UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit www.unidosus.org or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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Using this Toolkit:

UnidosUS designed this toolkit to share general guidance and some examples of the ways that nonprofit organizations can outreach to prospective adult participants for enrollment in job readiness and workforce development training programs. It was developed by compiling information from UnidosUS Affiliates and other grantees; UnidosUS is grateful to those who have shared their best practices with us throughout the years. UnidosUS notes that guidance given by program funders or experienced industry partners should supersede the following information.

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the way that programs are run—from different outreach strategies and virtual instead of classroom-based learning. Some of the strategies presented in this document may not currently be viable or may need to be altered to meet current or future circumstances. We have included a “COVID-19 Considerations” section at the end of the document to capture specific strategies that can be put in place during the pandemic.

Considerations for Program Design

The most successful job readiness and job training programs have strong organizational support and buy-in from two stakeholders at the outset: industry partners/employers and community members/jobseekers. It is important to consider:

1. **What do industry partners and employers have to say?**
   - Ask about the jobs available in your target industry, and the skills and credentials that a jobseeker needs to succeed in those roles. Are employer partners willing to guide you on curriculum design so that you can include relevant information and activities?
   - Identify the unique value that you bring to employers. Are they struggling with employee retention? Are they looking for bilingual talent? Is there a skill set that they’re having trouble finding in general applicants? Make sure you know how you can help them meet their hiring needs.
2. What do the jobseekers in your community have to say?
   - Participant voice should be considered from the very beginning. Talk to the community members and job seekers that your organization serves. What careers are they interested in? How much time are they willing to invest in improving their skills? How comfortable are they using technology (computers, tablets, smartphones) as a learning tool? Make sure you know how your program can help people build their skills and resumes. Community members can make authentic and valuable contributions to program planning, implementation, and evaluation/reflection.

3. What expertise can your organization leverage?
   - Lean on what works—your organization likely has a wealth of information already and a set of best practices about what works well when serving adult learners. This information may come from different types of programs that serve adults, not just workforce programs, but financial capability, health, civic engagement, and other initiatives. Use this information to think strategically about ideal cohort sizes, when and how often to have classes, and the best way to keep participants engaged, whether you are recruiting for in-person, blended, or distance learning programs.

### Industry Partners & Employers
- What jobs are available in your target industry?
- What are the skills and credentials needed?
- Are employer partners willing to guide you on curriculum design?
- Identify the unique value that you bring to employers.

### Jobseekers
- What careers are they interested in?
- How much time are they willing to invest in improving their skills?
- How comfortable are they using technology (computers, tablets, smartphones) in the classroom?
- Make sure you know how your program can help them build their skills and resumes.

### Organizational Expertise
- Lean on what works - your organization likely has wealth of information already and - a set of best practices
- Use this information to think strategically about ideal cohort sizes, when and how often to have classes, and the best way to keep participants engaged.
Outreach Strategies

Once your program design is in place, how do you reach eligible and interested participants? There are two approaches that can be effective—casting a wide net, and targeted recruitment.

Casting a Wide Net

Casting a wide net means letting anyone and everyone know about the new workforce training program that you are offering. This is important when your program is in its early stages. You want people to associate the name of your organization with the new program you are offering. At this stage, you are more interested in spreading the word than you are in finding the “perfect” program participant. You want word of mouth to work in your favor—the more people that know about your program, the more people they can tell. For example, say that your program is designed for people between 16 and 24 years old. You may still post flyers at a senior center’s community board with the hopes that people who frequent the center will see the flyer and share the information with their younger friends and family members.

