-changing.” The unionized building trades that they enter on completion of the program provide more job security, higher wages, better benefits and perhaps more job satisfaction than most jobs available today, including many of those that require a college degree. In some of the building trades, members who complete their apprenticeship earn an Associates degree. CSkills participants enter the building trades as paid apprentices and receive full-time wages and benefits as they learn. Regular wage increases are specified in their union contract, so that wages grow along with skills. The benefits and wages offered to New York City building trade workers not only benefit them and their families, they also raise the bar for other workers and show what is possible when labor and management agree on the value of advanced skills and training. As BCTC President LaBarbara says of CSkills participants in Sandy Build It Back: “Because of this initiative between the City of New York and the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, dozens of residents in Sandy-impacted areas are now on a pathway to middle class careers in the unionized construction industry, which offers training and education, pays good wages with health benefits and retirement security and a safe work environment. The Sandy Build It Back program is not only rebuilding homes, it is rebuilding communities.”

**CWE Workforce Development Services and Funds Enable Movement Up Sector Specific Career Ladders:** From CSkills, participants enter apprenticeship, where they receive regular wage increases and benefits as they move through the years to complete their apprenticeship and become journeypersons. Journeypersons enjoy regular wage increases over time and as they develop more specialization and skill. Journeypersons can become instructors in the trades and move up to higher positions on the job or within the union. They can also become
business agents or open their own companies. Their skills can be continually broadened and developed, so that they can direct their careers as they choose.

**CWE’s Model Differs From Standard Adult Education Practice:** Both CSkills and building trade apprentice and journeyperson training use a combination of hands-on, on-the-job, shop and classroom learning. The practice of learning with and from others in groups is also typical of this training and mimics adult learning in workplaces and other settings, such as team sports. Learning by demonstrating, doing and practicing a task, followed by critical discussion about the work with others, resonates with multiple learning styles. What really makes the impact of the pedagogy in the trades stand out among the CSkills participants quoted in this report is how aware they become of their own learning. To quote just one CSkills participant: “The hands-on training was good for muscle memory, for your brain to see what you were doing with the measuring tape. So compared to going back to school with all classroom work . . . . getting it into physical form was good for my brain.” Another agreed: “As far as learning, the hands-on aspect of it is way different from the classroom, ‘cause you’re able to picture it now, instead of just imagining it in your head.”

**CWE’s Programs Give Workers the Opportunity to Enter Jobs with Good Wages and Promising Futures:** There are few if any jobs with the entry level wages of the building trades and the regular pay increases built into work in these occupations. Unionized building trades workers enjoy regular increases negotiated by their union contracts as they move through apprenticeship, and as they acquire specialties as journeypersons. Just within the construction industry alone, the union differential in wages amounts to $11 more per hour on average. Union workers also enjoy health benefits, pension plans, free access to the courses they need to add to their skills and certifications, and, in some cases, significant college credit for their apprenticeship. As workers acquire specializations in their trade, they can enter a range of positions in the union or the industry.

**CWE Programs Enable a More Effective Mix of Employment Preparation Options:** CSkills offers the cultural introduction, academic preparation, and mentoring that supports success in the trades to aspiring building trades workers. CSkills and its building trades instructors and mentors offer an effective surrogate for family in the trades, introducing the cultural, academic and behavioral expectations of construction unions, jobs, and training programs. Using a simulated combination of hands-on and classroom learning, CSkills prepares participants for successful apprenticeship and lifelong careers in the building trades.

**CWE Providers Have Honed Best Practices Across a Range of Industries, Populations and Communities.** CSSkills links NYC CTE Schools, CWE’s community partners, and it’s building trades partners to bring the best practices of on-the-job and classroom learning to individuals seeking entry into the building trades. Instructors are drawn from the trades and use the same methodologies that participants will encounter in building trade apprenticeships. CSSkills takes participants into communities that need their skills, offering an opportunity to learn while providing a benefit to others.
OUTCOMES COMMON TO THE BUILDING TRADES

CWE Enables Entry into the Building Trades: Construction Skills was created by the Building and Construction Trades Council to address training and employment issues within the industry and to open the doors to career opportunities within the building and construction trades to diverse New Yorkers. As described in this report, CWE serves as the training provider for the CSkills programs, overseeing recruitment, screening and assessment of individuals hoping to enter CSkills, and hiring staff and instructors for CSkills classes and activities. CWE staff work with Executive Vice President Nicole Bertran to offer information sessions at CTE high schools in New York City and the Workforce 1 system, and assist interested individuals with entry into Construction Skills. Those selected for the program participate in CSkills hands-on community projects and classroom learning related to the trades. While doing so, they practice the skills and habits essential to keeping jobs and advancing in the industry.

CWE Helps Maintain Employment as Certifications and License Requirements Change: CWE funding has helped support the building trades classes necessary for apprentices and journeypersons to keep their certifications current and to acquire new skills and credentials that are either required for working on job sites and/or increase opportunities for workers within the trades.

CWE Facilitates Diversity in the Trades: One of the primary goals of CSkills is to ensure that graduates of New York City CTE high schools are introduced to the CSkills opportunity and encouraged to participate if they qualify. The primary purpose of CSkills is to open up the opportunities that jobs in the building trades offer to all New Yorkers.

CWE Workforce Development Programs and Services Help to Provide a System of Support for Lifelong Career Training: Together with the lifelong access to training in the trades that entering a building trade union provides, CWE computer, English language and other classes are available to building trades workers. As well, each union provides a career ladder of specialty training in its particular trade, and offers required safety and upgrade training and certifications essential to work on construction sites.

Conclusion

For job seekers concerned about how to earn a living in one of the most expensive cities in the world, for high school graduates from working families for whom the debt burden of a college degree feels unbearable, for individuals who want the work they do every day to have visible meaning, entering the building trades can feel like a dream come true. In the unionized building trades of New York City, you earn a living wage that increases as your skills do. And when people ask you what you do for a living, you can point to the city's skyscrapers, its bridges and its iconic neighborhood landmarks and say, “I helped build that.”

Construction Skills graduate Ellen Brienza, currently a fifth year apprentice at Local 3 of the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers), was recently interviewed
as part of a CNN feature focused on “millenials” looking for blue collar jobs. Describing her experience as a building trade apprentice, Brienza says proudly: “I have a skill. You can’t take that away from me. Nobody will ever take that away from me. I have friends in college starting their fifth year of school. They are four years behind me. I already started my life. I already have a career. I didn’t have a lot of money growing up, so knowing I can have a stable job for the rest of my life at really good wages, it’s just awesome. I love it!”

Brienza’s CNN interview can be seen at www.constructionskills.org
THE EDWARD J. MALLOY INITIATIVE FOR CONSTRUCTION SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Enrollees (1)</th>
<th>Number of Completers</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Completers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction Skills Youth Program</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Skills Adult Program</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>237</strong></td>
<td><strong>208</strong></td>
<td><strong>88%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE EDWARD J. MALLOY INITIATIVE FOR CONSTRUCTION SKILLS
Percentage (%) of Completers
July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016

(1) New York City Residents

**Placed in union apprenticeship programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Graduates</th>
<th>Apprentice Placements</th>
<th>Percentage of Apprentice Placements</th>
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<td>83</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Skills Adult Program</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Outcomes**

Table below represents unique New York City Residents who have completed their program of study and achieved the goals for the period of 7/1/2015 to 6/30/2016. There will be additional outcomes captured in the near future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Apprentice Placements Pending</th>
<th>Other Employment</th>
<th>Enrolled College</th>
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<tr>
<td>Construction Skills Adult Program</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workers United Education Program
Workers United Education Program

“The union’s culture was always about education, education, education – because we thought that the more people understood, the better union members they would be, and the better workers they would be, and that continues today.” Edgar Romney, Secretary-Treasurer, Workers United

“The Workers United Education Program still follows the garment workers’ union’s commitment to social unionism by providing free educational opportunities for union members and, today, for community members as well. There’s such a need and there are very few places that people who don’t have much money can go to access these services. We recruit students in a variety of ways, but we often get students through word of mouth. Current students tell their co-workers, friends and families about us.

We also get calls from people who have gone to the Department of Labor because they are unemployed and are trying to gain more skills. Our computer classes include many community members who don’t need English language, but need more experience with technology to get a job, so the Department of Labor refers them to us. Our program reflects New York City in that our participants come from all over the world.” Sherry Kane, Director, Workers United Education Program

The Workers United Education Program (WUEP) grew out of the respected education programs developed by the legendary International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers’ Union (ACTWU), both founded in the early 20th Century to fight for better wages and conditions for workers in garment factories.

One of the most pressing needs, then as now, for immigrant workers was to learn English, so that they would be able take full advantage of the opportunities available to them in the United States. The ILGWU, which represented workers in the women’s clothing industry, began offering classes in English, labor history and the performing arts in 1915. These classes addressed the needs of immigrant workers for literacy, for learning English, and for learning about the history of the labor movement. They also addressed the challenge spoken by Rose Schneiderman, a striking textile worker in Lawrence, Massachusetts, who famously said: “The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too!” Her words expressed the desires of workers for not only life’s material necessities, but also for art, and for ways to express the creative visions and thoughts of working people.

In fact, throughout its history, the ILGWU never limited itself to "bread and butter" issues only. Rather, it always provided members with opportunities for experiencing and developing the arts as well as for accessing education, health care, housing, and recreation. Local unions of the ILGWU established education departments in the early years of the 20th century, offering a variety of classes to members in English language instruction as well as the visual and performing arts. The Education Department of the International Union also offered lectures and programs, and partnered with high schools and colleges to offer classes and training to members locally and nationally.
The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, later the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers’ Union (ACTWU), which represented workers in the men’s clothing industry, also focused on more than just wages and working conditions. Beginning in the 1920s, the Amalgamated provided educational opportunities for its members, as well as recreational facilities and services such as insurance, a bank offering loans to working people, low-cost housing cooperatives, and medical clinics. Today, the Amalgamated Life Insurance Company and the Amalgamated Bank – the largest union majority-owned bank in the country – remain committed to providing services to working people.

The garment workers’ unions, perhaps more than any others, understood the essence of Schneiderman’s cry: “Hearts starve as well as bodies—give us bread but give us roses!”

Edgar Romney, Secretary-Treasurer of Workers United, the successor union of the merged ILGWU and ACTWU, is a long-time staff member and embodies the union’s abiding commitment to the rights of garment workers to develop as union members, as workers, and as active participants in the ongoing, creative life of New York City. Romney recently celebrated half a century of involvement with the New York City’s garment workers, starting as a member of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) in 1966. Although his tenure with the union coincides with significant changes in the garment industry and in the workforce globally, Romney affirms that for workers, the need for education has remained constant, and is now more important than ever. This is particularly true, he tells me, for the immigrant workers that have consistently been the union’s membership base:

“In 1966, Local 23-25, the largest local union of garment workers in New York City, represented 30,000 workers altogether; approximately 25,000 were Chinese-Americans. Many of them were recent immigrants to the country and so the concern was if those workers were going to be here and be part of American society and part of the union, we felt strongly that it was important for them to learn how to speak English. So we had a massive number of classes to teach English—and also classes to prepare members for citizenship. These classes served not only our Chinese-speaking members, but our Spanish-speaking members as well.”

Romney notes that many of the Chinese-speaking members who came into the union in the 1960s already had sewing skills and had worked in the industry in China or Hong Kong. He says the training necessary for them involved upgrading their existing skills. Many of these workers were employed in small shops (factories), with an average workforce of 45-50 workers, in Manhattan’s Chinatown.

“In the local union that I was primarily associated with, 23-25, there were about 500 shops in lower Manhattan – some as small as 5 or 6 workers and some as large as 150-175 workers. The nature and seasonality of the industry caused that number to fluctuate.”

In addition to contracting shops in Chinatown, there were many shops in the Garment District, located between 34th and 40th Streets in the area bounded by 9th Avenue to the west and Broadway to the east. These most often employed sample makers working with designers to create clothing that was sent out to contracting shops to be mass produced.
The owners of these small factories formed Employer Associations based on where they fit into the garment industry. There were Associations for factory owners in the coat industry, the blouse industry, children’s wear, etc. – representing both the manufacturers (firms that employed the sample makers) and the contractors (factories that mass produced the garments).

Romney points out that within the garment industry, it was relatively easy to open up a factory, and to move it when rents and costs rose in New York City. Initially, many shops went to Pennsylvania where costs were lower, and that state became a major location for the garment industry, along with parts of the South, where piece goods were made and shipped to Pennsylvania. With the move of many garment factories overseas, a trend that began in the 1980s and continues today, the garment unions lost their members and began to look at organizing in other industries. As a result, laundry and distribution center workers now make up the largest contingent of Workers United members in the United States and Canada.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, resulted of the demise of many downtown factories and the disruption of overseas shipping in an industry where many contractors rely on day-to-day cash flow, exacerbating the loss of domestic manufacturing jobs to globalization. According to Romney:

“During 9/11, Local 23-25 lost about 3-4,000 members…Factories were not able to open and contractors were unable to get their garments in and out, which helped accelerate the industry’s move overseas…Many people don’t realize this, but in the garment industry, apparel is a perishable item. If I send an order to your shop on Monday, I’ve got to get it back by Friday, so I can have it in the stores the following Monday. And if I can’t do that, it’s like putting ice cream outside of the refrigerator! Many of the manufacturers felt they could no longer rely on New York City anymore. This was not the fault of the workers; it was not the fault of the community; it wasn’t anybody’s fault, but apparel manufacturers felt: ‘I just can’t get my work in and out of there anymore.’ And the work never came back.”

“People ask me, what happened to those workers? There were, at that time, 25-30,000 in Local 23-25. What happened to them? Many of them went into other industries – they went into hospitals, into nursing homes, and into restaurants. They went to work in hotels; they just dispersed. Very, very few are left in the garment industry because there just aren’t that many jobs left.”

During these massive changes, program support from CWE sustained the union’s education program. As a result, many former Workers United members and others in the union’s CWE classes have been able to get new jobs following 9/11 and up to today:

“CWE provided the opportunity for free ESL and training in other industries. We had a lot of people that came through those training classes. People took computer classes at that time, developed their skills, and some became office workers; once they became more proficient in computer skills, they were able to get jobs. Hundreds of our members were trained. As a result of what happened, people had the time to come to classes then. Before they would come maybe once a week, but now they were coming three or four times a week until they were able to get new positions. If it wasn’t for CWE, I don’t know what would have happened to all of those workers.”
In FY2015-16, the program offered 15 classes at two locations – in Lower Manhattan and in Manhattan’s Chinatown. It offered English language classes at 4 levels of proficiency, an English conversation class, and two levels of computer instruction – basic and more extensive practice in Microsoft Office programs.

Sherry Kane, Workers United Education Program Director

“Anyone who comes here, whether it’s for English or computer classes, is doing it to keep their current job, to get a job if they are unemployed, or to get a better job than the one they currently have.”

Sherry Kane is a longtime union activist, who worked for the garment union for 14 years, and taught adult education all over the world, before becoming the Director of the Workers United Education Program. The classes serve union and community members and are funded by CWE. About a third of the workers enrolled are union members from Workers United, DC1707, SEIU 32BJ, 1199 SEIU, Laborers, UFCW, Teamsters, IATSE, SSEU, UNITE HERE, the Amalgamated Transit Workers Union, among others.

The rest of the workers in the classes are immigrant New Yorkers seeking ESL and/or basic computer skills, most of whom are working or want to look for work when their skills improve. Eighty percent of the workers who attend the classes learned about them from current or former students. Kane tells me, “We tend to know our students relatively well because they may be here for several years. It takes time to learn a language well enough to feel comfortable in it.”

Asked why workers come to WUEP classes, Kane responds: “Learning English gives our students more flexibility in a number of ways. It allows them to meet the broader educational goal of getting comfortable in a language in which they will be living and working. It also gives them more advantages if they are more fluent – I notice the lower level students might have to drop out or change the time they take their classes because their shifts change. They have much less control over their jobs. The higher level English speakers tend to have more flexibility. Students really feel like the classes help them in their jobs. People come to me and say, ‘I have been told that if my English does not get better, I will not be able to keep my job.’ or ‘I don’t like my job, but the only way I can get a better job is to learn English.’ More fluency gives them the ability to move around more easily in our society.”

“We also offer a place that’s very friendly and welcoming. I think that’s very important. People come back year after year and they refer their friends to us. We try to offer a place where people can come and feel comfortable and safe.”

Asked whether she feels the Workers United Education Program classes are more welcoming than classes in other settings, Kane responds that the program maintains the social unionism feel of the old days – providing educational instruction, a welcoming space, and cultural activities for the students. The program’s instructors have been teaching adults for decades, and the two full-time teachers both worked for garment union education programs in the past. Because the current
funding comes from CWE, she reaches out widely to recruit for the program and shares referrals with a range of organizations in the city. The program arranges NYC-based cultural activities for the students and encourages civic participation. Staff members have regular contact with students, calling them when they miss class and students often call the office when they cannot attend class. The roster of seasoned teachers who have worked many years with adult workers also contributes to a high comfort level for those who come to the classes.

The number of classes offered each year depends on CWE’s budget allocation. In 2015-16, the Workers United Education Program offered 15 classes, in both the fall and the spring. Eight of the Workers United Education Program’s ESL classes were taught by long-time teachers Jackie Bain and Chuck Lee. Four ESL classes were offered in Manhattan’s Chinatown and an English conversation class and computer classes were added at the request of many students. Eight classes ran from mid-August to the end of June and an additional seven went from October to May. Weekday English classes met twice a week in the evenings and weekend classes met during the day on Saturdays.

Many students stay all day on Saturday, attending the English classes in the mornings and the computer or conversation class in the afternoon. Because few organizations offer basic computer classes, the year-long beginner class is necessary and much appreciated.

