



The Role of Navigators in IELCE/IET Career Pathways

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Career navigators and advisors provide individualized and targeted supports that help learners navigate their education and training and result in improved outcomes.¹ These supports can help improve student persistence and completion, enabling adult learners to achieve their education and career goals.² Career navigators and advisors play a particularly important role in serving English learners (ELs) and immigrants, who benefit from additional aid navigating complex U.S. systems and accessing services to help support their integration into U.S. society. Navigators and advisors can guide ELs through identifying, participating in, and progressing along a career pathway that can include Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) and Integrated Education and Training (IET) components. In addition to working directly with ELs, navigators and advisors can also support elements of program design and implementation, especially by developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships.

The *Enhancing Access for Refugees and New Americans* project aims to support adult educators in developing and delivering high-quality IELCE/IET programming in alignment with an immigrant integration approach.

Enhancing Access Spotlights describe specific aspects of IELCE/IET implementation.

Navigator Support Along the IELCE/IET Pathway

Navigators provide a consistent point of contact for learners as they progress along a career pathway (Exhibit 1). Effective career navigation can include personalized support and up-to-date and relevant information based on current labor market trends and opportunities. The following lists describe potential touchpoints and activities that navigators may take to ensure ELs are receiving the support they need as they engage in IELCE/IET activities along a career pathway.

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The resource was reviewed by Leticia Farrera, a navigator with Austin Community College.

¹Borradaile, Kelley, Alina Martinez, and Peter Schochet. 2021. *Adult Education Strategies: Identifying and Building Evidence of Effectiveness* (NCEE 2021-007). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2021007/pdf/2021007.pdf>

²Workforce Strategies Initiative. 2014. *A Resource Guide for College/Career Navigators or Those Interested in Starting a Navigator Program*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Annotated-Bibliography-Of-Resources-For-Navigators.pdf>

Exhibit 1. Phases of Navigator Support



RECRUITMENT AND PRESCREENING

As learners are recruited and prescreened for IELCE activities, navigators should

- Conduct targeted outreach with key community partners, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) providers, refugee resettlement agencies, American Jobs Centers,³ and libraries to identify and recruit potential learners.
- Work with learners from the time they enter programming or begin their career pathway to prepare them for IELCE/IET activities.
- Help potential learners understand IELCE/ IET program information, goals, and eligibility requirements to prepare for their next steps.
- Complete prescreening conversations to check for potential student “fit,” including interest, eligibility, and strengths/potential barriers.

ENROLLMENT

When learners enroll, navigators should

- Ask open-ended questions to identify and document short- and long-term career and education goals (e.g., What are your career goals? What skills or work experience do you have that you want to build on? What steps do you already know you need to take to achieve your goals?).
- Use the intake process or intake data⁴ to identify professional credentials and degrees students have from other countries.
- Share learner data with colleagues to identify additional programming needs such as bridge programs or additional onboardings efforts.



³To find your local American Jobs Center, search here: <https://www.careeronestop.org/localhelp/americanjobcenters/find-american-job-centers.aspx>.

⁴Many states provide or require a common form for local programs' use. These forms typically ask for information around the learner's highest credential earned and whether it was earned in the United States or internationally. Intake staff can use this information to identify Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs). For an example, see the Massachusetts state form: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/laces/intake-form/>.



PARTICIPANT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

During learners' participation in IELCE activities, navigators play an ongoing role and should

- Continue to identify and address learner strengths and potential barriers to persistence and completion.
- Connect learners to supports for basic needs, including housing, transportation, social services, and childcare.
- Promote digital equity by making sure learners have access to needed digital literacy instruction, technology devices, and the internet.

TRANSITIONS

As learners participate in their IELCE/IET program, navigators should

- Support learners in planning next steps to employment, further training, or education.
- Build self-advocacy and system navigation skills to support learner success in transition to employment or further training and education.
- Identify individual learner strengths and address barriers for a successful transition.
- Maintain contact with learners early in their next steps to provide supports or make referrals as appropriate.



ONGOING PROGRAM INVOLVEMENT

To play a role in overall IELCE/IET development and continuous improvement, navigators should also

- Continually identify barriers and assets to persistence and completion, address any need for in-house and community resources, and coordinate scheduling issues and changes.
- Attend IELCE/IET planning and coordination team meetings.
- Continue to build and strengthen partnerships with core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners, community partners, and employers.
- Share learner data with IELCE/IET instructors to update on learner progress, changes, barriers to persistence, and trends to identify additional basic needs supports that would be beneficial.
- Contribute to program design and improvement opportunities based on collected data showing learner needs, strengths, goals, and opportunities.
- Reach out to program alumni to learn about their career progression and how the IELCE/IET activities prepared them for their next steps to inform program improvement.
- Invite alumni to engage with the program (e.g., mentor learners, speak at events, support recruitment).

Navigators in the Field

The role, title, and scope of navigators can vary depending on the state, organization, and purpose. The following examples, identified through a landscape scan⁵ of the research and existing practices related to IELCE and IETs that serve ELs, illustrate three approaches to navigators at the program, regional, and state level. They highlight strategies that support ELs as they transition from IELCE to IET activities along a career pathway.