Here are a few strategies:

• Engage in door-to-door community canvassing.
• Create radio ads for both Spanish-language and English-language radio.
• Place flyers in the community:
  o Schools, libraries, barber shops, childcare centers, churches, faith-based organizations, food banks, clinics, recreation centers, malls, parks, grocery stores, city/county offices, American Job Centers, local small businesses, community fairs/events, transit stops
• Send mailers, post cards or flyers to target ZIP codes or communities
• Create an eye-catching and approachable booth at a job fair to share information about your program. (If possible, ask program graduates to join you and speak with people that express interest in learning more).
• Develop referral relationships with staff at local schools and community colleges.
• Market your program on social media and via e-blasts.
Targeted Recruitment Strategies

Once the word is out about your program, you can use targeted recruitment strategies to find applicants that are based on your program eligibility criteria. Using the same example as before, say that your program serves people that are between 16 and 24 years old. Rather than posting flyers at a senior center, now you would be thinking about marketing at local high schools, on social media, and at other places where young adults in your community gather.

Targeted Outreach

- Cross-referrals from other programs at your organization. (ex. Send an email to your GED program graduates; talk to the parents or caregivers of the children at your childcare center or afterschool program).
- Relationships with community college counselors.
- Nonprofit partners that serve similar clientele.
- Reverse referrals from employers (some employers may be able to give your flyers to job applicants who are not invited to advance in the hiring process interview and recommend that they do some additional upskilling before applying again).

Additionally, once your program is established and early participants have graduated and gotten jobs, you can develop even more targeted outreach strategies that factor in the skills and abilities of successful graduates. For example, say that you have 30 program graduates who have secured jobs in the target industry. Of those 30 graduates, 23 people had at least one year of frontline retail experience, though it was not an entrance requirement for the program. It may be worth asking graduates how they leveraged their retail experience and asking employer partners why they found applicants with a retail background to be appealing. Once you have these answers, you can decide if experience in retail should be a program entrance requirement, and if you should specifically seek out other applicants who have experience in the retail field.
Targeted Recruitment

- Cross-Referrals
- Community College Counselors
- Nonprofit Partners
- Reverse Referrals from Employers
- Graduates

Additional Outreach Tips

- Word of mouth is perhaps the most important outreach tool. Make sure that your colleagues are well-aware of your program and can share information about it as appropriate with clients, and with people in their day-to-day lives; friends and family members, neighbors, or people that they meet throughout the course of the day—a barista, the cashier at the drive through window, etc. Convey the importance and benefits of the program and clearly communicate what participation entails. Share data when possible.

- Program participants and program graduates should also be encouraged to talk about their experiences with the people in their lives who may be interested in the training, whether those are family members, friends, neighbors, or former colleagues.

- Feet on the street. Go out into the community and talk to people about your program. Have an eye for location—your organization may have a large service area, but you want to make sure that you are marketing your program in areas that make sense geographically—you want to make sure that prospective participants live close enough to your organization to be able to attend classes, and also live within easy commuting distance of your employer partners. Talk to people, share your program elevator pitch, and pass out flyers.
Crafting Your Message

Now you know where to look for prospective participants. How can you make sure that you are providing information about your program in a way that is compelling, straightforward, and has a clear call to action?

**Flyers**

Flyers should be informative, visually appealing, and have a clear title or call to action. They should also include:

- A relevant and interesting title; avoid using acronyms or jargon that will not be recognizable outside of your organization.
  - Ex. Bilingual Banker Training vs. XYZ Organization’s LIF Training Program
  - One strategy for the title is to ask a question, “Interested in a career in IT?” or “Tired of retail? Use your customer service skills at a bank or credit union.”
- Information about the program structure (total time commitment, including meeting days, times and locations).
- Basic program eligibility information (age restrictions, prerequisites such as a high school diploma or GED, language skills, etc.).
- Provide at least two methods of contact (email address, phone number, website form) so that an interested candidate can get in touch with you in the way that they are most comfortable.
  - Make sure people know who they are contacting:
    - “Call Jessica at 723-456-5566” vs. “Call 723-456-5566 to learn more.”

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Some organizations run standing orientation sessions and put this information on the flyer (ex. Orientation every Monday and Thursday at 9:00 a.m.). This can be helpful but be sure to provide an alternative so that someone reading the flyer who cannot make it to the orientation is not dissuaded from reaching out to you.