The beginning level computer class provides a foundation for students to get to know the technology. The intermediate course gives students more experience in Word, helping them learn to write letters, create flyers, and design resumes. Because it is a year-long course, the intermediate class also introduces students to other Microsoft Office programs, such as Excel and PowerPoint. Students with more experience, who are interested in programs such as Quickbooks or PhotoShop are referred to other programs.

In the high level ESL class, students write essays that their teacher, Jackie Bain, submits to the Gallatin School at New York University for possible publication in a journal that includes writing from ESL programs around the city. Several students have had their work published over the past 6 years in the school’s journal, The Literacy Review. (See Appendix A for a sample of a published piece from Bain’s class).

The Workers United Education Program is currently coordinating with the New York New Jersey Regional Joint Board of Workers United on a new initiative. The Joint Board is organizing some of the 30,000 nail salon workers in New York City to address the dangerous and illegal conditions they face in the industry. Many of these workers have expressed interest in English language classes that will help them communicate more easily with their clients and their bosses. The Workers United Education Program will provide English classes for these workers that include general communication skills as well as information on health and safety and wage theft. The program will also explore training options to prepare workers for the certification required in their industry.
Assessment and Placement

In order to place workers in appropriate ESL classes, a short oral test and written grammar test are used. A more comprehensive assessment that includes skills that students regularly use, like reading a paycheck, a driver’s license, and a supermarket flyer, or getting information from websites, is used as a pre- and post-test to provide one indication of students’ progress. Teacher feedback on students’ listening, speaking, reading and writing skills is another indication of how well students do over the year.

During the 2015-16 school year, the program served about 400 students. Asked about retention, Kane says, “We have very high numbers during the fall semester and on Saturdays. On a recent Saturday, for example, students in the beginning level class had to bring in extra chairs because there were so many people in the room. The teacher is animated and he has a way of working with a large group by dividing them into small groups that really helps with a big class. We have very good numbers until the end of December. There’s a drop off in the winter when it’s cold and dark, but students usually come back in the spring. Even if students have to stop coming because of family obligations or work, they often return the following year or perhaps a couple of years later. If they leave, it’s usually not because they don’t like the program, they just have other commitments.”

Students with limited English who want to join the program mid-year, those who need very advanced English and College preparation classes, or those looking for High School Equivalency or Citizenship preparation classes, are referred to other programs. And the public libraries and community organizations with limited space refer students to the Workers United Education Program when they fill up.

“We have a good relationship with other programs and we work together to try and help people get the services they need. Some of our students have paid for ESL classes, but they come here because they can’t continue paying. Also, our classes run a full school-year and learning a language takes time. Students can take as long as they need to feel comfortable in the language.”

Organizing and Training Nail Salon Workers

“By joining with organizations fighting for the rights of nail salon workers, our union has become an important resource for nail salon workers who are organizing to change their conditions. Their lives mirror the story of so many workers in our region. Over the last century, our union has helped workers organize to change working conditions for thousands of workers. We are proud to be the union partner in this critical movement.” Julie Kelly, Manager, New York New Jersey Regional Joint Board, Workers United

The abysmal conditions and extreme exploitation of nail salon workers were documented in a series of articles in the New York Times in May of 2015. The lead article by Sarah Maslin Nir was based on interviews conducted in four languages with over 150 of the thousands of workers in New York City nail salons, as well as with industry employers. Much of the description below comes from her article “The Price of Nice Nails,” New York Times, May 7, 2015.
Nir reported that the vast majority of workers in the nail industry were paid below minimum wage. Worse, a common practice was to not pay them at all for many of their first weeks, under the guise of “training.” Workers were also routinely humiliated, punished, and even physically abused by salon owners. Lawsuits filed against salon owners in the New York City are based on a long list of abuses; in one of these cases, for example, workers were paid $1.50 per hour during weeks they worked as much as 66 hours. In another, the salon charged workers even for drinking water, while paying them nothing on slow days. A 2014 investigation by the New York State Department of Labor found 116 violations in 29 salons.

Given their low wages, many nail salon workers go home to crowded rooms shared with other low wage immigrant workers. A profile in one of articles in the Times series describes the lives of one worker:

“Ms. Ren worked at Bee Nails, a chandelier-spangled salon in Hicksville, where leather pedicure chairs are equipped with iPads on articulated arms so patrons can scroll the screens without smudging their manicures. They rarely spoke more than a few words to Ms. Ren who, like most manicurists, wore a fake name chosen by her supervisor on a tag pinned to her chest. She...worked in silence, sloughing off calluses from customers’ feet or clipping dead skin from around their fingernail beds. At night, she returned to sleep jammed in a one-bedroom apartment in Flushing with her cousin, her father, and three strangers. Beds crowded the living room, each cordoned off by shower curtains hung from the ceiling.”

Almost all of the nail salon workers speak little English, and many are in the country illegally, increasing their vulnerability. Most are Asian, though there are also many Spanish speakers from Central America. For mothers in this industry, life is even harder, as the Times article reports:

“An underground economy has sprung up in Flushing and other city neighborhoods where salon workers live. On weekdays, women walk from door to door, taking nail salon workers’ children to school for a fee. Many manicurists pay caregivers as much as half their wages to take their babies six days a week, 24 hours a day.”

The New York New Jersey Regional Joint Board of Workers United, a local that represents workers in the retail and service sectors, men’s apparel production, and light manufacturing, is currently collaborating with community groups and nail salon workers to change the conditions in the industry. Manager Julie Kelly and Organizing Director Luis Gomez were invited to join a coalition of groups working on the issue that includes NYCOSH (New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health) and ADDIHKARR (a Queens-based community organization that works with the Nepalese community). ADDIHKARR was initially working with domestic workers, but found there was an overlap with nail salon workers because many of the same individuals either move between these two industries or have family members working in both.

Kelly, Gomez, and the union’s organizers have spoken to more than 1,100 nail salon workers, and describe the industry as including Korean owners and workers (the most numerous group), followed by Chinese and Latinos, and then Nepalese and other groups. A large group of workers comes from indigenous regions of Mexico and Ecuador, and do not speak Spanish. The majority of
workers are immigrant women in their early twenties to late thirties. Gomez points out that there are many single women with children among the workers, yet over 80% of them work more than 10.5 hours a day. For these long hours, they receive an average of $7.41 an hour, under half of the wage that the “Fight for $15” campaign considers a living wage in New York City. In addition, there are workers who have been in the industry for as long as 16 years who have never had a paid day off.

Health and safety issues abound. "There are a lot of unsanitary things happening," Gomez reports.

Gomez tells me the goal for Workers United is to “transform the industry.” To do this, he says that he and others are working to create a base of workers ready to engage in organizing at their workplaces. “That’s what we are building toward. That’s exciting…and also one of the challenges: helping businesses understand how the benefits of better educated workers and how having a better paid and organized workforce and meeting health and safety standards helps them stay in business.”

The New York Healthy Nail Salon Coalition invited Workers United to be its union partner. On Staten Island, the coalition includes the Community Justice Project, which works with the union to offer classes in wage and hour laws as well as in safety and health. In Manhattan and Queens, hundreds of Spanish-speaking nail salon workers have talked to union organizers about their working conditions and their pay.

The union also helps workers apply for a provisional license but they will eventually need a more permanent license, which is time-consuming and costly. The nail specialty license is within the field of cosmetology and students are expected to attend proprietary beauty schools in order to prepare for certification, but not all of these schools do what they promise and many charge prohibitive and exploitative fees.

NYCOSH, one of the New York Healthy Nail Salon Coalition partners, has designed a curriculum to prepare nail salon workers for both the practical and written exam for the nail specialty license, but with thousands of workers expected to apply for certification, more programs are needed. CWE has extensive experience in preparing workers to pass certification and licensing exams in the fields of health care and the building trades, for example, and may be able to step in to fill this need.

Both Gomez and Kelly stress that the workers need and ask for occupational English classes in their communities, in addition to preparation for licensing. After meeting with some of the nail salon workers, WUEP Director Sherry Kane designed an ESL curriculum based on what workers said they needed on the job and in their daily lives. This curriculum is being tested and modified in the classroom by CWE teacher Adam Bubrow starting in July 2016.

Kelly concludes:

“This campaign is the best example of coalition work that the union has been part of, and it’s also an opportunity for us to participate in CWE in a bigger way. It reaches a whole segment of the New York population that is not connected to education in any other way... So we want to make sure that people get a whole service, from learning the language, to learning the trade, to being able to go to their kid’s school and have a conversation about what’s happening there and in their communities.”
Workers United Education Program Classes

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Chuck Lee, Full-Time WUEP/CWE ESL Teacher

Mr. Lee began teaching ESL in the 1970s in Chinatown, shortly after earning his degree in architecture. During the next decade, Lee was hired by the ILGWU to teach ESL in Chinatown two nights a week, and later when it added a Saturday class. At the time, there was a recession affecting construction, which made it nearly impossible for Lee to get full-time work as an architect. Lee eventually became one of the first full-time instructors at CWE.

Asked what has kept him in this work for over 40 years, Lee responds: “It’s fun! I enjoy it. I have an opportunity to use my artwork to illustrate and develop lessons. Since I was a graphic designer, I can develop lessons with pictures and so on. Joking with the people in the class puts me in a relaxed situation, as opposed to sitting alone at a drafting board to deal with an architectural problem.”

The workers in Lee’s classes include young adults as well as grandparents, many of them friends of friends who have been in the program. Some are former garment workers who went into other fields such as home health care. To help spread the word about CWE’s free classes, Lee puts up flyers around the city and at public libraries.

I ask Lee what it takes for someone in his beginning class to reach the point where they are comfortable with speaking English. He replies: “I would just say the urge to come to class and to do the work. I have a student I taught in Level 1 two years ago and she’s in my Level 3 now; she’s so into it that she asked me about the GED class...So she is advancing herself through her motivation and drive. I have another student who goes to work around 2 or 3 in the morning and gets off around 2 in the afternoon, and he waits around to come here at 5:30. I am just amazed at that!”

When Lee tells me that his beginner class is mostly Hispanic while his Saturday class is primarily Asian, I ask whether it is easier for Spanish speakers to learn English than it is for Asian students, whose languages are very different in sound, form, grammar and structure from English. He replies: “It is. I’ll use what little Spanish I have and the Chinese is a little bit harder. For example, I’m working with prepositions tonight, but I have to explain with Chinese speakers what a preposition is, because Chinese doesn’t have prepositions.”

Lee tells me that there are always different levels of English within any of the classes, and that he will use the better speakers to act as group facilitators when the class works on group assignments. He encourages the groups to speak among themselves in their native language when necessary: “Students help students; that’s one of my formulas or rules regarding working groups.”

For Lee, the hardest thing is to get participants speaking: “I give them exercises, flash cards – one person is supposed to say what the flash card says and the other person is supposed to guess the answer or add the missing word. The students seem to be hesitant, in terms of listening and
answering. That’s what I want them to strive for – to try to learn to do that. Because, as I say, “Outside, you’re going to be speaking.”

As we near the end of the interview, I ask Lee what he would like the New York State Education Department to understand about why funding his classes is a good use of taxpayers’ money. He responds: “It’s not the money, it’s the knowledge that they gain...It’s a matter of teaching them communication, so that they can get along in the outside world.” Lee tells me that although his parents told him he could become a teacher when he was younger, teaching did not appeal to him at the time; but now, he says: “These students are here for a reason. They work, they’re parents, they’re people who are trying to survive in this country with their families...Now, after all the years that I have been here, I have a lot of respect for that.”

**ESL Level 1 Class Observation**

As workers trickle into Lee’s Level 1 ESL class, they immediately begin working together on an assignment. Meanwhile, Lee draws a street scene on the board. There are eight men and twelve women in the class. When all are present, Lee circulates among them, checking their homework individually, reviewing and discussing their work with each student.

In this class, I see how Lee uses his art skills to create scenarios that become the basis of questions he asks the students. For example, because this lesson was on prepositions, he asked about the relative positioning of figures in the street scene he drew, eliciting words like behind, in front of, next to, etc. Lee also walks over to me to show me how he keeps track of issues with the language as students answer questions in English. This practice gives him direction for what to build on in the next class. The class has a relaxed, even joyful feel.

Another aspect of Lee’s fast moving class is his use of different kinds of presentations – at the board, using objects, etc. To review prepositions, he takes a marker in his hand and moves it around, asking them to call out the marker’s changing positions: between, next to, in back of, behind, in front of. Someone asks how “next to” and “near” are different, and Lee acts this out. Lee uses the drawing of a street scene to place a man at the bus stop on the corner, and then asks people to describe these and other locations he points out in the drawing. He adds new prepositions as he goes: “The house is where in relation to the bus stop? **Across** the street.” He continues, placing people **inside** and **outside** the house, etc. Next, he names the streets in the drawing to illustrate the sentence: “He’s at the corner of 22nd Street and 7th Avenue.”

Finally, he stands in front of the class, holding two objects, a wooden box and a plastic container of the sort that might hold a half-dozen markers. As he changes the position of these objects in relation to each other, the students are asked to describe the rapidly moving pieces using prepositions: above, below, behind, next to, etc. When he puts one of the objects above the other, a student calls out “on top of,” – Lee demonstrates by putting the uppermost object on top of a student’s head versus holding it above. It’s like “three-card monte” with grammar goals!
Lee distributes a handout for homework that asks the participants to name things in an apartment. It’s called: Moving Day Handout. He draws his chair close to their desks and asks about Thanksgiving, if they celebrate it and what they ate.

Next, there is a deft lesson involving “in” and “on,” using plastic shapes Lee continually repositions, moving his hands like a magician might. This is followed by a description of the class location: “We are in this room, on the 12th floor of 83 Maiden Lane.” Now he reverts to the use of the two boxes, as above, manipulating them to express the relationships in the following sentences using prepositions: “We are in this room on the 12th floor at 83 Maiden Lane. Maiden Lane is in Manhattan. Manhattan is in New York City. New York City is in New York State. New York State is in the USA.” And he continued, using the motions of a juggler with shapes and small boxes, crafting an unconsciously nimble demonstration of prepositions in relation to objects in space, and New York City in relation to the country. This was followed by asking the class to name the figures in the street scene on the blackboard, using the names of people in the class. The camaraderie created in the class was evident in this exercise, as participants named figures in the street scene after each other, making the class feel like a small, intimate city.

ESL Level 1 Focus Group

Among the 15 people in Lee’s Level 1 class, five are from the Dominican Republic, three are from Mexico, two are from Colombia and two from El Salvador. The remaining three are from Honduras, Ecuador and Guatemala. Six of the participants have children.

Asked about their jobs, five told me they worked in restaurants, two in construction and, two in the garment industry. One of the men paints the boats for the Circle Line, and one is a parking attendant. One woman works as a home attendant and another cleans offices, working for herself.

I asked the participants how important the class was to them and why. Their responses included:

“The classes are very, very important, for the job. I live in the United States. I need understand all the people, my family, whatever. I need more English for my job.”

“It’s important because learning, maybe new job good, best. I help the class homework with my son. Talk about you and me. It’s very, very important for all.”

“This for me is very, very important. I no have money to pay the school, so this is good for me, the free. I need the English for my job. On my job for answer the question, I no know how to.”

“It’s very important, because it improves the quality of your life, and of your work and getting along with people. If you know English, it opens all the doors. If you don’t know English, you are pushed to the side.”
Finally, I ask why funding this class is good for the taxpayers and good for the state of New York?

"I think that the majority of companies here are US companies that use immigrant labor. Having them speak English benefits the company and the customers of the business. Then I will get a job and pay taxes and that will benefit the government. Also, most of the immigrants that come pay taxes themselves."

"I am from the Dominican Republic. I’ve been here 3 years. One friend send me to these classes. I started coming maybe 3 months ago. I pay my taxes every week. I am happy because I am coming to class. It’s good for the city, because we live in one country speaking English. In my work, people say you live in the United States, you need to study English."

Lee mentioned a participant who worked all night and stayed up the few hours between the end of his shift as a parking attendant and the beginning of class. Here he tells how important the class is to him:

“My work starts at 5 AM and I finish at 2:30 PM. I work on 43rd St, between 6 and 7 Avenue. I park 1,200 cars a night. Then I leave 125 St and wait for the class start. [After class, I go home] and then I sleep maybe after 10 PM. I start again: 4 or 3:30 AM to wake up. When you go for the working, the people say, ‘Oh, you speak English?’ You say, ‘Maybe, a little.’ I come to class because I need English, because maybe next year, I change the work because my family now is more big. I want my job the best . . . . First now, I study English, because next year, change the work.”

ESL Level 3 Class Observation

Lee’s ESL Level 3 class includes 15 people on the night of my observation, six men and 9 women. The class begins with a homework review. Lee writes the topics for tonight on the board: Present Perfect Tense (interested in the result of an action) and Present Perfect Continuous Tense (interested in the action, continuous or not).

One worker says she forgot her glasses. Lee responds by bringing over an open box of glasses he has accumulated and inviting her to try them and use one that helps her see the board. As students trickle in, Lee focuses on reviewing the assigned homework. Next, Lee begins distributing sticks of gum, and small plastic dishes of various candies, to everyone in the class. He asks who likes bubble gum and gives some to those who do. Then he offers a bag of Japanese green pea snacks. The snacks offer a context for a rapid-fire set of questions and answers that requires participants to use different forms of verb tenses. Lee asks: “Why am I giving you gum and candy? Because I am thinking about the lesson!” He then plays with the tenses of the verbs eating and chewing, based on what people in the room are doing with their snacks:

“Who has gum? Who is chewing gum? Has anyone with bubble gum blown a bubble? Has Debby eaten her M and Ms?” He uses examples and actions from the class to answer questions about the tenses and when to use them, ending with: “I have been demonstrating this lesson.” He adds: “We
started the class at 5:40. Some more people *have come* into the class since 5:40” – he then names who came in and in what order and says: “So students *have been coming* into this class since 5:40.” He circles back to the original definitions of the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses and works on more examples with the class. At the end of class, we all admire a *New York Times* photo of a gown that a sample maker in the class worked on at her job.