Program Approach to Navigation

Navigators are essential staff members at many local adult education programs. At Austin Community College (ACC), Career Pathways Coordinators serve as full-time navigators and play a key role in [ACC's Adult Education Career Pathways Programs](#), serving as the point person for learners, including ITPs, from the time they enter until they exit the program. Specifically, the Career Pathways Coordinators have the following responsibilities:



Participant Recruitment and

Prescreening:

- Coordinators lead class visits to high-level EL courses to identify and recruit interested and eligible ELs.
- Coordinators create a community network of stakeholders such as employers, parent support specialists in the district, libraries, refugee resettlement programs, and more.
- Through quarterly community stakeholder meetings, the coordinators raise awareness of programs offered.



Participant Enrollment:

- The Career Pathways Coordinators work closely with instructors and other program staff (such as the Workforce Integration Coordinator, the Ability to Benefit Coordinator, and the Level Up Coordinator) to ensure that ELs are placed correctly, receive any benefits and support they are eligible for, and are exposed to the career pathways that most closely align to their skills, interests, and previous education and training completed in their country of origin.



Participant Support and Guidance:

- The Career Pathways Coordinator provides the individualized support to help ELs apply what they are learning in classes to their unique career plan. For learners who are ITPs, this may mean guidance on credential evaluation, counseling around potential career pathways, and conversations about short- and long-term goals. The Coordinators also work directly with employers and staffing agencies to share new opportunities or make direct referrals when appropriate.

⁵The landscape scan was conducted by the Enhancing Access for Refugees and New Americans project. Many of the resources identified through the landscape scan are available on the project's web pages: <https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/refugeesandnewamericans>.



Participant Transition: Even after learners leave the program, Career Pathways Coordinators keep in contact with graduates to learn more about how their experience in the program prepared them for their next steps. This feedback helps the program continuously improve. Additionally, participants and alumni can mentor incoming learners and visit classes to share their personal stories, including their experiences coming to the United States, takeaways from their education journey, and their experiences related to further education and work in the United States, including financial aid, apprenticeships, networking, job search, interviewing, and work culture.

Regional Approaches to Navigation

Navigators can have a regional scope, such as serving learners from across a region who enroll in a local community college or working in a region of the state to support ELs in that area. Likewise, local programs can employ navigators to help ELs connect to regional services. In Chicago, 13 local adult education programs jointly fund a Career Navigator position at their local OneStop on the west side of Chicago. By attending OneStop meetings and having a presence at American Job Centers, the navigator provides a connection to the adult education programs, improving communications between the OneStop and the adult

education programs. The adult education programs can refer learners directly to the navigator, who provides on-site assistance to adult learners in navigating and accessing OneStop services.

State Support for Navigation

States are essential in supporting the role and scope of navigators. State leadership can offer training and fund or develop statewide approaches and resources. Many states, including Texas, Minnesota, and Virginia, are exploring ways to support positions that provide individualized supports. For example, the Virginia State Department of Education supported the training of a cohort of adult educators to become certified career coaches. Drawing from state leadership funds, the Virginia Adult Literacy Resource Center developed and carried out the Virginia Career Coach Certification Program.⁶ The Adult Education Coordinator noted that “investing in the training of coaches has allowed more providers to have individuals within their own organization with the knowledge and skills to serve as a career coach and support career pathways.”⁷

⁶ Virginia’s Career Coach Certification Program used World Education’s [Navigator and Coach Capacity Building Curriculum](#), which had been used by other partners in the state, including the community colleges, Department of Social Services, and high schools. It provides a common language and approach across partners. More information about Virginia’s program is available in the brief, [A Blended Training Model for Scaling Career Coaching](#).

⁷Personal communications with author.

Navigator Training and Research

Explore the resources below to better understand the role of the navigator in adult education programs, including connections between the work of the navigator and student success and an online training to build the skill of the navigator in adult education programs.

Resources

- World Education. *Advising and Coaching Students with Foreign Degrees and Credentials*. <https://www.collegetransition.org/career-pathways/publications/advising-students-with-foreign-degrees-and-credentials/>

- World Education Services. WES Advisor E-Guides. https://www.wes.org/advisor-e-guides/?s=&categories_eguides=792

These e-guides provide tips and advice for advising international learners and skilled immigrants in 10 fields.

Research

- Borradaile, Kelley, Alina Martinez, and Peter Schochet. 2021. *Adult Education Strategies: Identifying and Building Evidence of Effectiveness* (NCER 2021-007). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2021007/pdf/2021007.pdf>

- Workforce Strategies Initiative. 2014. *A Resource Guide for College/Career Navigators or Those Interested in Starting a Navigator Program*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Annotated-Bibliography-Of-Resources-For-Navigators.pdf>
- Midwest Comprehensive Center. 2018. *Student Goal Setting: An Evidence-Based Practice*. American Institutes for Research. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/MWCC-Student-Goal-Setting-Evidence-Based-Practice-Resource-508.pdf>
- National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. 2005. *Goals and Self-efficacy in Persistence*. https://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/self-efficacy_role.pdf

Training

- Online Course: Finding True North: The Role of the Navigator. <https://elearning-worlded.coursestorm.com/course/finding-true-north-role-of-the-navigator>

This free, self-paced online course from World Education introduces the core functions and competencies of navigators.