Commitment Fee

While many workforce training programs run by community-based organizations may be offered to participants at no cost or a low-cost, UnidosUS recommends against highlighting the word “free” on a flyer. Things that are “free” may be interpreted as having a lower value. It’s free, how good could it be? Additionally, while a program may be offered at no cost to a participant, it is most certainly not free. Significant investments in staff time, infrastructure, and materials are all needed to run a successful training. Instead, UnidosUS recommends stating that there are “scholarships available” for a program. When a prospective applicant applies, they are applying to access a scholarship which significantly reduces the cost of participating in the program. If they are eligible and accept the open slot, they can do so at either no cost or for a nominal fee.

Some organizations choose to charge a $50-$75 commitment fee to participants, and report that the fee helps increase participant retention, since the participant has financially invested in their success. The commitment fee charged to participants can be used to purchase program supplies, or it can be returned to participants directly, in the form of a gift card at graduation, or indirectly, through the provision of supportive services that a participant receives during the class—such as gas money, a transportation pass, or meals/snacks during class. Some organizations may use part of this money as an attendance incentive for the participant with the best attendance record, or towards the cost of hosting a graduation ceremony.

Other Tips for Flyers:

• Include your organization name on the flyer; how prominently it is placed should depend on whether you think it will attract additional interest in the program.

• Flyers with a white background/that use less ink will be less expensive to print out.

• Use appealing colors and no more than one or two fonts.
Photos are a great addition to any flyer. Candid photos from your training and photos of program graduates are particularly impactful. Be sure to obtain written consent from participants to take and use their photos in program marketing materials. If you need to use stock photos for the first flyer, make sure that the photos show people that are representative of your target population.

Is your program seeking bilingual candidates? Print and post copies of the flyer in both languages.

Do you need to have funder logos on your flyers? Unless you think that the funder or sponsor name will be a hook for participants, keep the logos small and line them up at the bottom of the flyer.

Curious about how effective your flyer is? Host a focus group of program graduates and ask for their feedback. What was it about the flyer that attracted them to the program? Do they have any recommendations to make the flyer more appealing?

One Affiliate hosted a focus group, and learned that mock interviews, a guaranteed interview with an employer, and the job placement assistance were some of the key words on the flyer that attracted participants. Focus group participants also noted that they could tell the picture of the person on the flyer was a ‘real person’ and not a stock photo.

Sample Flyers

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Social Media

Social media, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, can be powerful recruitment tools. Keep messages short, to the point, and include an eye-catching photo. A flaw of social media is that it is easy for people to scroll past posts without responding to the call to action. How many times have you made a mental note to follow up with something you saw on social media and then forgotten to do it? To combat this, some organizations link their post to a short online “interest form” that collects a few key pieces of information – name, and preferred method of contact (either email address or phone number). Now you have a record of someone’s interest, and an outreach staff member can follow up with them to share more information.

Tips for Social Media:

1. Ensure that social media pages are up to date and reflect the program appropriately – up-to-date, active pages tend to get the most engagement.
2. Keep messages short, clear and concise.
3. Share information in Spanish and English.
4. Have easy actionable steps—click here to RSVP, call this number for more information.
5. Post regularly and consistently—UnidosUS recommends three to five total Facebook posts per day, and one to two posts on Instagram. Tweet as often as you like!

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Social Media

Social media, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, can be powerful recruitment tools. Some organizations have also had success advertising programs on Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, and Indeed. Keep messages short, to the point, and include an eye-catching photo. A flaw of social media is that it is easy for people to scroll past posts without responding to the call to action. How many times have you made a mental note to follow up with something you saw on social media and then forgotten to do it? To combat this, some organizations link their post to a short online “interest form” that collects a few key pieces of information – name, and preferred method of contact (either email address or phone number). Now you have a record of someone’s interest, and an outreach staff member can follow up with them to share more information.