**ESL Level 3 Focus Group**

Ten of the fifteen participants have children. Five work in the garment industry. Others work in a food company, a family day care center, and an ice cream store. One is a home health aide. The others are garment workers who are now laid off. Four participants come from China; another four from Ecuador. Two are from Mexico. The others are from Nicaragua and Columbia.

**Asked how they found out about the class and why they decided to come, sample responses included:**

“I learned about this class from my daughter, who found a flyer. I’m in this class because I don’t speak very well English, and I need for my job, cause I sometime have to answer the phone but now it’s a little bit hard. I need a promotion in my job. But first I need learn English.” (Ice cream store worker).

“I need this class for a better job. I was in FIT. My friend took a pattern making class, and she told me about this class. I am a sample maker.” (I asked this worker how it felt to see the dress she worked on in the *NY Times.*) “So happy!” she replied, adding when asked if she liked her job: “Yes! I love it. I love it.”

“My friends told me here. OK. My job need English, every job. I am engineer. I studied for that in my country.”

“I come here; I want to learn more English. I want to improve my job. I hope future I can get a better job. I want to become a pattern maker, so need more English. And I want to try to learn more and improve (so) I can speak and understand the people when they talk.”

**Please talk about what you are learning and the way you are learning it. Is it different from school in your country?**

“I like the English, the verbs, the words, how Mr. Lee talks about it. He talks what’s important, more practical for the student. Every day is new, new lesson, different sentence.”

“Mr. Lee, he teach very good. When I don’t understand, he can teach many ways to teach me, more time, more ideas...In the morning I work; sometimes I feel very tired, I’m sleepy. In this class, he make it interesting, and I wake up. I’m thankful for him teacher, really!”

“I like this class. Because before I learn English another school, night school. I feel different – example, like the present perfect tense. Before, I learned, but I cannot understand. Now, with Mr. Lee, I always
said, ‘I got it!’ He explain, lot, lot, he’s very patient. He’s a smart teacher. When student ask the question, he can catch first—and then he can explain very good, very well.”

“I feel happy in this school, because the teacher, if I don’t understand, he try to make a good sentence, a different sentence, to explain to me, to make me understand. That’s why I come to this school. Before, I don’t know English, so now I can talk to my boss at my work. Mr. Lee try to figure out how to teach the student.”

**Why is this class a good use of tax dollars—what would you tell taxpayers about why it is a good use of their tax money? How do the taxpayers of New York benefit from your being in this class?**

“I think it’s good when the state return the tax dollars in education, because workers need to be educated. I fix luggage at my job. I don’t have problem in my job, but I need to look better job. For to look better job, I need to speak English better.”

“My boss, he’s Jewish. He doesn’t speak any Spanish. So that’s the reason to come to this school; I need to talk with him about the job. He told me before, many years ago, that I need to go to school. So now I can talk with him, that’s good. He say to keep going to school.”

**Jackie Bain, Full-Time WUEP/CWE ESL Teacher**

Like Lee, Jackie Bain has worked for CWE for decades. During this fiscal year, she taught Levels 2 and 4 at CWE’s Maiden Lane site. She estimates that about a quarter of the workers in her classes are union members. Bain has a treasure trove of creative materials for her ESL classes, and believes in stressing writing. She regularly submits writing done by those in her classes for publication in the Gallatin School of New York University’s Literacy Review.\(^5\) The Literacy Review publishes essays by immigrant ESL students and literacy learners who attend classes at adult education programs all over the city. About 800 essays are submitted and only 69 are published in each issue. Bain has had submissions by her students in every issue since she began submitting them six years ago.

Bain holds a BS in Education and a BA in Theatre Arts, and has taught ESL in Japan and Germany, as well as acting and directing at CW Post College. After working for the New York State Council on the Arts, she became a CWE teacher in 1990 and has worked for the garment workers’ union education programs since that time. Asked what has kept her in teaching all these years, Bain replies: “Because this is the most exciting teaching that I have experienced. I’ve been in many countries, taught many levels – but this, really – it’s the motivation; the students are very excited to learn...No two classes are the same. What the students bring to the class is probably more than what

\(^5\) NYU’s Gallatin School offers both graduate and undergraduate education for students who work in consultation with faculty on individualized programs of study.
I do! Of course, I have all the lessons planned and ready, but what they bring to the lesson changes and enhances it.”

Bain describes her curriculum as based on what students need to learn, and including a lot of writing: “How do I come up with it? Instinctively! I’m teaching all the time, and so you know what students need and how they will learn it, what approaches you need to use. I pull from every aspect of life.” Bain illustrates her teaching with the example of having individuals write for 10 or 15 minutes, share their stories in small groups of four and then with the class. The class usually ends with conversation about issues that generate strong feelings and debate. Bain’s small group work mixes workers from different parts of the world who speak different languages. Topics are chosen “from their stories, from the conversations, from answers to questions like: ‘What happened at your job this week?” Bain’s classes go on field trips to museums and everyone gets a library card. They visit the library together, especially the mid-Manhattan branch, which has ESL books.

Asked about the differences between her Level 2 and 4 classes, Bain responds: “The main thing that is different is their facility with English. Many in Level 2 still plan to go back to their country to live; by the time they are in Level 4, that has passed! They have found opportunities here, their families don’t want to go back. . . . And now, because of more education, they are more ambitious. They are looking for better jobs.” Both classes are multicultural and multilingual, there are men and women from many countries and continents and most have jobs.

Bain uses News for You, a weekly newsletter for oral reading and vocabulary. Participants select the stories they want to read, and do the crossword puzzle at the back. Bain provides materials that the workers in her class can take home and do on their own when they have time. To keep participants interested and motivated, Bain uses a wide variety of materials and practices that develop the skills of reading and writing in English. She works with poetry and dictation to develop listening skills, and has participants learn to self-correct their work. She requires “total immersion,” everything is done in English:

“The main reason for coming to English classes, I think, is opportunity – either for a better job or opportunity to help their children. That is why they come to this country...We do mock interviews for jobs; I taught job readiness for one semester and have a relative who fills me in on current questions he uses for job interviews. We did resumes, went to job interviews, job fairs. And I think our multicultural classes teach you not only English, but to understand other people. You can’t teach that in a book!”

ESL Level 2 Class Observation

In this class, participants review vocabulary associated with a hospital and talk about what the words mean. For example, when Bain asks about the word Admissions, a participant says, “When you enter.” Next, they discuss the new month, December, and name the four big events in the month: Christmas, New Year, Hannukah and Kwanza. Next, they move into dictation exercises, also centered around the December holidays. After their dictation, several read and discuss what they wrote. One person asks for the difference between “five” and “fifth.” Bain explains, and moves the class onto punctuation, described as “rules for writing, such as quotation marks, which let you know someone
is speaking.” Bain writes sentences without punctuation on the board and workers in the class call out what punctuation is needed and where. Then, the class works on a writing assignment, modeled on a story about Ramón, a man from Mexico, who works in a restaurant and goes to community college to study English. The writing prompt asks: “Is your day like Ramón’s? Do you work hard, too?”

**ESL Level 2 Focus Group**

According to Bain, twelve countries of origin are represented among her Level 2 participants, mostly Spanish speaking countries in Central America, the Caribbean and South America. Among the ten workers in the class, two have children in the United States and one more has children at home. Two are not currently working.

Asked to talk about their work, participants describe their jobs:

“I’m working here in the construction field, I make shelf storage. But I am a software developer. I need to learn English to work (in software development) here.”

“I’m working in remediation jobs, like asbestos abatement.”

Two other workers are cashiers. Jobs among the rest include: a home attendant; a cabinet maker; a housekeeper; and a babysitter who works at home.

**Why are you here? Why do you want to learn English enough to come out in the cold?**

“It’s important for me for new opportunities. I want a job not in my house. I want to go and get a new job, a good job. That’s why I come.”

“I’m coming because for me, English is very important...for your education and for your life. It’s central, you need it to get a better job. I want to go to college and I think I want to study for computer systems. For that I need English. You know, for *everything* you need English. That’s why I push everyday!”

“I want to go to the college, maybe I want to study for being a safety manager (because you are working in asbestos abatement right now?). Yes. I want to move up; I like my job.”

“I want to learn more English because on my job I have to speak to the customers and sometime I have problem. I feel better now when I come to the class, practice a little more, and I am talking more. I want to change positions also. I will go to take some classes for making cake and cookies. In my dreams, I want to make my own business.”

“I want to be professional nurse or teacher. I’m a home attendant now.”
If this class weren't here, and you had to pay, what would that mean for you? All say they wouldn't be able to learn English then. So I ask, “What would you want to say to the State about why it is good for them to have free English classes?”

“Because if everybody speak in good communication with other people, is more business, more money, more taxes, for everybody.”

“It is very important for all the people come here, you can have more different things you can do outside...you can learn the citizenship so you can have the right to vote and have a better job and do everything in the country.”

“It can help it to be a better state because the people is more educated and it will improve for everybody.”

ESL Level 4 Class Observation

The class begins with a scrambled word search, using words on careers. Jobs are listed alphabetically; Bain goes through the list, asking participants about the jobs listed, which include actor, writers, white collar worker, blue collar worker, etc. At Level 4, these participants are able to define most of the words. This is a warm-up exercise, and moves into describing some of the jobs on the list. The class has a comfortable, conversational tone. News for You articles, such as one on Congress, generate discussion on the two houses of Congress and how many are in each. Workers in this class know the answers right away, and are able to read the story aloud easily. The way they discuss the content suggests they are comfortable having these kinds of discussions in English.

The class has ten women and one man at this point. Most are Latino, though two are Asian and one is from Iran. Five are already citizens. Bain’s class is structured to include reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. In this class, close to the Thanksgiving holiday, conversation revolves around the meaning, history and traditions of the holiday. Bain mines the reading assigned on this topic for vocabulary and grammar. A writing exercise asks: “What are you thankful for this year?”

Next is a dictation exercise, about the upcoming presidential election in 2016. Related vocabulary is discussed, for example, what is a debate? Bain distributes homework, which involves questions about an assigned reading and a crossword puzzle. Bain reminds the class it is National Native American week and refers to a previously assigned reading on the Trail of Tears. Several related pages with pictures are the subject of an exercise on the vocabulary of emotion. Bain also includes in the assignments a language learning diary page, asking them to list words they learned, who they spoke English with, what they read, and what they want to learn next.
ESL Level 4 Focus Group

Twelve workers are in the class, and tell me they come from Mexico City, Iran, Colombia, Dominican Republic (4), Vietnam, Guatemala, Hong Kong (2), and Malaysia. Two who are absent both come from Mexico. Half of the twelve present have children.

Asked what kind of work they do, responses include:

“I work in a grocery.”

“I work in the Mexican newspaper.”

“I working in the Young Adult Institute, I cook and clean. We help people from the DR.”

“I work in the pattern for the clothing.”

Three others say the work as housekeepers and/or babysitters. One participant works for human resources. Four of the workers are not currently employed.

Why did you come here to learn English?

Every participant mentioned work when they answered this question. Sample responses included:

“I am in this class because I want to learn English, regular English—to get a better job.”

“I am here to improve my English because to get better communication with the family and the community, also because I want to work as a school counselor, and I need to know English. Because I was working that in my country.”

“I work for Human Resource. My duty is customer service. I would like to speak English more proficiency to service the customer, but not broken English in the future!”

“I’m here in this class because is very important for me to learn English. First of all, because I live in this country where official language is English. I improve my English I think I can get a better job, high salary. Also, I like to meet and communicate with more people, make new friends. Also, I would love to continue my education in this country, go to college.”
Taxes that you pay when you work help to pay your teacher and the rent for the classroom and the paper, etc. Why is that a good use of the taxes that you pay? Not why is it good for you, why is it good for the state, the city, the country?

“I think it’s good for immigration, especially in New York City. In the beginning, most of us don’t have money for education, for learning English...All of us, we want to live here. All of these classes are really good for the future, and for United States’ future, for all people and for the country.”

“I think this program is good for the immigrant, for the adult. Because the new immigrant who came from their country, maybe they graduate from college, but their English is not very well. So if they can learn it very quickly, get a good job, change her life, it’s good for the people. I think American doesn’t want the immigrant to depend on the government, get the welfare. So I think this program have to continue.”

“The only way that I can improve my life and get better jobs was learn English. And this program helps me and also many people. Not only the people who study, but the teachers, because this program creates jobs and then it helps to all of the city. Also we can understand the laws, we can start a business, if you have a fluent English speaking.”

“I think it is very important to give the money for a program like this, because this is a good service for us. We have people who want to be productive for this country, to give a lot of service to the community. Also, for the people who were born here we can serve them in different way. If they give something to this class, they can see the result in a few years because we have a plan—we may want to go to college, to do a Masters, to open business, to do a lot of things. We can continue with this—without this program, all of this would be gone, all of the thinking, all of the ideas. So thank you so much.”

**WUEP ESL Level 4, Chinatown Site**

One of four teachers at the Workers United Education Program’s site in Manhattan’s Chinatown, Martin Brown began his ESL Level 4 class with *Metro News*, a free publication. Brown asked the participants to talk about the picture on the front page, which encouraged readers to get the flu vaccine with a picture of a suffering flu victim. One says: “I think the flu. She didn’t get the vaccine.” The class takes turns reading; the level of engagement is high. Brown asks if anyone has had the flu and what it was like. Responses include: “You have to lie in bed,” and “It can be dangerous for children.” Brown asks for other words for “vaccine,” and participants call out “shot” and “injection.” Next, the class reads from a Center for Disease Control web page and answer related questions. Problematic words, such as “prevent” and “influenza” are defined. Next, Brown asks questions based on the reading: Who are the high-risk categories? I notice the deep engagement between the workers in the class and the instructor, and the joyful mood that prevails despite the grave topic. There is a mood of accomplishment and pleasure as participants read and understand the article. It is also clear how much Brown himself enjoys the class.
A participant says, "Someone said prevention is better than cure." This led to a discussion of how people can protect themselves from infection. One man noted that the bird flu in China was more serious than the flu in the U.S. Also discussed were ways to prevent sickness; participants suggested exercise, good food, "early to bed, early to get up." This part of the class concluded with making sure everyone knew how to get a free flu shot.

The class moved to an ongoing project, reading *The Grapes of Wrath* in small groups, with participants taking on the roles of the characters in the Steinbeck novel. After a review of what had happened in the previous chapter the class read, I sat in on one group missing their usual participant and was asked to play the role of the grandmother. A high level of emotion and interest was evident in this group reading.

**Martin Brown, Part-Time WUEP/CWE ESL Level 4 Instructor**

Brown has been teaching adults since 1980, when he began teaching English to Afghan speakers in Pakistan. More recently, he has taught in the city's community programs, including New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE). This CWE class, he says, is his first one with Chinese speakers only. He says he is learning the social dynamics among the group, though "as always, I gear the class to what it is they want . . . They are mostly not newcomers either as immigrants or as speakers of the language, so they're not people who need the basics; they're mostly already literate."

When the class first met, Brown asked them what they wanted to do and learn in the class. As a result, reading the free newspaper and reading a story, in this case *The Grapes of Wrath* became ongoing activities. Brown says, "My goal for the class is what they want. They all want English for practical purposes, for work or getting around in their daily lives." Brown checks in with the group each class to see if they are learning from and enjoying the activities, and to hear about topics of interest and questions they have. His main strategy is language immersion in material that the class can discuss and that is meaningful for them.

Asked what issues come up for him as an instructor, Brown says, "Pronunciation and articulation. Their English is better than it sounds sometimes. That is something I have to figure out how to address." He says he assesses participants from the general feedback and responses he gets from the people in the class when he asks how the class is working for them: "I try to be assessing all the time, to just be conscious of what they are understanding...I ask them what they want to do, in order to plan the class, and ask periodically if they like what we are doing, if it is worthwhile for them. I take their word for it when they respond. I ask for general feedback about how the class is working for them."

From seeing the class and listening to Brown talk about his teaching and informal assessments, it is evident he pays close attention to the workers in the class, asking frequently what people want to learn and noticing the particular learning issues that emerge in the class. He addresses these issues with practices, materials, and ways of teaching that help develop the skills participants need and want.
Brown notes that *The Grapes of Wrath* activity draws out more of the participants who don't speak as much: "I take that as a good thing, it's not just the dominant voices...Once they are in groups, they seem to come alive!"

**ESL Level 4 Chinatown Class Focus Group**

Martin Brown's ESL Level 4 class is held in a public school in the evenings. There are 17 people in the class when we get to the focus group, mostly women and two men. Everyone is from China except one person from Vietnam. Eleven of the 17 are parents, and several of these tell me they are also grandparents. Of those working, three are garment workers; two work in a jewelry factory; the two men work in air conditioning and ventilation. Other jobs include work in a school kitchen, customer service in a bank, caring for elderly people, and working in an employment agency. One person not working is in college to study nursing.

I ask the participants why they come to the class. Sample responses include:

“Communication is important, but important is for the *job*!! (said very emphatically) For my life! I working in employment agency. All over the world people come to my agency, but speak different languages – English is first, Spanish is second. I learn more English so I can talk to someone.”

“Me too, because my kids always spoke everything when we have occasion, when we went to the restaurant, they order everything for me. I don't want that happen in the future. I need to try by myself for my future and to communicate with coworkers also in the office.”

“I want to make more money, pay more tax!”

“I want to get a raise!”

The state of New York gives the money for the class and wants to know more about what happens in the class: why should New York State taxpayers pay money for you to come to class? So this isn't why it's good for you, but why it's good for all the people in New York?

“Because the English is the language, to talk to each other is really important. Conversation, you understand, you speak, that's really important. For the job, for everything.”

“I experience that I can help people around me who doesn't speak that much English, if they don't know much, I can help them. Then they can speak on the job and they can get some help for their need.”

The responses focus on the importance of speaking not only to better one's own chances at work and in the U.S., but also to help others who don't speak English. For example, one person added:

“I am working in an Indian company. My bosses are all Indian people, and they would like to hire more Chinese people, because Chinese people always work hard. They try to hire more Chinese people but not easy; most of the times it's a friend bring a friend to work, but they don't speak much English, they scared to talk in English. So we can help, I really feel happy when I can help someone to get a job.”
ESL Level 5 – Conversation Class

This Level 5 class, held on Saturday afternoons, helps students practice conversation skills and is taught by Betty Paysner. She begins the class at 1:35, with six students present. Discussion, focused on the upcoming Thanksgiving holidays, begins immediately. Paysner asks, “What is Thanksgiving about?” A participant answers, “The first immigrants from England.” Paysner replies, “Yes, that’s why we speak English! But who came to explore before the English?” Her next remarks explore the arrival of Asians, the ancestors of Native Americans, across the Bering Strait. The workers in the class seemed to know a lot about the history of the U.S., and talk about why the English ended up here, resulting in them having to take English classes.

The discussion moved on to traditional Thanksgiving food, and how it is also connected to the history of relations between the English and the Native Americans. A worker from Vietnam tells the class that there is a Vietnamese holiday that also gives thanks to parents and ancestors. This leads to a broader discussion of holidays in the countries represented in the class. The food discussion encompasses what animals are eaten across the globe. Participants are really engaged, asking questions and sharing experiences.

The banquet server in the class begins taking about the lavish Thanksgiving dinner he serves, at a per person cost of $1600 at the Waldorf Astoria. His classmates ask about the wines served, which the UNITE HERE Local 6 member says can cost up to $700 a bottle. However, he points out, “You can get a nice Thanksgiving dinner at a diner for $22 in the U.S!” After hearing about the hotel worker’s great job, participants were interested in union jobs held by others in the class and wanted to know more.

Next, participants share turkey recipes, which include injecting the bird with lemon, lime oil and ground spices or with beer and garlic. One person describes holidays at home as “more family, more friends.” Asians and Africans in the class say they don’t make turkey. Latinos talk about stuffing with rice, pork, chicken and bacon, spiced like paella. A round robin reading exercise follows, focused on the first Thanksgiving. As people ask questions, Paysner discusses rules of punctuation and pronunciation.
Betty Paysner, Part-Time WUEP/CWE ESL Conversation Instructor

Betty Paysner has been teaching classes for CWE since she heard about it during its start-up in the 1980s: “What keeps me in this for all these years is that I find such satisfaction in helping people who are doing their best to start a new life in a new environment as adults, without having the language. It is so difficult, and I’m just very happy to be able to try to help them with it,” Paysner tells me. She says the conversation class includes Chinese, Vietnamese and Spanish speakers, mostly women. Several students from the morning’s Level 3 and Level 4 English classes stay to practice their conversation skills in the afternoon and some of the participants have been coming to the class for three years.

Paysner tells her students that children learn new languages quickly because they are not afraid of making mistakes. She encourages them to speak and not to worry about errors. She recommends that parents with English speaking children have one meal a week where English is spoken at the table. She tells me, “I wish there were more conversation classes offered, because I think speaking is paramount!” Asked how she assesses progress in the class, Paysner says she asks participants to review what they have done and what they have learned verbally during each class.

Paysner tells me about the class held just after the Paris bombing: “Many of the students were very worried. We did spend some time hearing the story of my student from Vietnam escaping during the Vietnam War – the whole business of trying to get out of a place where there is a lot of fighting going on.”

Paysner’s goal for the people in her class is “to feel comfortable speaking English because if they cannot make themselves understood, how can they get a job that will lead to something other than just basic manual work? Some of them want to go on to college, so it’s very important that they can express themselves. Then, as I tell them, they can get in touch with their political representatives for help, whether in housing or any problems that they have. In order to do that, they have to be able to express themselves in English, because most of us who were born here don’t speak another language, and there aren’t always interpreters on hand. And they need it for medical situations, [for] everything in their lives here in this country.”

ESL Level 5 Conversation Class Focus Group

The participants in the group are from Vietnam, China, Cameroon, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. Their current jobs include a home attendant, someone who works on payroll, a restaurant worker, a part-time home health aide, a restaurant manager, and a banquet server (a member of the Local 6 of the hotel workers’ union), a construction/asbestos removal worker (a Laborers Local 78 member), and a porter (a32BJ SEIU member). I ask these workers why they come to class. Sample responses include:
“I find this school on my Facebook page the last year and for me was so great, first for the union and second because it was free classes. It’s so great for me at this moment because I no have a job. I feel so comfortable with the classes. . . My teacher is a good teacher, she’s so patient with us. I feel comfortable and I am so appreciating this because of the situation in my life. It’s not easy for a lot of people in United States. You need to pay in a lot of schools. So it’s a blessing for my life.”

“I decide to be in this class because I need speak much clear; because I work in the hotel it’s necessary to speak English well. I like to stay here, I feel comfortable and I will stay until I feel comfortable with the English. Ask me another question!” (I ask, “What would you do if you couldn’t come to this school?”) At this moment, I don’t know. The reason I come to this school is it’s close to my job, so I want to keep this school.”

“My goal is to speak English clearly. In my country, I was a teacher and I would like to be a teacher here. In my country I was a math teacher and that is why I want to speak English here.”

I ask what they would say to someone from the New York State Department of Education about why these classes are a good use of state tax money?

“I think if we speak English we can share our skill and communicate easily with our peers, and that would be useful for the society and for the town.”

“Because if we speak English well, we can do a better job than what we do now and we can help the economy of this state and this country to grow.”

WUEP Computer Classes

WUEP currently has two computer classes – an introductory class for beginners that helps them learn how to use a computer, use email and navigate the basic Word program, and an intermediate class that teaches the basics of the programs in the Microsoft Office suite. A common complaint from users in both levels is that their children don’t like to help them on the computer at home. This has motivated them to come to class.

Introductory Computer Class Observation

Pablo Santiago teaches this lower level class of mostly immigrant workers, for whom English is a second language. Pointing to key icons in Word on the computer screen set up for classroom viewing, Santiago asks: “What are these?” He then called on individuals to talk about what each icon does, such as change font size, change font color, etc. After reviewing the font, paragraph, and editing icons, the class moves to the functions in the clipboard section. Santiago demonstrates how to hover over icons so that they reveal their function. To reinforce this, Santiago asks them to hover over the icons and write down what each does. Volunteers then write these functions on the board for both paragraph and font icons. Santiago comments: “Why do I want you to do this? So you know that most icons will tell you what they do if you point to them; you don’t have to memorize it. You have to be observant; look and find. You have to be precise and click right on it.”
Next, the class works with a “to do” list on the board, practicing highlighting, bulleting, and other texts changes in Word, using the drop down menus. Santiago reviews, demonstrates, and then has them instruct him in how to do these operations. The class continues to practice these ways to format and change how a paragraph appears in Word.

Pablo Santiago, Part-Time WUEP/CWE Introductory Computer Instructor

Pablo Santiago has taught at CWE for about 20 years. His goal is to teach the workers in the class what they want and need to know. Asked how he assesses the progress of participants, Santiago tells me: “The sense that I get of their progress is when they are able to do the task. Then I know they are practicing and learning. To me, the speed with which they can do the tasks is an indication that they understand and have absorbed what they learn in the class.”

Santiago tells me that adult workers in his class differ from their children in terms of using a computer “because their children, from the minute they go to school, are in front of a computer and that’s how they are formed. . . . I tell them “Even though you may be a seamstress or a maintenance person, you never know when technology is going to creep up in your job. Because I know many people working in maintenance and I tell them: “One day, your work orders are going to be sent on the computer. And you’ll have to open up the computer and find out your assignment for that day. What room do you have to clean, or what work order do you have to complete, or what machine do you need to use? Employers will do what is best for them, and if it’s efficient for them to use a computerized system, and if you can’t do it, you may be left out in the cold.”

Introductory Computer Class Focus Group

Workers all have children and come from Columbia, China, and Thailand. Their jobs include working in a store, cooking, tailoring, working as a home attendant, for a jewelry company, and restaurant jobs.

“I am from Columbia, and I work in the factory as a tailor. I came here for learning the computer. I know today everybody depends on the computer; for information, for report, for looking for jobs, for appointments, for benefits, for everything, yeah. Everything is in the computer. For paying bills, shopping, everything.”

“I come from China. Now I am home attendant. I want to study computer and improve myself and change my job. I want to be a nurse.”

“I come from Bangkok, Thailand. I have one child. He is 24 years old. He graduate here and he is working right now. I never have schooling here, but I learn by myself. But somehow the computer, whenever I ask my son, he always get mad, get crazy, fussy! . . . So I think I have to come here to learn.”

“I came here for same problem everybody have. I’m working right now. I’m a line cook – for NY Steakhouse in Yankee Stadium. The reason I want to learn is right now is very important. To see my schedule, it comes to us and everybody have to check it on the computer. Even my payroll check, it come from there.”
How will you use what you learn here? Some of you have already told me you want to get different jobs, pay taxes, etc.

“Right now everything from the computer, you can buy ticket, buy medicine.”

“If you going to see doctor – he email to a pharmacy. It’s not on a piece of paper anymore.”

I asked how it helps the taxpayers of New York, who help pay for the class, that they are learning to use computers.

“If I know English and computers, I can translate for other Chinese people, I can change my job, get more money and pay more taxes.” Others agree, but no one else volunteers an answer, which may be due to difficulty in understanding the question.

WUEP Intermediate Computer Class

Six women and six men attend the intermediate computer class taught by Tracy Berkley. The class begins with opening “Spell Check” and clicking on “Spelling and Grammar” on their Quick Access Toolbars. Next, they work on saving and accessing pictures, changing picture size and orientation, and inserting pictures into documents. This is followed by a short quiz on working with pictures. Then, the class practices using the “Find and Replace” feature in a document. After this, they work with drop down features on their tool bars, clicking afterward to restore their full tool bars. As participants practice these skills, Berkley circulates to check their work, asking and answering questions as he moves among them.

The class then works with manipulating documents, having them appear on screen, hiding them from view, minimizing them, etc. Berkley’s method is to demonstrate the action he is teaching on the large screen in front of the class, provide a practice assignment, and then circulate among the workers in the class, assessing whether they understand and are able to use what he has taught them.

Next, Berkley moves on to naming documents, and naming and storing files and folders. He encourages the participants to think of a physical file cabinet and compare it to the “Documents” file on their computers. He demonstrates opening, naming, and closing files and folders and has the workers do the same.

Tracy Berkley, Part-Time WUEP/CWE Intermediate Computer Instructor

When I ask about his goals for the class, Berkley tells me: “I’m teaching the entire Microsoft package, so Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access. The objective is to really prepare the students to utilize these skills whether in the workplace or at home, to really utilize these computer skills on a personal basis, one-on-one with the world.” Berkley has taught basic computer classes as well to workers, seniors, and parents whose children who are bringing home assignments to be done on the computer. At CWE, he teaches adults trying to improve their skills to keep their jobs or seek a better position.
I comment on Berkley's deft mix of showing, telling, practicing, and assessing. He tells me that no two computer learners are alike, and that teaching in 2016 is very different than teaching was traditionally because, "We have more stuff coming from every device and direction! Some people are slower than others, so I always have to keep control of the pace at which we are going in the classroom." This dual focus on the class as a whole and on the learning of individuals in the class is a constant for Berkley:

“How do I know how if they are retaining this information? Next week when I come in, I'll give a test on everything we have done tonight. We'll go through it – I don't grade papers anymore, what they do is they grade their own papers. Then, we talk about what they've gotten wrong so that we can get all the wrongs right. That way we all go on to the next level together; one person is not staggering behind while another is rushing ahead.”

Berkley tells me what he has learned from the participants in his classes is “their passion and their desire to learn this stuff. And I learn to be patient with someone who is trying to learn. Sometimes I don’t know if it is a language barrier, a learning barrier or whatever, but I know that patience has to be on the forefront of my teaching techniques, because without that, it's really hard to break the barrier between the workers here and this information. Sometimes students are tired, they've had a long day, they're either getting off or going to work. You really have to be in tune with what's going on...If giving a 5-minute break every hour is going to keep people awake, do it! Because it really saves a lot of time and attention span if people are getting that time to step away and rest their eyes and maybe walk around, get some air and drink some water.”

Berkley says he credits his success with participants to constantly reinforcing small, manageable pieces of information and to not taking any person in the class for granted. He notices when a worker in the class is tired, or when she or he is trying to write notes when they should be watching what he's demonstrating in front of the class: "There could be lots of variables hindering them, so I've got to pay attention.”

Despite the challenges of his classes, Berkley makes clear his love for teaching: “I really enjoy what I’m doing. You’re not just a teacher when you're up there: you've got to have wit, you've got to have humor, you've got to be serious; you've got to wear all these hats. It’s really about: What do I have to do to get the point across? At the end of the day, if I've got to wear my clown outfit, I'll wear it! Just so long as they're getting what I’m teaching because if they’re not, if I can't go to bed knowing that my students are getting it, what's the real point of this whole thing? It’s that serious; it’s adult education. We have to take each and every person very seriously when we step into these classrooms.”
**Intermediate Computer Class Focus Group**

There are 13 people in the class, nine of whom are working and seven of whom have children. Asked why they are in the class, sample responses include:

“English because it’s the native language in U.S. and we are living here. *The computer is as important as speaking English.* I want to say thank you to the Consortium for me to use the printer and for learning English and computers.” (He has also taken WUEP English classes, as have three others in the class.)

“I am here to learn and upgrade my skills on computer. It’s important for my work…I work construction, and I need do some paperwork and help my kids with their homework.”

“I’m here learning computer because of my job. I was moved from my old job to a new position and then have to use the computer! I didn’t know how, because when I was teenager, we had no opportunity to learn. So now, I’m being a little more capable to do my job, more efficient to do my job. That is why I am here.”

“I think learning computer is very important and it’s necessary. It’s like when you don’t know how to write. Everything is technology right now – so if you want to conduct some investigation about some topic and you don’t know how to use the computer to do that, you can’t get it. Also, you can help your children with their homework, and you can help them how to use it. But if you don’t know you cannot do many things…You also got to work – you can’t work if you know computers.”

“To me it is very important to learn computer because I can do my job and you have to learn computers for everything. If you are going to apply for a new job you need computer to do all this kind of paper[work]. Even if you are on unemployment, you need to use the computer! Everything from now is with computers.”

“I want to learn more knowledge and in the future I want to try to get a new job, because now I don’t have much work now. (What kind of job do you do?) I work for the fashion, sample maker. But when before I had to read the pattern…now they are not calling it patternmaker, they are calling it technical design, I have to use the pattern from the computer. (And previously this was something you did by hand). Right.”

Some workers in the class tell me they heard about it from the Department of Labor’s Workforce One. A member of the DC9 Painter’s union heard about it from his union, others learned about the class from friends. One said: “A friend of mine recommend for this computer class and say the teacher is very patient. That’s why I come here.” A few had been taking classes at places that closed their programs. I ask the participants what it would mean if the class they were in now was not available, and what they would say to NYSED about what having the class means for them. Responses include:
“It gives everybody a chance to learn computers, especially now we are in the 21st Century, and everything is mostly through computers. It will benefit the city and state that we have more training and people will have more knowledge about it and be ready for the workplace.”

“We use the computer to email when we get new change orders and they want to change colors. It’s hard to talk to the supervisors by phone because they are always busy, so [we] send them emails to hear about new projects. It saves paper. Good for the environment also.” (Garment worker)

“You need to use a computer even to file a job application, and send copies of your ID, like your driver’s license or passport or Social Security papers. There are so many companies that want you to do that now, and they are far away from the city. Now they are not in Manhattan, they are in Long Island, Queens or Brooklyn. They need to verify your identity for Homeland Security.”

Qualitative Evaluation Results

Below, the Workers United Education Program is evaluated based on criteria developed by focus groups with program directors in summer 2011, the year of the first CWE qualitative evaluation report. Each program is evaluated based on the standards common to all CWE programs, as well as those typical of its program type (union, community based organization, or building trade apprenticeship/journeyperson training).

Outcomes common to all CWE programs:

CWE Funding Saves Jobs: As both teachers and workers repeatedly note, work is the first and foremost reason that people come to the WUEP classes. Several mention that their employers encourage them to learn English. For employed workers in the class, learning English and computers is essential to retaining their jobs and to advancing in their workplaces and industries. Even for those working in professions such as the garment industry, moving up to better jobs requires computer skills. To quote one garment worker:

“We use the computer to email when we get new change orders and they want to change colors. It’s hard to talk to the supervisors by phone because they are always busy, so [we] send them emails to hear about new projects. It saves paper. [It’s] good for the environment, also.”

CWE Funding Helps Workers Acquire and Update Computer and Technological Skills: Workers in the computer classes say they need these skills to maintain their current jobs, to apply for jobs, to advance in the workplace and, increasingly, for every aspect of daily life. From construction workers to garment workers, computers are now essential in every industry that immigrant workers enter. In today’s job market, they have to learn how to navigate the English language and U.S. culture, as well as learning the skills to write and respond at their keyboard.
“I work for the fashion sample maker. But when before I had to read the pattern…now they are not calling it patternmaker, they are calling it technical design, I have to use the pattern from the computer.

CWE Funding Transforms the Life Chances of Individuals and Benefits Families and Communities: When immigrants enter the United States, their journey to the life they envision for themselves in this country is just beginning. Encouraged by employers and family members, immigrant workers quickly realize that to advance at work, to improve the life chances of their children, and to truly access the “American Dream,” they need to speak English more fluently and use computers. Most of the workers in the WUEP computer classes are either taking English classes concurrently or see learning to use the computer as an important skill once they have learned some English. How vital this is to living and working in the U.S. is captured in the reasons they give for coming to these classes:

“You need to use a computer even to file a job application, and send copies of your ID, like your driver’s license or passport or Social Security papers.”

In addition, several workers each year apply for U.S. citizenship and fluency in English is vital to this process. In the spring of 2016, for example, Josefina Diaz Javier, a Home Health Aide who became a U.S. citizen commented that, even though she wasn’t yet fluent in English, the classes helped her feel comfortable in the interview with the immigration officials. She noted that taking English classes helped her to pass her oral examination, which allowed her to be granted U.S. citizenship.

CWE Funding Enables Movement Up Sector Specific Career Ladders: While the Workers United Education Program grew out of the education programs created by the garment workers’ unions, today’s students work in a variety of industries, including apparel manufacturing, restaurants, home care, child care, and construction. The program’s ESL and computer classes focus on the general educational goals of helping students maintain employment or find new or better jobs. Many of the students in this program are working in low-income jobs, but providing them with more English language and computer skills allows them to negotiate improved salaries or find better positions.

Students working in the apparel industry are referred to job specific training programs, including classes in advanced sewing skills and pattern making, given by the Garment Industry Development Corporation (GIDC) at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Students in other industries are referred to union or community programs that provide additional training in those areas.

Currently, the Workers United Education Program is actively supporting the efforts of immigrant workers in nail salons to achieve better wages and working conditions. Toward that end, the WUEP director developed a work-related ESL curriculum, which is currently being tested in the classroom and modified to meet these students’ needs. In addition, the union and its community partners are exploring the training requirements necessary to allow these workers to get their New York State Certification. The goal is to bring these immigrant women workers into the nail industry fully trained and cognizant of their rights as new Americans and working New Yorkers.
CWE’s Model Differs from Standard Adult Education Practice: CWE’s purpose, as stated in the legislation governing its funding, is to prepare workers to retain jobs and to “enhance their opportunities for increased earnings and advancement.” To accomplish this, WUEP classes respond to the expressed needs among workers for computer skills and English language classes which are necessary to function in virtually all New York City workplaces. The Workers United Education Program thus updates and continues the tradition of welcoming new Americans begun by its antecedent garment unions in the early 1900s.

CWE Funding Gives Workers Opportunities to Enter Jobs with Good Wages and Promising Futures: Earning a living wage and advancing in the workforce require efforts on the part of both workers and unions. Immigrant workers commit to learning English and the skills necessary for American workplaces. Unions and their community partners commit to fighting to create and maintain good jobs with living wages. The Workers United Education Program provides the educational component necessary for immigrant worker advancement, while its community and union partners provide the expertise on what workers need to move up in particular industries. Together, CWE’s union and community partners provide the education and support that immigrant workers need to achieve the “American Dream.” WUEP’s current efforts to partner with the New York New Jersey Joint Board and community groups to address the conditions of workers in nail salons continue the union’s longstanding tradition of educating immigrant workers.

CWE Funding Supports a More Effective Mix of Employment Options: The two entry-level skills necessary for employment in virtually all workplaces in New York City are English language facility and comfort with using technology. Workers missing these skills are more likely to end up vulnerable to the kind of exploitation faced by workers in unregulated nail salons, restaurants, domestic work situations, and non-union construction sites. By providing access to these skills in classes designed by dedicated and seasoned program staff and taught by experienced instructors, WUEP offers the two most necessary skills for industries in New York, at no charge to immigrant workers. Once they achieve some fluency in the English language and in computer skills, workers can take other classes provided by CWE and community groups, such as those that prepare them for the High School Equivalency or college entrance examinations, and various other types of computer classes.

CWE Providers Have Honed Best Practices Across a Range of Industries, Populations and Communities: The garment workers’ unions established some of the oldest immigrant worker education programs in the United States. In order to help workers feel more comfortable in the United States, classes not only focus on skills training, but also include cultural activities. Workers attend concerts at Carnegie Hall organized by WUEP program staff, apply for library cards, and visit museums with their teachers.

As noted earlier in this report, class content is fluid and responds to the needs of the students. Teachers change their lessons based on the students’ abilities and what they feel is most relevant. They regularly review lessons in order to assure that newer students are integrated. The new nail salon curriculum was created based on the expressed needs of these workers and will be modified after being tested in the classroom. Creativity is encouraged. For example, workers in Jackie Bain’s ESL Level 4 class participate in an annual citywide essay contest for adult learners sponsored by New
York University’s Gallatin School, and are often published in its annual journal of selected essays. (One such publication is appended at the end of this section of the evaluation.)

Union Based Programs

CWE Funding Saves Jobs: Although the Workers United Education Program is rooted in the storied past of New York City’s garment unions, it is also at the forefront of the struggle of 21st Century immigrant workers to achieve the “American Dream.” It now offers immigrant workers, from all industries and all corners of the city, free English and computer classes. These are the two forms of communication most necessary to obtaining and retaining jobs, and advancing in today’s workplaces. In providing funding not only for classes, but also for the development of a curriculum vital to the needs of workers in nail salons, CWE and WUEP continue to support New York City’s most vulnerable workers, ensuring their continued employment and the vitality of the workplaces that employ them.

CWE Programs Support Union-Based, Labor Management/Industry-Driven Programs: WUEP follows the model established by the garment workers’ unions to support the needs of immigrant workers, which in today’s job market means providing the English language and computer skills required across industries. These skills give workers more flexibility in negotiating better wages and working conditions.

As part of the struggle of immigrant workers in the nail salon industry for skills development and basic workers’ rights, WUEP is developing a curriculum that will enable these workers to improve their language skills. The program is supporting the union and its allies by creating programs that help nail salon workers achieve state certification and licensing in this industry at little or no cost. Ultimately, employers will benefit from a licensed, highly trained workforce that will enable compliance with laws governing workplace wages and rights in the city and state.

CWE Programs Transform Lives and Support Career Advancement: These two outcomes are similar in that they apply to immigrant workers more broadly than to those in a particular industry. Building on the history of the garment unions, WUEP supports immigrant New Yorkers across industries with the baseline skills now required for entry into and advancement within virtually any career path in today’s workplaces: facility with the English language and with technology. As one participant affirmed: “We need English because it’s the native language in US and we are living here. The computer is as important as speaking English.” Efforts by WUEP to provide occupational English classes and by the New York New Jersey Regional Joint Board and its community partners to provide licensing classes to immigrant nail salon workers will allow these workers to emerge from the shadow of extreme exploitation documented by the New York Times and support their efforts to earn a legal and living wage. As they do so, they will not only transform their own lives, but will also transform the industry by “Helping owners understand how having a better paid and organized workforce and meeting health and safety standards helps them stay in business.” (Luis Gomez, Organizing Director, New York New Jersey Regional Joint Board, Workers United).
**CWE's Work-Focused Education Attracts and Retains Workers:** As the quotes from workers in this report echo, their primary reason for coming to class is to get, keep and advance in their jobs. As long as they, themselves, feel that their English is improving, they will struggle against all the competing claims on their time – even the need for sleep – to get to class.

**CWE Classes Strengthen Generic Work Skills:** The Workers United Education Program offers classes that workers say are essential to their ability to acquire and retain employment. Employers and workforce professionals also stress the importance of these baseline skills. That is why immigrant workers request these classes and why they remain the focus of the Workers United Education Program.

The Workers United Education Program fulfills all of the union-based outcomes that emerged from the initial focus groups convened to develop the standards for the qualitative evaluation. It serves adult workers and their family members who seek English language classes at no cost regardless of their work or immigration status, while also addressing their need for computer literacy.

**Conclusion**

One in five New Yorkers is an immigrant, and immigrants and their children account for nearly one quarter (23.9%) of registered voters in New York State (American Immigration Council: immigrationpolicy.org). Immigrant workers come to New York City from all over the globe, seeking the opportunities that it has historically provided to the newest New Yorkers. The ILGWU and ACTWU began their involvement with CWE during its founding years. The union – now Workers United – has changed as the domestic garment industry has changed and as the workforce itself has been transformed by technology. Workers United now represents and organizes a diverse cross-section of workers in a variety of industries, but the union maintains its commitment to the basic needs and rights of all workers: Bread (a living wage and a safe workplace) and Roses (the opportunity to learn, to dream, to achieve, and to create). Today's Workers United Education Program classes emerge from and reflect this history, bringing it alive by helping workers access the arts and by using creative ways to develop a facility with both the English language and with new technology.
WORKERS UNITED EDUCATION PROGRAM

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<tr>
<td>Workplace ESL Advanced Conversation</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workers United Education Program Percentage of Students Showing Improvement July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016

(1) Corresponds to the number of students who initially enrolled. Because WUEP classes run a full school year, students who initially enroll may leave the program because of work or family obligations.

(2) Corresponds to the number of students who regularly attend class during the school year.

Table below represents unique Participants who have completed their program of study and retained employment or other outcomes for the period of 7/1/2015 to 6/30/2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Outcomes</th>
<th>Unique Participants</th>
<th>Retained Employment</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained Employment (3)</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Participation Outcomes (4)</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) The majority of students that enroll in WUEP classes are employed and most retain their employment.

(4) Students who regularly attend WUEP classes are engaged in community activities through the program, including getting library cards, attending concerts, learning about issues that affect their communities, etc.
September 1, 2016

Ms. Debbie Buxton
Consortium for Worker Education
275 Seventh Avenue, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Dear Ms. Buxton:

I represent the National Association of Blouse Manufacturers as well as the New York Skirt and Sportswear Association, trade groups that include numerous garment manufacturers in New York City. The companies that I represent employ hundreds of workers in apparel manufacturing, an industry that plays a vital role in the New York economy.

As one of the leading fashion centers in the world, the employees of the companies that I represent work closely with various designers to create beautiful clothing for many retail stores throughout New York and the world. As you are aware, the majority of employees in New York’s garment industry are immigrants and, for that reason, English language and computer courses provide these employees with skills that help them both in and outside of the workplace.

The Workers United Education Program, affiliated with the Consortium for Worker Education, has for years provided workers with the necessary skills to interact in English with co-workers from a variety of backgrounds. An educated workforce only serves to improve business and, for this reason, we are happy to support this valuable resource.

Very truly yours,

Steven E. Thomas
Appendix A

Worker Education

by Gladys Mei Yue Lam

My father was the secretary of a firemen's union in Hong Kong. He spoke and wrote Chinese, English and Spanish, as well. My parents had eight children. We were not too poor, but not rich. When I was a child, my father spent very little time with his children. He left home early and came back home very late, after we had gone to bed. At that time, we did not know why he was so busy; other fathers would have dinners with their children. We would see ours only on Sunday. I thought that my father did not like his children.

My father sent all of his children to Chinese school in which English was just one of the subjects and the language used only in English classes. As a result, my English level was low. When I went to high school, I learned why my father always came home late: He worked as a volunteer English teacher in a worker’s union school after work. He taught workers’ children English because the workers had no money to send their children to school. The English classes were free, and my father did not get paid. I did not understand why he did this.

After I graduated from high school, I had to find a job. I found that it was very difficult to get a job if your English level was low. I was very frustrated and disappointed. I knew that the road of my life would not be easy. Eventually, my uncle encouraged me to work in a bank. The salary was low, and I hated the job.

However, I was unable to switch to another job because of my poor English. At that time, I blamed my father and from the bottom of my heart, I was angry with him. He taught others English, but his children’s English level was low. If he’d stayed at home after work to teach his children English, or if he’d sent his children to English school, all his children would have better jobs and better lives.

When I talked about this to my brothers and sisters, each of them agreed that he was not a good father. He served others, but sacrificed his children’s future.

When my father died, several hundred people were present at his funeral. I was very surprised. I asked my uncles what he did to become so respected. They told me it was because my father contributed his time and his knowledge to people in need. He changed a lot of people's lives. They were very grateful to him.

Today, I study English in a worker's union school, and it is free. I am benefitting from it. Now I understand why my father taught.

Fifty-seven-year-old Gladys Mei Yue Lam emigrated from Hong Kong six months ago. She studies at the Consortium for Worker Education’s Workers United Education Program, where Jackie Bain is her teacher and Nancy Lorence is the site director. Gladys Mei Yue Lam aims to get her college degree. She gives special thanks to Piling Ein, an advisor at the site, saying, “She was most helpful to me.”
Make The Road New York
Make The Road New York

“Make The Road aspires to fully integrate transformative education with the provision of survival and legal services that help families meet immediate needs.” Deborah Axt, Co-Executive Director.

“How do you help people to improve their skills to access the jobs out there, but also focus on how to improve the quality of jobs, so that people can actually make a living, advance in their careers and take care of their families?” Sierra Stoneman-Bell, Director, Adult Education and Career Pathways

The mission of Make the Road New York (MRNY) is “To build the power of Latino and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services (maketheroadny.org).” MRNY is a community organization shaped by its efforts to provide support for workforce development within immigrant communities facing barriers of language and of legal status that typically trap immigrant workers in low paying, and often dangerous, jobs. Currently, MRNY has four community centers (one each in Staten Island, Queens, Brooklyn and Long Island) serving over 19,000 dues paying MRNY members and approximately 47,500 additional participants in MRNY’s classes and services.

Co-Executive Director Deborah Axt confesses that after her first visit to MRNY, she felt: “This is where I want to be for the rest of my life!” Sixteen years later, she feels no differently than when she was a law student who sat outside the front office: “It was just bustling and crazy like it is now! It was clear that it was really a neighborhood-rooted space, one that all of the community members felt was their home.” A former union organizer who went to law school, Axt says she was looking for a community-based approach to supporting the struggle of “low wage workers to have a voice at work, to experience power and to really represent themselves.”

As Co-Executive Director with Javier Valdes, Axt supervises all of MRNY’s low-wage worker organizing, policy work and finances. She also built its legal department, which currently has 60 full-time attorneys and advocates on staff. If a teacher in an ESL class, for example, hears about a problem a participant has with a landlord, s/he can enter the information in MRNY’s attorney data base and it will notify a housing lawyer who will call within 48 hours. Axt explains: “There is such a need for this with new immigrants who are often preyed upon by lawyers and others who say they will get them a job, or an apartment. We are an organization they can trust. With immigration reform pending, all kinds of questions come up, so the lines of people seeking our help are around the block.”
As asked to talk about the role of education at MRNY, Axt replies: "MRNY aspires to fully integrate transformative education with the provision of survival and legal services that help families meet immediate needs. We do this while working toward systemic change and community organizing, so that people experience collective support. You can go to a MRNY office in your neighborhood, walk in the front door and find: an English class for workers; after school activities for your kids; community meetings where you can raise your voice with other people experiencing the same problems that you're experiencing; and legal support for every crisis that might hit you in your life."

Describing those who participate in MRNY's work, Axt says that about 60% of total participants are women, many of whom form the core of MRNY active members: "We are trying to build a pipeline so folks stay engaged with each other and then go out in the world to be much more active, brave, connected and informed citizens everywhere they go." At MRNY, participants can join worker committees addressing issues in many industries, including warehouse work, construction and food service. There are also committees focused on immigration, housing, youth, education and LGBTQ issues.

Axt says that CWE invested in core support for MRNY and helped the organization build its expertise in workforce development: "CWE led me into the network of leaders in great worker training in the coops in particular. . . . Despite the fact that there is a lot of attention to worker coops right now, there aren’t a lot of really solid resources out there to provide that kind of technical assistance. And it’s incredibly resource intensive to build that expertise. . . . CWE understands the need to weave together training with its goals of helping to really empower and support the folks who are learning to deploy those skills right away on the job and to build real career paths for themselves."

**Sierra Stoneman-Bell, Director of Adult Education and Career Pathways**, says worker education and training at MRNY occurs in the context of building power in working class immigrant communities to address common issues in housing, health, legal status, and workers' rights on the job. As Stoneman-Bell describes it: "Our service work has four main areas: adult education; workforce development; legal services in employment law, housing, and immigration; and access to health services and information." Make the Road is also involved in community organizing on these and related issues, such as environmental justice, worker rights, etc.: "We really take a multi-issue approach to the communities that we work with on a daily basis, connecting our immediate services with long-term learning and organizing," says Stoneman-Bell. "CWE has been really instrumental in supporting our workforce development program which is connected to our adult education services as well."

MRNY's workforce development program began in 2009, with the goal of building the capacity of immigrant workers to prepare for and connect to good jobs. Currently, workforce development services at MRNY include a series of job readiness workshops combined with one-on-one employment counseling, as well as occupational safety and health training for about 2000 people each year. MRNY serves a primarily Latino immigrant population, but also local residents from other backgrounds who find their way to its workforce development programs.
CWE has supported MRNY’s key workforce development efforts: core job readiness workshops; Community Health Worker (CHW) training; Worker Health and Safety training and Worker Cooperatives.

**Core job readiness workshops** focus on typical skill-building activities such as: creating a resume; networking; developing contacts and interview skills. As well, a core workshop on worker rights and health and safety teaches participants how to advocate for themselves on jobs if work becomes dangerous. Stoneman-Bell describes MRNY’s job readiness as “a combination of getting the skills they need to get the jobs, but also learning how to identify when something is not right at a work site and getting help to solve that problem.”

**MRNY’s Community Health Worker (CHW) Training** is an intensive five-month program. While CHW is not always a specific job title, workers who complete the training have found jobs in a range of titles, such as health coach, or health systems navigator. Employers have included local hospitals, for example Wyckoff and Woodhull, as well as community organizations and local clinics. This year, CWE also supported MRNY’s launch of a **Bridge to Careers in Health class**, which provides English literacy instruction contextualized in health care vocabulary and content knowledge.

Stoneman-Bell says “It’s been incredibly valuable to have the support from CWE for all these different ways we are looking at immigrant workforce needs—for having a commitment to a common broader goal and supporting our approach to how we want to build our community.”

MRNY has also partnered with unions, particularly those in the building trades. For example, the organization has worked closely with Local 1010 Concrete Workers and Locals 78 and 79 of the Laborers Union. MRNY has partnered with the District Council of Carpenters and Local 79 to help community members gain access to pre-apprenticeship training and navigation support.

MRNY’s services are open to everyone, members and non-members alike. Members, however, enjoy early registration for ESOL classes and also have a voice in the organization and voting privileges in board member elections. More than half of MRNY’s governing Board are MRNY members.

**EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS**

**Job Readiness**

Job Readiness counselors Jorge Rivera and Inti Ossio facilitated an introductory session on job readiness on a very cold day in February 2016. Ten participants were present at the outset. The counselors described an effective job search, including developing an electronic resume and email accounts so that job seekers can communicate with potential employers electronically. Participants were asked to be active on their own behalf and stay in touch with their counselors about the progress of their search. In this class, only one person already had a resume. Ossio and Rivera explained how they could assist, “But,” Rivera
added, “I don’t want you to depend only on me; you participate actively in the plan we create together.”

This balance between offering necessary services and information but developing the skills of participants to advocate for themselves was presented as a feature of MRNY’s approach to serving a population that faces multiple barriers in the workplace but has the persistence and determination to succeed in their struggle to find work. As well, MRNY’s job readiness training includes knowing workers’ rights and the laws that protect them.

Next, Ossio and Rivera provided an overview of MRNY trainings in commercial cleaning and OSHA regulations that employers must follow. “Don’t just go out and look for a job, come up with an idea and a plan!” Rivera stressed. The workshop concluded with a summary of training, counseling and other services accessible at MRNY. “All our services are free. All we ask is that you maintain your relationship with your counselor and meet with them. Even if you get a job, continue to meet with them. Tell them what your job is like, email, text or call them. We have job training, counseling and other services here. Let us know if you have a work permit. If not, we may be able to help you get one, or get a tax id which you can use to pay taxes.”

At their next workshop, these participants would be reviewing interview skills in Spanish, learning about the application process and dress code, and discussing how to get to interviews. Help with resumes and practice for interviews would be offered in English and Spanish. Rivera closed the session with: “Whatever you need or are interested in, we will support you.”

**Jorge Rivera, Job Developer**

Rivera worked in job development for years, including at HRA and FEVS. At MRNY, he focused on recruitment and on partnership building relationships with employers and social service programs that address the needs of MRNY participants seeking jobs. Rivera drew on his citywide contacts from his years in workforce development, and one of his first initiatives at MRNY was creating a job fair with local employers. During his first year, MRNY held more than six job fairs, which Rivera felt “creates more opportunities and builds stronger relationships” between employers and MRNY participants. His message to local employers was: “You want to really focus your trainings and recruitment on someone who will deliver, why not someone who is within walking distance from you?” This approach, he felt, allowed employers to “show they are giving back to the community,” and also to hire employees who benefit from one-on-one counseling support from MRNY.

Rivera also stressed how MRNY participants could get to “the next step,” a job with better pay and benefits: “I always say to a client how long will it take you to move up to the next level on this job? I’ve seen them start as prep cooks and now they are cooks or chefs. . . . I’m very passionate about my clients.”
Inti Ossio, ESL Career Adviser

“I think being part of a community organization and myself having grown up here means that I walk through the neighborhood every day. . . . I spend a lot of time here and I see my clients on the street.”

Inti Ossio outlined MRNY’s approach to workforce development: “We serve folks in the Jackson Heights/Bushwick communities and one of the things we focus on is making sure the people in the community know their rights as workers. This is built into the workshop series they have to take if they want to receive career counseling.” This series—which includes interview skills, health and safety, resume building, job search, networking, career goals and workers rights—prepares them well for individual appointments with counselors. “What we are trying to do is educate them so they can move themselves forward with the long and short term goals they have. We ask that they commit 50% of their time to doing what they need to do to meet their goals. We don’t ask for money and we provide ESL and other classes to our participants at not cost.”

Ossio worked primarily with Latinos, though there were a few middle Eastern and South Asian participants as well at MRNY in Queens. The majority were women who were current or former participants in ESL classes at MRNY. Ossio said she was ‘constantly calling” her clients, reminding them about interview appointments and asking whether they wanted to come in and prepare for their interview. Those she could not call, she texted.

Although her clients needed work, Ossio said their schedules often made it hard to find a job for the hours they are able to work. Most are mothers, and some work in babysitting or maintenance and housekeeping jobs. When she tried to explore their interests, they often said they were just looking for any job. “So she told them, “I understand, but its really hard for me to help you when I don’t understand the experiences you already have, and what interests you have that will help me to place you in something that you are more likely to be happy in.” The men she sees, Ossio said, look for work in industries where they already have experience, such as construction, or as vendors. Some come with degrees from their countries, and many are interested in working in health care. She gave an example of a young woman who was a therapist in her country, and began going to the CLIP program at LaGuardia for ESL. She finished in six months and was able to find work counseling trauma victims at Latin Women In Action in Corona, Queens and then at Safe Horizon. Ossio also worked with Rivera and his job bank, and referred women to the CHW program. She said that in the Orientation sessions she and Rivera did, they saw about 60-75 new people each month, and ended up working actively with about 30 or 40 of these.
MRNY Job Readiness Focus Group

Eight participants took part in a job readiness focus group on February 12, 2016. Only one was working now, as a salesman in a clothing store. All were looking for jobs. The kinds of work they sought included child care and babysitting, general maintenance, store displays, electronics, and sales. One wanted to start an events organizing business. Most people heard about job readiness at MRNY through friends or family who found jobs; one was referred by the Department of Labor. As one person put it: “We are all here looking for guidance and support; this is one of the ways we know we can get that.”

Asked about their motivation for coming out on such a frigid day, one participant responded: “When you are interested, the weather doesn’t matter.” Another said, “Being at home won’t change my situations. I always make sure I come out to the things I have to do and it doesn’t matter the weather because I will always learn something new or get something out of it.” Other responses included:

“I’m still looking for work, whether its cold or not.”

“This is America. It’s cold in America.”

“When the need is high, the weather is not an obstacle.”

MRNY Community Health Worker (CHW) Training

“We had two CHWs as interns and we ended up hiring both. We really need their characteristics of empathy, knowing the neighborhood. They know how to communicate efficiently and they have an overall friendliness; they are open and trustworthy. Speaking the language is a big plus and we have a large Hispanic population.” Linda Nozart, Director, Woodhull Hospital Asthma Program, part of North Brooklyn Asthma Action Alliance

Becca Telzak directs MRNY’s health programs, and oversees a health team of 24 people who work in health programs at its four locations. Key to MRNY’s approach to health is training people from immigrant, low-income communities to be part of MRNY's health team and to work in their own communities. Telzak credits CWE support as essential to providing “training for health roles that people from the community can take on.” MRNY connects participants to community organizations for their internships. “Over the past two years,” Telzak says, “we started a CHW project working on asthma in Brooklyn with Wyckoff Heights Medical Center, which is just around the corner. We now have two CHWs working there to connect folks who have asthma to health providers, and helping to document housing conditions that aggravate asthma.” According to Telzak, Bushwick has one of the highest asthma rates in the US.

MRNY also wants to involve CHWs in health policy work, and integrate them into higher-level conversations with the Department of Health and hospital systems. The goal is to figure out ways to use CHWs that create job opportunities for them and really benefit the
Communities where MRNY works. CWE supported both the development of the bridge to health course and the CHW training.

MRNY now employs five graduates of the CHW training on its health team, and provides experience for others who volunteer. Examples of job placements elsewhere include hires by the South Asian Council for Community Services in Queens, Action Health New York City, Woodhull Medical Center and Public Health Solutions. Telzak also tells me of a recent health-related meeting she attended at the Mayor’s office, where she was pleasantly surprised to find herself sitting across from a CHW trained by MRNY.

Telzak connects the CHW model to the continuing effort to deliver more health care at home and in communities, rather than in more costly hospital settings: "If you are going to take care out of the hospitals, you need folks who speak the language and understand the culture to go into homes. So having CHWs is really essential to meeting state goals of reducing hospitalizations and increasing preventive care."

CHWs also help people navigate the health care system, and apply for insurance, food stamps, etc. On the preventive side, CHWs connect people to MRNY’s Health Eating and Active Living project, and to its community garden and food pantry. They also work with Latinas Care, a cancer support group that meets monthly at the Brooklyn MRNY office.

Woodhull Hospital has hired two CHWs, one full-time and one part-time to visit the homes of asthma patients where Linda Nozart, Director of the hospital's asthma program says “They are the actual eyes of the hospital.” She gives the example of how CHWs thoroughly search for asthma triggers in the home, telling the story of a case where a large hole in the patient's bathroom wall was the source of dust and vermin in the apartment. The CHW reported this to NYCHA and to the City Department of Health. As a result, the hole was fixed and the apartment was improved with new cabinets. The patient, Nozart says, has not been back to the emergency room since.

Carmen Garcia, a CHW at MRNY

Carmen Garcia says she was always interested in health and nutrition, and was studying to be a doctor in Ecuador before she married and came to the U.S. She sees the CHW training she received as providing her with a great opportunity to fulfill her intention to work in health care, and she especially appreciated the participatory learning she experienced during the training. She learned goal setting and interview skills, and also shared ideas and experiences with others in the class. She values the multicultural nature of the class and of her work as a CHW, which she loves: “I think MRNY helped me a lot because before this I was in a job that I didn’t like. I wasn’t getting paid good and I wasn’t treated good. So it changed my life because sometimes you come to this country and you think that you don’t have an opportunity like this one. . . . I never thought I was going to do something like helping a lot of people, and make a difference in their lives.” After Garcia completed the CHW training, she was hired by MRNY’s health team.
MRNY Bridge to Health Class

The Bridge to Health class I attended was working on the determinants of health, and how to advise a friend who needs to change a health behavior. Twenty-one participants worked in several small groups and identified relevant health behaviors from their text and their journal entries. As they shared their strategies, instructor Don Portolese deftly worked in English language instruction. For example, he talked about how to give advice using conditional phrasing: “If I were you, I would,” was one example. Or, “you could consider, which he pointed out sounds more like a choice, and less like unasked for advice or a command. Participants suggested other ways to phrase advice, such as: “It is important to consider the effect smoking has on your health and your family.” A participant who needed her client to take a shower considered how religious the client was, and told her: “Cleanliness is next to godliness!” This served as a jumping off point for another mini-English grammar lesson: the instructor asked for the root word of cleanliness, and defined it as the act of being clean.

Portolese’s classroom was full of posters about health and language; the walls literally spoke! As the class worked in groups on reading about and resolving health challenges, Portolese circulated and joined the discussions, taking the opportunity to make grammar and spelling points and dissect words to extract common prefixes. He was dynamic, using humor and dramatic phrasing.

Bridge Teacher Don Portolese

“This class is going to get them to a rewarding career and they are also helping their own communities to rise up.”

Portolese showed me a wheel of the dimensions of health: intellectual, environmental, emotional, social, cultural, physical. He told me he will ask participants to do a presentation about one of these, to help them think about what kinds of health care jobs they want to seek. He described his class as academic skills and language development within the topic of health care. For their class project, they will identify a health care issue in their own lives and the strategies they would use to address it. The class works as a support group for individuals developing their projects.

Once participants have identified the kinds of work they want to do, they will begin looking at particular job titles in health care, and Portolese will begin discussions about the skills required for these jobs and support participants as they work on cover letters and resumes and participate in mock interviews. The interviews will be filmed, so they have a chance to observe their posture, behavior, language, etc. Some of the participants have done health care work in their own countries, and face the frustration of the language barrier when they think about where they can enter the US health care career ladder.
To address these language issues, Portolese works with a complex health care text, and teaches participants how to break words down to get the meaning, covering parts of speech, context clues, grammar, etc. “The learning objectives,” said Portolese, “are basically strategies for how to approach health and related information in a way that you are able to understand it and deconstruct it.” As well, a goal of the class is to be able to write about health and make presentations about health topics. The course objectives also include identifying what positions are open to them now, what health care jobs they aspire to in the future, and what these require. Participants create a Linked In profile and explore how to look for jobs. The CHW class, Portolese pointed out, is a 5.5 hours a day, while the Bridge class is 2.5 hours. This helps participants understand whether the CHW training is possible for them.

Portolese said he covers what health care workplaces demand, for example, multi-tasking. “You really want to do this through images and a lot of discussion and have them develop strategies, asking ‘How would I get this done in this period of time?’ This forces them to deconstruct the tasks and prioritize.” For assessment, Portolese uses quizzes, exams, etc., sometimes asking them to help create these tests by reflecting on what was most important and what needs to be asked: “It takes the sting out of the testing process, gives them empowerment.”

**Bridge Class Participants**

The break in the class was small, so I concentrated on questions related to the class. A few told me what kind of work they were doing, or had done. This included part-time grocery store work; nursing in Albania; dental assistant; and child care. All participants are immigrants; countries of origin mentioned include Albania, Dominica, Jamaica. I asked about Portolese’s teaching. Sample responses included:

“He teaches us to write about health care first, not just to improve our English. *Not English to write, English to speak, the four levels of English!* I did that already! For me, this is exactly the point we need to learn as health care worker. He just teaches exactly what we need to improve our job. . . .Every week when I go back to work my boss says, ‘Oh you can do this now! So now you can write my prescriptions—you can send the prescriptions exactly to the laboratory!’ So I’m doing that. I get exactly what I need to work in health care.”

The group breaks into a discussion about the class and the teacher:

“He is a very lively teacher!”

“It’s about health care, but here I’m learning more. It’s more useful. And we make grammar, we make us say everything—how we can read, or how we can describe something, especially in health care.”
“We learn how to be polite with patients, how to handle problems, how to write down the right way, the professional way, and how not to be stressed and to learn how to handle our stress on the jobs. So it’s a lot of things, not only English, it’s to be professional.”

“It’s what adults need because I tried the other English classes just to learn to write, but it’s different, because the teacher tells you how to write ‘house,’ how to write ‘table,’ but when you go to your job, you feel frustrated and I cannot explain to the patient what he has to do. That is what we are learning here, and it’s so important.”

“Another thing that I think is important is preparing for the interview. Before I came here I was trying to go into health care field because I have experience, but my resume was very bad, it was from Europe. And anybody didn’t give me the opportunity to explain myself, who I am and how I do or what I have to do. And then here, we learn these things so how we can prepare our resume and the cover letter--these are important; it’s our mirror. Our mirror in the world.”

Asked why this class is a good use of MRNY funding and funding from other sources, sample responses include:

“I think it’s important that we are doing this training. Because in the long run we go out in the field and we help people. And these people really need our help, because some of them have no one to help them, no one to guide them, no one to advise them. So we, the community health workers ... we will be out there working with them.”

“What is the word for everything is connected to the other? So maybe, government helps us now, because we need to work and we change to study for work, because we have the American Dream and we work hard. So then I have money and I pay taxes and I have a house and a family.”

“I’m very shameful that in my country, Bangladesh, I was a teacher. For like three years here, I’m a cashier. . . . And my daughter said, “Mommy, You can’t live like this, you have to do something better.” So that’s why, I like my life to live myself. I’m not going to depend on anyone . . . I like to have happy ending for my life. I like this course for me, it’s free course, it’s very good. If I do better job in future, I’m going to give taxes the same way to the government, so that I give a lot of opportunity for the next generation like us.”

CHW Training Class

There are 23 participants in this class; four are men. Most appear to be immigrants of color in their twenties and thirties. The class is discussing community outreach for a SNAP workshop to be held at MRNY. They review the information about the event. Instructor Julie Quinton acknowledges, “Street outreach is hard! We’ll do some role play to practice.” The class plans to make flyers for the event; one participant suggests approaching businesses in the area for help. Another says, “People are tired! We need to look different, visually, what
can we do?” So the class decides to use colorful images in their flyers. Their assignment for the next day is to go out to distribute the flyers and gather information about those who are interested.

As part of their preparation, they read a story about HIV outreach in a bar, and talk about what the person conducting this outreach effort learned. Participants conclude, “It’s not going to be easy!” The goal is to get people comfortable and talking about the issue. The class talks a lot about security and safety, entering buildings, etc. Quinton takes every comment and question seriously and promises a deeper discussion about this topic. She encourages them to “Ask for what you need and advocate for yourself.”

Next the class watches a health literacy video and then talks about it in pairs. This leads to a discussion of how CHWs translate medical information in their work. The formula for this is: the CHW shares the information in small doses, asking the client to repeat back what she understood. Quinton tells them: “Share a little, check, and re-teach and then ask them to teach you. Use the client to inform you about your success or lack of; don’t make assumptions!” The class then practices in pairs, communicating information about a dose of medicine using this formula. Quinton gives out a list of good health web sites, and an assignment to make “a gorgeous, nice, happy outreach flyer!”

**Julie Quinton, CHW Instructor**

Quinton says the goal of the CHW class is to train people to develop the skills and content knowledge they need to work as CHWs. CHWs are front line workers in health and social services who do a wide range of jobs in a variety of settings. Examples include enrolling people in public benefit programs or in health insurance plans; counseling on health prevention and on managing health conditions; promoting programs and connecting people to services; working with families who have health issues such as asthma to identify and address causes of the illness, etc. Employers include hospitals, community health outreach centers, clinics, etc. Jobs can be full or part-time, though Quinton says most of their postings have been full time and she expects this to increase as the City Department of Health and the Health and Hospitals Corporation collaborate more on health prevention.

Quinton says she came to work at MRNY because it was a place where adult education work is integrated with community organizing and social change. As an instructor at MRNY, she says, “We do the work from the belief that we’re teaching each other; that it’s a process we are facilitating, helping people to develop the skills to work with us to transform their communities. As they gain the confidence to do that, we are very much allies and colleagues.”

The CHW course includes 13 weeks of classroom instruction and practice, such as community outreach projects and developing health-related skills and knowledge with each other and in the community. Typically, CHW classes are mostly women and two-thirds native Spanish speakers. Entry requirements for the program include work authorization, comfort with spoken English, and a 6-10th grade TABE reading score. This ensures that participants
will be able to handle the textbook used in the course. There is also a holistically assessed writing sample. Within the course, Quinton says, “We have them do drafts of portfolio work so they can learn from experience and hone their reading and writing that way—through practical application.” Everybody is expected to complete a portfolio of projects that apply what they learn in the course. This includes: designing an outreach campaign; participating in community organizing; writing an outreach flyer; designing a health workshop and related Power Point presentation; and composing a cover letter that is CHW focused. Participants also help design a public health intervention. As Quinton says, “Our belief is that we are giving people the tools that are helping them . . . become better advocates and communicators, better able to support their community and more capable of engaging in community change. . . . They're really ready to hit the ground running and apply their skills in ways that keep the power in community members’ hands to become healthier and to help their communities become healthier.”

**CHW Participants Speak**

This was a large class with a range of backgrounds and reasons for their interest in becoming CHWs. I conducted several focus groups and include sample responses below. Participants in these groups were from many countries, including Peru, Poland, Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bangladesh, Peru, and Chile. I was most interested in their reasons for taking the class. Below are selected responses:

“I came to this country 26 years ago . . . all the while I am working in the health field, as a home health aide for more than twenty years . . . . I want to know more about this profession, because I think it’s more easy than home health aide for me, because I have the knowledge and now that my children are gone, I have the time. Now I want to dedicate, because I always like medicine. I know the Spanish speaking people need me . . . . I want to see what is the work I can do with older people.”

“I like to talk with people and I like to be involved in whatever it takes to help them. I used to work in the airport and I used to talk a lot. So my relationship with people from all over the world was the bread of every day . . . . So that’s what I was trying to be looking for here; to develop my skills to be with the people.”

“I am currently a health care professional . . . . I am now learning that it takes more hands-on than it takes being an administrator to reach the community. So I’m using both my knowledge from my professional life and what I have a passion for, to go out in my community and teach. Instead of them coming to the outpatient clinic to me, I can actually go out to them; because sometimes we have barriers that are beyond our beliefs. This course will bridge those two worlds for me.”
A medical assistant who has both worked in a hospital and been a patient was also in a CHW focus group. She said she feels she’s been in many medical settings and “I have been doing this job and did not know there was a title for it . . . so I’m very excited that I’ll be able to obtain employment and move forward with something that comes easy to me.” Another participant said she “fell in love with this . . . All of the jobs that I’ve been doing before, they were unsafe. The things that I’m learning now, I never know these things before. And now I’m getting ready to let others know. It’s the community and if we work together we are going to change the world and do things a little different.”

**Worker Health and Safety Training**

*Javier Gallardo, MRNY Health and Safety Co-ordinator*

Javier Gallardo coordinates the work of ten trainers who provide Worker Health and Safety training for MRNY, including certifications recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA). Last year, MRNY trained over 1600 workers on OSHA-10: “For construction work, they learn all about general health and safety, including prevention training to protect themselves from accidents, falls and chemicals, as well as electrical safety and scaffold safety.” In New York City, the card issued after completing OSHA 10 training is needed in order to work on most construction sites.

Gallardo, who trained in Occupational Health and Safety at Rutgers University School of Public Health, tells me that MRNY provides OSHA 10 training for workers in general industry as well as for construction workers. General Industry Training covers safety for cleaning workers, hospital workers, restaurant workers and warehouse workers: “The card issued by this training does not expire and it is not mandated for these industries, though many employers require it. The General Industry OSHA training is ten hours, but can also include electives such as fall protection, ladders, ergonomics, blood borne pathogens, etc. Some topics are similar to construction but others are very different.” In many of the city’s big buildings, commercial cleaners are required to have the General Industry OSHA 10 card. Gallardo says the objective of both OSHA 10 trainings is for participants to earn the credential and get a job, but also to learn how to protect themselves and know their rights as workers: “I would say that 90% of those who take either of our OSHA trainings need it to work.”

Most of the workers who take OSHA trainings at MRNY are Latinos from the neighborhoods where MRNY offices are located. Gallardo says 75% of those who take the OSHA course for construction workers are male, while those who enroll in the General Industry course are almost evenly male and female.

MRNY is currently building its capacity to provide OSHA training and to do follow-up with participants to see if and how they are applying the training in their particular situations. Gallardo tells me that the trainings are interactive and use a combination of small group activities, visuals, and discussion to make sure “they get what they need.” Still, the question
of how to apply the training on the job comes up; Gallardo says workers will say, "Hey, this is beautiful, but I have to apply it in real life. When I am there, I'm afraid I'm going to get fired if I speak up." Gallardo says the MRNY trainers tell them they have a right to file a complaint with OSHA as an individual, but they recommend they do it through MRNY or a union.

MRNY trainers themselves attend train the trainer sessions and classes in topics such as industrial hygiene, as part of a partnership with the United Steelworkers and their Tony Mazzocchi Training Center. The Barry Commoner Center at Queens College also supports MRNY's health and safety training and research capacity. To describe some of the ways he applies what he has learned, Gallardo gives the example of the MRNY organizer working on the car wash campaign with RWDSU (Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union) and New York Communities for Change. One goal of the partner organizations working on this campaign is to prepare a report on health and safety in that industry. Gallardo concludes: "The more we have informed our workforce about their rights and how to prevent accidents and save lives, the better off everybody is. If we have less accidents and fatalities, we are saving a lot of money for hospitals and all the health systems that spend millions of city and state dollars. But also, when you train workers, you transfer power too. So the more knowledgeable the workforce is, the higher the morale. They become more efficient and effective and more likely to keep their jobs."

**Worker Cooperatives**

Speaking about MRNY’s rationale for incubating worker cooperatives, Axt says that a core belief of the organization is that “folks employed at a certain business are the experts, but the way our economy is currently structured—the sort of top down, heavy on corporate structure way of viewing economics—doesn’t engage their expertise. It’s not good for income inequality for sure, but it’s also just not smart in terms of productivity and innovation. It’s just smart economics to have workers really involved in designing and leading in the workplace.”

Worker cooperatives incubated by MRNY are owned and operated by workers. Many MRNY members and participants come from countries where worker coops “operate at scale," says Axt, so it is a comfortable structure for them. Coops can also avoid the exploitation and low wages characteristic of many jobs available to immigrant workers. MRNY has now incubated three worker cooperatives at different stages of development: Pa’lante, a cleaning cooperative; ACTO, a cooperative of OSHA trainers; and a nascent cooperative of its transgender members who are training at a cosmetology school to form a cooperative in the beauty industry.
MRNY’s coops not only help members create their own businesses, they also develop sustainable jobs and avoid the kinds of discrimination and wage theft immigrant workers often face at work. MRNY staff spent three years learning about coops, and consulting with other New York City worker coops, such as ROC New York, which operates Colors Restaurant and coops created by the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park. In 2012, MRNY members began discussions about which industries they should focus on for coop development.

In 2014, MRNY launched Pa’lante Green Cleaning, after a year of training for members. The industry was chosen not only because it was one in which so many MRNY members and participants had worked, but also because the non-union sector of the industry had very poor working conditions and low wages. MRNY members with a strong interest in the industry were encouraged to apply and if accepted, begin the year of training. Once they were Pa’lante members, industry specific and hard skills training continued on topics such as green cleaning products.

Soft skills training for coop members involves team building, communication skills and conflict resolution skills. There is also the work of branding, logo design, and identifying working partners. MRNY has partnered with CUNY law school and the Urban Justice Center for legal support. Coop members and MRNY staff and partners work on key decisions about by-laws, such as daily operating rules, etc. The whole process for Pa’lante took about a year, including training, decision-making, and setting up the coop structure.

ACTO is a MRNY-supported worker cooperative of OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Act) trainers, who offer OSHA training in English and Spanish. The ten members of ACTO, alongside five MRNY staff members, became authorized instructors through a partnership with the United Steelworkers. OSHA 10 training is required to work on all New York City construction sites; MRNY would like to see it mandated for other industries as well, and is looking to connect occupational health and safety to worker organizing. For example, MRNY is currently working with RWDSU (Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union) and with non-union car wash workers who could benefit from the training.

The third MRNY coop project involves LGBTQ members who requested cosmetology training. MRNY sees the model as a way to address the particular barriers its LGBTQ members face, which include extreme discrimination by employers. As MRNY staffer Daniel Puerto told me: “The LGBTQ committee approached us and we saw the coop model as perfect for a community we have struggled to serve effectively.” In 2014, the City Council allocated $1.2 million to worker cooperative development in New York City, some of which helped support the group of transgender Latina women currently earning cosmetology licenses with the goal of forming a beauty services cooperative.

After having supported the development of the three worker coops described above, MRNY is now partnering with other coop incubators to continue to lend business support to these coops. MRNY also provides ongoing support to coop members through a holistic set of services and policy campaigns that help these community members to address other aspects of their lives that continue to destabilize their families.
MRNY Financial Empowerment Training for Coop Members

“Working in a coop is helping other people and having more security; if something happens, we can help each other mutually. Whereas on the outside, . . . . they make us work and there’s no salary. But in the coops, we can all fight and not allow anyone to steal our salary. . . . It’s better to work as a team than by ourselves.”

Coop Member in Financial Empowerment Training

On April 8, 2016, Brian Gurski, who works on financial empowerment with immigrants in Jackson Heights and Corona, offered a workshop on budgeting to MRNY coop members. MRNY’s financial empowerment training was part of a collaborative project with Citi Community Development, the New York City Office of Financial Empowerment and the ICA Group to develop financial empowerment tools for worker cooperatives.

Gurski began by saying that each person or family has its own way of saving, and its own concepts and principles about managing money. He asked those present why they had come and what they expected. He encouraged members to ask questions and give feedback during the workshop, which was the first of six in the training.

Seventeen MRNY coop members, from both ACTO and Pa’lante, attended. Their questions and comments concerned the finances and budgets of the coops as well of their own families. Sample responses were:

“I’m a Pa’lante member. I want to learn financial management and to plan step by step, how to save for retirement and invest in our business.”

“I’m from ACTO. We are a general industry and construction coop. As a coop, we want to build our financial future. We need to understand how to manage our resources. The financial committee is here to strengthen what we need to know as business owners and personally.”

“I am the coop back office coordinator. I want to learn how to support the coops better.”

Gurski promised to focus the training on the issues members raise: “Not everyone needs to be the financial manager, but everyone needs financial literacy to converse and plan and be part of decision making and budgeting and planning. Everyone here is an owner, and it is important for everyone to understand the finances. Goals of financial stability allow us to plan for healthy eating, our children’s futures, our retirement and keeping our money safe.”

Gurski then engaged the participants in a discussion of how they were managing their money currently. He gave an example of meeting a goal of saving $1000 a year, and talked about what that means weekly, monthly, and over 10 years. Throughout the workshop, he linked personal and household financing with the prosperity of the coops. He reviewed what would be covered in each workshop and told them that the New York City Consumer Affairs Office of Financial Empowerment offers free services to MRNY coop members. He also provided a list of other free financial services.
Participants discussed their own ways of managing money; one member said: “I consider myself good with money and I always make a list. I buy only what I need. In the U.S., people buy and buy and then don’t use. I come from a country that needs everything we throw away here.” Gurski built on this example by encouraging participants to “use your own values, systems, lists; use what speaks to you. Take control, so you will be able to establish and reach your goals.” Because they have come from different traditions, Gurski suggested, they need to organize themselves in ways that match people to their strengths when assigning coop roles. Considering the social barriers faced by immigrant workers, Gurski described coops are a strategy they could use to create good jobs for themselves. Gurski encouraged both their dreams and their intermediate goals, saying, “Goals you can smell—dreams must be turned into goals, activated by a plan that makes your dream possible.”

The class moved on to the main goal of the sessions, which the instructor defined as “to change your attitudes about money. Use words with possibility and power! See money as a tool instead of a problem. A budget is not a list of sacrifices, but a list of decisions.” Gurski then provided concrete steps participants could use to control, evaluate and document income and expenses, both as coop and as family members.

**Coop Members Speak**

Seeing the decision to become coop members as a financial one, I asked participants why they decided on this strategy as workers. Sample responses included:

“As a single mother, I know a few things about being able to administer money. I’m the kind of person who knows I should always have a little stash, because you never know when you’re going to need it. . . .Now, thanks to this class, it really gets my attention to do the financial classes for credit at the bank even more. There’s a lot I want to accomplish in the future.”

“This orientation was very important for us because in managing the coop, we need to keep track in an organized way, so that we know that we are going to grow and that we also have to pay taxes. So this workshop is the workshop we’ve been missing!”

“I learned about MRNY from other families. I was desperate because they wanted to get rid of me from my apartment. . . .I came here and I saw a group of people in this very room and they were helping people who were thrown out of their apartments. I told people what was happening to me and I got an attorney. . . .We won the case because of that. I became a MRNY member because I saw there were a lot of good things to learn and to defend ourselves. I also became a part of the Pa’lante coop. Every time I have a problem, I reach out for help and they always help me. Thanks to this place, I found a family.”
“I just want to communicate that as an institution that believes in people’s dignity and respect . . . taking the lead on developing one of the first transgender female-led worker cooperatives in the country speaks to our values and our mission.” Daniel Puerto, MRNY Coop Developer

Daniel Puerto was involved with all three of MRNY’s coops, Pa’lante, ACTO and the one developed by PRYDE, MRNY’s LGBTQ organizing committee in Queens. He said that from the beginning of MRNY’s work with cooperatives and with the transgender community, discrimination in employment opportunities for transgender members emerged as a critical issue. MRNY transgender members skyped with transgender activists in Argentina and learned about worker cooperatives there.

By the end of 2014, MRNY’s PRYDE members had decided on becoming cosmetologists, and in 2015, MRNY committed to covering the costs of this intensive required training for the members. New York State required training for licensing in the beauty industry is more than 1000 hours, and covers hair care, coloring, cutting and styling; as well as skin care and nail care. Those who complete the training must pass a New York State Department of Education practical and written exam in order to work as licensed cosmetologists. MRNY worked with a beauty industry advisory board, a beauty foundation, and a stylist who works with Victoria’s Secret models to access industry expertise and guidance. The next step will be for the coop members to achieve their New York State Cosmetology licenses, after which they will find placements in post-beauty school apprenticeships and internships.

Puerto emphasized the impact of the development of this project on participants: “They have become transgender activists, part of transgender folks across the country who want to form worker cooperatives . . . . PRYDE members are women who are exploited because of their immigration status, who are exploited in the workplace, who face discrimination in applying for jobs, whose probability of being hired is low because transgender individuals are the most likely to live in poverty. They went from that state to training, to becoming business owners as a coop. Two of the coop members training here faced eviction, another faced diabetes, and another had just broken up with a partner. And so, I’m very proud of the commitment they have shown to their future. This is not a project for Make The Road, this is a project for them, for their lives. They’ll forever be licensed cosmetologists.”

After passing the state exams, these PRYDE members will work as apprentices in salons that Le Parisien Beauty School will help to identify. They will develop their bylaws as a cooperative and formulate their next steps to launching their own business. Puerto concludes: “In the news recently, a transgender woman was attacked on the subway. We hear about the bathroom bills, and all the controversy over that. We hear about suicide and homicide, specifically targeting trans individuals. To know that this is a group of people who
are coming into themselves, to know your organization is providing a service that is going to directly impact them, it is transformative.”

**Instructors at Parisien Beauty School**

**Carmen Ledesma:** In July of 2010, Carmen Ledesma received the Small Business of the Year award from then Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Nearly 13 years before this achievement, Ledesma left her native Paraguay and came to the U.S. with two goals: to give her children the best education possible and to open her own business. When many of her clients asked how they could enter the beauty business, Ledesma says she identified with the aspirations of these Latin American immigrant women and so opened her own Aesthetician School because “I knew that so many people had the desire to someday achieve my same dream, but they didn’t have the tools.”

Le Parisien Formula B Beauty School in Woodside, Queens is approved by the New York State Education Department to teach all aspects of hair cutting, care coloring and styling, as well as skin care treatments, make-up application and nail care and coloring. The school features a hands-on instructional methodology and provides instruction exclusively in Spanish. Shortly after I enter the school, Ledesma points out four MRNY members styling hair on mannequin heads at several hair stations. They also get to work on real customers who come to the salon, which is lively, pristine, and attractive. Ledesma circulates among them, correcting and demonstrating and commenting on their work. Instructor John Lewis demonstrates blow-drying techniques to an MRNY participant. My visit is in April, as PRYDE members prepare for their state exams.

Ledesma’s skills are global; she tells me: “I developed my training and skills first in my country, then I learned coloring techniques in Germany, cutting techniques in France and styling in Spain. I am able to take all of that into teaching here.” Between 70-80% of those who study at Le Parisien work in a salon within six months of training as assistants. “The salon owners come to us looking for them,” Ledesma tells me. Her school prepares people both for the state board and for work in the industry. She understands that the MRNY participants are receiving some funding to attend her school, and approves: “When you have education, you make it so that people are not dependent on the government and you open roads for them and their families.” She tells me that 98% of her participants pass their exams and get jobs in the industry, and some end up opening their own businesses.

**John Lewis** has worked at Parisien for about 15 months, though he has been in the beauty industry for 33 years. He tells me that the typical schedule for trainees is attending classes from Monday through Thursday, learning the basics: “Everything: from infection control to hair cutting, color classes, how to manage, cut, and style hair, etc.” This instruction covers both theory and some practice with mannequins. On Fridays, “They work more as a clinic, “putting together what they learned during the week to give services to clients….It’s part of the education; you learn something in the classroom, you practice on the mannequin, and then you do it with the client.” There is also a test for each chapter covered in class, some written, some practical, some both.
For the state exam, participants must be able to prepare the materials and bring the equipment they need to use, and they are timed for each aspect of their work. Lewis tells me: “We are conducting instruction in the way that they will be prepared to take the state board examinations, where they need to perform ten different services.”

Asked how he knows when someone is ready to tests, Lewis responds: “Every year we have a seminar for teachers to give us different teaching techniques to teach all the types of students we can possibly have in this school. But I have a lot of time teaching, and I know when I see a person exactly what I can achieve with that person. . .people who know how to work with hair and people that don’t know how to use a comb. When they finish here, they are total professionals.” Lewis tells me some graduates work 3-6 months as an assistant and then “step up to the chair when they are ready for the type of salon they are in.” Asked about why funding for the Parisien training is a good investment, Lewis says it is an investment in changing lives: “I’m helping you to learn, but you are going to change your life, you are going to have your own money, you are not going to be una carga (public charge).” Asked about the MRNY participants in particular, Lewis says, “They need to continue helping these people. Why? They are fantastic, they are fantastic! They are good students, they want to learn, they want to change their lives, and this is very important to New York.”

**MRNY Transgender Participants Speak**

“I’m a member of PRYDE MRNY. I’m here for the opportunity they have given us to change our lives, given that discrimination against the trans community is very strong in New York City. We have become marginalized because we don’t have opportunities. This has given us the opportunity to have a profession. . .MRNY is enabling us to make the first coop of trans women at the national level. And this is very important and makes us very proud.” This participant adds that MRNY is helping her to get an education and to organize the first trans coop, and this enables her to no longer be singled out and marginalized.

“We want to make a difference in society, and we want to show that we are doing something for ourselves. This is the first time I have been given the opportunity to study and be supported by someone (MRNY). I want to change the way I’m living. We want to be professionals in our field for the trans community. We have not received support in the past from our families or anyone, and we want to be able to live calm lives with the resources that we need.”

“I am from Mexico and the trans community. I’m in this program to advance and to have access to better jobs. Trans people are not provided jobs and it’s really important for us to have a better life. . .and to not always be described they way we have been described. I’m here because of MRNY and the opportunity they have given me to study, and also want to thank them because they have been concerned about the trans community and have this program, which will enable me to have a better future.”
“I am Mexican. I am in this country 17 years and I’ve faced discrimination in most of the jobs that I’ve had. I’ve struggled because of my sexual orientation, and there are many obstacles I’ve had to overcome. But now I am very happy that I will soon be graduating. I want to thank MRNY for supporting this cooperative and also just supporting me. . . .I want to tell my companeras, my friends and colleagues that it is very important to take advantage of these opportunities so we can move forward as a trans community. We will no longer be marginalized and we will be able to be owners of our own businesses.”

QUALITATIVE EVALUATION RESULTS

Qualitative evaluation of all three program types that receive CWE funding is based on indicators of program quality, including those specific to each type of adult education program funded by CWE, and common outcomes among all programs that receive support from CWE (see appendix to this year’s report for chart of indicators). These outcomes were established in 2011, based on findings from a series of focus groups conducted with program administrators representing all three program types (community-based organizations; building trades; and labor-management/union programs). Make the Road is the community-based organization in the 2015-2016 evaluation.

Common Outcomes Across CWE Funded Programs

**CWE Funding Saves Jobs:** This outcome is not directly applicable to MRNY’s programs; rather, the coops incubated by MRNY create jobs by employing members unlikely to get jobs, especially good jobs, in the current job market. After helping coops launch, MRNY continues to provide holistic support, such as hosting the workshops in the Financial Empowerment series described here. MRNY serves an immigrant worker population that faces multiple employment barriers, including lack of facility with English and often lack of legal immigration status. To address these barriers, MRNY has turned to a strategy more common in some of the countries from which South and Central American immigrants come than in the U.S. They have created cooperatives in which workers manage the work they do together and share in the income the cooperative creates. By doing so, they avoid the exploitation and insecure incomes in many jobs available to undocumented immigrant workers. Coops also make sense because somewhat paradoxically, undocumented non-citizens “cannot be employees, but they can be employers” (Travis Putnam Hill, in “Single Moms and Coop Tamales,” Yes!, Summer 2016: page 45). MRNY has supported cooperatives as a viable employment strategy for undocumented members, and has helped launch two working coops: **ACTO**, a cooperative of Spanish-speaking OSHA trainers, and **Pa’lante**, a green cleaning company. As well, MRNY has supported the training and development of a transgender-led cooperative in the beauty industry, creating opportunities for the immigrant population facing perhaps the greatest barriers to employment. Together, these coops provide jobs, as well as training the immigrant workers served by MRNY.
CWE Funding Helps Workers Acquire and Update Computer/Technological Skills: MRNY does not yet have the space or resources to provide consistent access to computers in all its programs. The adult education program employs mobile technology labs as part of ESOL classes. The staff works with smart phone technology to communicate with the people they serve, most of who do not have access to personal computers. MRNY counselors use smart phones to stay in touch with participants and notify them about job opportunities.

CWE Funding Transforms the Life Chances of Individuals and Benefits Families and Communities: MRNY’s effect on the immigrant workers it serves is often described as transformative and life changing, by both participants and MRNY administrators, counselors and instructors. Put simply, undocumented immigrant workers who walk into any of MRNY’s offices, all of them located in immigrant communities, can expect significant changes in their lives. They will have access to lawyers not only for immigration matters, but also for issues such as unfair harassment at home, as in the case of a worker described in these pages whose landlord was forcing her out of her apartment. Workers who talk about these changes in their lives typically stress that they are here to provide more opportunity for their children, and MRNY participants have taken on its mission to serve the immigrant community. For PRYDE coop members, “MRNY is enabling us to make the first transgender cooperative at the national level,” as one said during the focus group. Another also describes both the transformation and career opportunity MRNY is providing for the PRYDE coop members: “We will no longer be marginalized and we will be able to be owners of our own businesses.”

CWE Funding Enables Movement Up Sector Specific Ladders: The job readiness series of workshops at MRNY focuses on making sure workers have access to the information, preparation, and networks they need to find work and to advance to their next jobs. MRNY staff have provided job search strategies for each individual seeking work, and maintain contact after employment to try to move their MRNY clients up in their chosen careers. In classes tailored to specific industries, such as OSHA classes for the construction and cleaning industries, or classes that prepare community health workers at two levels, MRNY participants are getting the classes they choose and the knowledge they need for getting and keeping jobs in these industries. Ongoing training for Coop members has supported the success of workers in the industries they have chosen.

CWE’s Model Differs from Standard Adult Education Practice: MRNY has addressed immigrants’ urgent need for work through its job readiness series and the ongoing help of its dedicated and experienced counselors. Instead of focusing solely on language or generic skills, the workforce classes have focused on these issues in the context of work. An example is the Community Health Worker Classes. The pre-CHW class addresses the language and literacy challenges of those who want to become CHWs, within a context of the CHW job. The CHW training continues this development with the focus shifted more to the health content and issues that CHWs face. Similarly, Coop members learn the literacy and math skills they need to run their businesses in seminars, meeting and discussions centered their work. All of the MRNY services, workshops and classes that have benefited from CWE support--from job-
readiness to cooperative training to job-specific training in the beauty industry and for community health settings—strengthen generic work skills, such as timeliness, appropriate behaviors for seeking jobs and for the workplace, building a resume, etc.

**CWE Funding Gives Workers Opportunities to Enter Jobs with good Wages and Promising Futures:** By choosing to fund MRNY job readiness workshops and services that continue to support career mobility, as was well as training for CHWs and workshops and education related to effective coop development, CWE is providing options to immigrant workers outside of the choices they typically face. MRNY offers training in fields chosen by their participants, allowing them to enter health care, construction and the beauty industry with more preparation for and understanding of how to advance in these fields. Cooperatives in these industries offer an alternative that provides workers with more control over both wages and the direction of their futures than conventional employment offers them.

**CWE Supports a More Effective Mix of Employment Preparation Options:** Strong job readiness and job advancement support provided by MRNY’s job developers and counselors, options to become part of worker cooperatives, targeted industry specific training and support in sectors that employ immigrant workers are an effective combination for addressing the barriers immigrant workers face. MRNY’s comprehensive support services in a range of areas, as well as its team of sixty lawyers and advocates, provide assistance with problems that often wreak havoc with the ability of immigrants to work and to live without fear.

**CWE Providers have Honed Best Practices Across a Range of Industries, Populations, and Communities:** To the mix of populations served by CWE funding, MRNY adds disadvantaged immigrant workers with diverse backgrounds and hopes for the future. MRNY staff nourish the latter by listening to the goals these workers have for themselves, and the kinds of experiences they face on the jobs they have had here. They provide quick access to legal support and classes in the kinds of work their participants are interested in doing: cosmetology for their transgender participants; community health worker training for others; training for cooperative members to help their businesses prosper and safety and health training for construction and restaurant workers. Unwilling to accept the barriers and dangers immigrant workers typically face, MRNY instead carves out workforce pathways and support for individual workers as well as for worker owned and operated businesses.

**Outcomes for Community-Based Organizations**

**CWE Funding Helps to Serve the Hardest to Employ Populations:** MRNY’s work with cooperatives and its training for jobs to which immigrant workers aspire honors both the choices and skills of these workers, who face multiple challenges in their search for work. MRNY’s job readiness services, which extend from introductory workshops to ongoing counseling for career advancement, honor the desire of immigrants to serve and bring value to their own communities. CWE support for MRNY serves the workforce needs of undocumented, often non-English speaking and impoverished immigrant workers seeking employment and fundamental human and workers rights.
CWE Funding Provides More Intensive Services to those Who Need Them: There are several examples of the intensity of services CWE helps support at MRNY. For those who aspire to become community health workers, the bridge class that develops health-related English language skills enables them to meet their goal of finding work that serves the needs of their community. For transgender MRNY members who face intense and multiple forms of discrimination in the conventional job market, providing the training to work in the beauty industry offers a more viable career path and one they chose for themselves. These examples show the creative ways CWE works with providers to meet the needs and the aspirations of the communities they serve. CWE also helps support participants with intensive job search and job readiness training, and helps to make worker cooperatives a viable alternative to low wage work. CWE funding helps to provide a way for transgender immigrants facing multiple forms of discrimination to achieve their career goals. When those hoping to become community health workers needed to overcome language barriers to training, a bridge class was created to better prepare them for the training they sought. By supporting MRNY, CWE is helping an organization that has a uniquely intense and comprehensive array of support for immigrant workers. MRNY not only offers help in finding a job, but also provides support for pursuing work that enables immigrants to achieve the goals and dreams that brought them to New York.

Helps Community Providers Help Those They Would Otherwise Not Reach: Those who have seen MRNY’s long lines at the front desk, or its packed training and meeting rooms might wonder if MRNY needs to reach more undocumented immigrant workers, but MRNY staff are unlikely to rest until they have addressed more New Americans than they currently reach. In this ambitious effort, every kind of support counts. The funding that CWE provides to MRNY enables the organization to fill their training rooms until not a single additional chair can fit, and to address new training needs that arise as the important work of supporting and training new Americans goes forward. MRNY’s ambitious goals for its participants are exemplified in the achievements of the transgender prospective beauty industry professionals who have faced multiple barriers to achieving steady employment and economic stability. CWE funding has been essential to supporting this class and others, so that MRNY and those who come to its doors can reach their goals, as aspiring new immigrants have been doing ever since there has been a New York City.

Conclusion

The work of Make the Road staff and the determination of its participants exemplify the promise and challenges confronting immigrant New Yorkers at a time when our city, state and nation face daunting political choices and challenges. The persistence of Make the Road staff, members and participants who address the workforce needs and daily struggles that undocumented, non-English speaking immigrants confront in one of the most expensive cities in the world gives new meaning to the organization’s name. When obstacles block the path to achievement or even survival, as renowned worker and community activist-educators
Myles Horton and Paulo Freire tell us: "We make the road by walking." The pages above tell the story of how the road of immigrant workers moves forward daily, as Make the Road staff listen to and respectfully support their aspirations to contribute to their families, their communities and their adopted City and country.

This quote is from a poem by Antonio Machado, originally published in 1912, in Proverbios y Cantares, published by Campos de Castilla.
## Make the Road New York

### Program Participation and Completion Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Enrollees</th>
<th>Number of Completers</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Completers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Health Worker Training</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge to Health Course</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Coop Development Training</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSHA Training</td>
<td>1725</td>
<td>1639</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Readiness Program</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2220</strong></td>
<td><strong>2053</strong></td>
<td><strong>92%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Make the Road New York

**Percentage (%) of Completers**

*July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016*

- **Community Health Worker Training**: 95%
- **Bridge to Health Course**: 83%
- **Worker Coop Development Training**: 77%
- **OSHA Training**: 95%
- **Job Readiness Program**: 83%
7/8/2016

Debbie Buxton
Consortium for Worker Education
275 7th Avenue, #1800
New York, NY 10001

Dear Ms. Buxton:

North Brooklyn Asthma Action Alliance (NBAAA) is pleased to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of Make the Road New York (MRNY) and the productive partnership we have developed.

NBAAA Mission: The NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull Asthma Program (NBAAA) serves poor, multi-ethnic, medically underserved communities, specifically targets disparities of access to quality of care. We utilize the chronic care health model in a comprehensive, family-centered approach to asthma care. This ensures evidence-based, best practices for all patients. Our goal is to improve clinical outcomes and increase quality of life for those with asthma. Further, we assist patients in the community in need of comprehensive, evidence-based care to improve their self-management of asthma, and this represents the single standard of care available to the community we serve. Not only do we strive to improve the lives of our patients, but we have lead a social movement to increase the healthcare infrastructure, empower communities, and train providers.

For several years, we have enjoyed collaborating with Make the Road New York, an organization that is well-known for engaging low-income and immigrant workers and building their capacity through education, training, and leadership development. MRNY’s Community Health Worker (CHW) Training program has been an important training resource and recruitment source for our hospital programs. We have had the pleasure of hosting many of their CHW trainees as interns, and we have hired several CHW program graduates in roles such as Community Liaisons and Community Health Workers that provide home environmental assessments for asthma patients. With their training and commitment to serve the community, the MRNY graduates are a terrific match for our health programs, as the demand for community-based outreach and prevention continues to grow. We anticipate that CHW roles will expand as part of a changing health field, and MRNY graduates will be well-positioned to access career ladder employment and contribute important skills to health teams. As the Lead Consultant for the Delivery System Repayment Incentive Program (DSRIP) Asthma Program at Woodhull...
Hospital, I truly know the value of the CHW field and how the hospitals rely on their skills to manage patients with chronic diseases.

We look forward to continuing to prepare and hire MRNY’s Community Health Worker trainees and building on our partnership with Make the Road New York for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Linda Nozart, MPH, RRT, AE-C
Assistant Director, Asthma Program
Conclusion

This year’s evaluation of CWE funded programs focuses on three partner organizations that serve New Yorkers hungry for opportunity:

**Make the Road New York** provides essential employment and legal services for immigrant workers;

**The Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills, Inc.** offers direct entry into the building trades for recent New York City high school graduates as well as adults from Sandy-impacted communities;

**Workers United** continues a long tradition of meeting the needs of immigrant workers with the English language and computer instruction so essential to getting and keeping good jobs in 21st Century workplaces. The union is also engaged in addressing the extreme exploitation of immigrant women workers in the City’s nail salons.

Like generations before them, participants in the classes described in this report seek an economic foothold in a City that has historically welcomed and benefitted from the skills and dreams of its workers. The quotes below are taken from an article in a special issue of the New York Times Sunday magazine focused on the construction of the City’s newest skyscrapers on the Hudson. All of the workers quoted in the article belong to New York City Building Trades unions and trained in apprenticeship programs jointly sponsored by the Building Trades and Construction Council of Greater New York. Their words provide examples of how investment in worker training and education re-imagines, recreates, and renews not only the skyline, but also the opportunities available to workers that lie at the heart of the City.

“This is a historic place. It makes me feel good to know I’m helping to rebuild it. It’s a permanent mark in the city. Twenty, thirty years from now I’m gonna be walking by and say to my kids, my grandkids, ‘I helped build that.’ **Jesse Gillespie, 22, Plumber 3 World Trade Center** "I do production welding. I also worked on Tower 1, and you can’t get a better view anywhere in the world. The best part for me is looking at the finished product. I think, we made that; Tower 1! It’s like the feather in the cap.” **Derek Dixon, Ironworker, 51, 3 World Trade Center.**

“I love working up here. Makes me feel like I’m building America back up. I love the view and the freedom.” **Scott Small, 55, Laborer, 3 World Trade Center**

“I wanted to be an air traffic controller. But I got into this, and I never imagined I would fall in love with it. When I’m up at the top and the wind is blowing at me and I’m on a lift six inches from the edge and I’m holding a four-inch pipe or its thundering and raining or I’m testing the pumps to the water towers . . . I’m thinking, Hey, I’m just doing my job.” **Myriam Giraldo, Plumber, 10 Hudson Yards.** (Quotes above appear in The New York Times Magazine, Sunday, June 5, 2016, page 54-65. Special Issue, High Life, focusing on the tallest buildings in New York.)
APPENDIX ONE:

Common Findings Across all 3 CWE Funded Program Types based on Focus Group Research in 2011:

- CWE Funding Saves Jobs
- CWE Funding Helps Workers Acquire and Update Computer/Technological Skills
- CWE Funding Transforms the Life Chances of Individuals and Benefits Families and Communities
- CWE Funding Enables Movement Up Sector Specific Career Ladders
- CWE’s Model Differs from Standard Adult Education Practice
- CWE Funding Gives Workers Opportunities to Enter Jobs with Good Wages and Promising Futures
- CWE Support Enables a More Effective Mix of Employment Preparation Options
- CWE Providers have Honed Best Practices across a Range of Industries, Populations, and Communities.

Focus Group Findings by Program Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Program</th>
<th>Union based/ Labor-Management programs</th>
<th>Building Trade Apprenticeships</th>
<th>Community-Based Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Type Specific Findings | CWE funding:  
- Saves jobs  
- Supports industry-driven programs  
- Transforms lives  
- Supports career advancement  
- CWE’s work-focused education attracts and retains workers  
- CWE classes strengthen generic work skills  | CWE Funding:  
- Supports entry into the building trades  
- Maintains employment as certifications and licensing change  
- Supports diversity in the trades  
- Provides a support system for lifelong career training  | CWE Funding:  
- Helps us serve the hardest to employ populations  
- Provides more intensive services to those who need them  
- Helps community providers serve those they would not otherwise not reach |