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4. Have easy actionable steps—click here to RSVP, call this number for more information.
5. Post regularly and consistently—UnidosUS recommends three to five total Facebook posts per day, and one to two posts on Instagram. Tweet as often as you like!
6. Determine a schedule to post—use your analytics to see what time of day your audience is most active.
7. Post success stories and encourage program participants and graduates to share and like the program’s page.
8. Continuously assess the posts with the most engagement to learn what content works well.
Platform-Specific Information:

**Twitter**

- Has been around the longest and has changed the least.
- Most popular among people who are 18-29 years old.
- 280-character limit per tweet, including links.
- Best platform for real-time engagement.
- Twitter Terminology:
  - Tweet = post made on twitter
  - Handle = identifier on twitter (i.e. @WeAreUnidosUS)
  - Hashtag = twitter currency used to categorize tweets (i.e. #jobtraining)
  - Tagging = mentioning another person or organization in a tweet (uses the @ symbol and the organization's handle) Ex. tweeting from UnidosUS’s account, we could say “We are excited to share that our Affiliate @NonprofitOrg is offering a new job readiness training!”
- Twitter Limitations
  - A tweet can't be edited, only deleted.
  - A tweet can't be bolded, underlined, or italicized.
  - A tweet can't include more than four photos.
  - A tweet can't include more than one link.
Facebook

- Highest usage among people who are 45-54 years old.
- Rewards quality content (visual, videos) with higher engagement.
- Algorithm changes consistently, making it harder to reach specific audiences.
  - Unless you are using one of their products, like Facebook Live.
- Facebook loves videos content.
- UnidosUS recommends posting no more than three to five times a day to ensure maximum viewership for each post.
- Many advertising options are available at low cost. Since Facebook owns Instagram and WhatsApp, your ads get served on those platforms as well.

Instagram

- Most popular among women ages 24-35.
- Best for visual storytelling.
- Optimized for mobile use.
- Quality over quantity.
- Content searchable through hashtags.
- Engagement through likes and comments.
- Instagram loves photos and behind-the-scenes footage.
- UnidosUS recommends posting only once or twice per day, and using the stories feature for more regular sharing and 'behind the scenes' footage.
- Owned by Facebook, Instagram also has an algorithm that organizations must stay abreast of to ensure its content is being served to their audiences.
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E-blasts

Many organizations use email to share information about their programs with multiple audiences, including partner organizations, and community members. Make sure that you tailor these messages appropriately:

• For individuals/community members: provide easy ways to get in contact, and a call to action to share the program information with anyone in their lives that may be interested.

• For partner organizations, include a PDF copy of your flyer and a call to action to print and/or electronically distribute the flyer to interested parties. It may be a nice gesture to offer to mail or drop off hard copies of your flyer if this would be helpful to them. You can also offer to provide a short training to their staff that includes more specifics about the program if that would be helpful to them when engaging with potential participants.

• Make social copy, graphics and resources easy to share with free tools like Dropbox or Google Drive. These tools make it easy to upload and share graphics and documents outside of your organization.

Sample E-blast

Digital Literacy for Work

Complete 9 weeks of training & be on your way to a successful career in administrative & customer service positions.

Eligibility
- 18+ & able to work
- Proficient in English
- High School Diploma
- No criminal record

Classes Include
- Computer Literacy
- Job Readiness
- Financial Literacy
- Employment search

Cost: $50 per person

Interested? Call, email, or attend an informational session.

Information sessions are held every Tuesday at 6:30 pm.

Contact Information:
Rosa Rivera: 978-732-2622
Evelyn Crespo: 978-732-3629

Call today, there are only a few spots left!

www.unidosus.org
LinkedIn

LinkedIn is another platform that can be used for recruiting. If your organization has a LinkedIn account, you can share information about your programs directly. In fact, there is now an option that lets you directly send your post to employees for further amplification. LinkedIn also offers a service called “LinkedIn Recruiter,” which is a paid recruiting tool.

It is helpful to keep track of how participants found out about your program and what intrigued them to reach out and enroll so that you know what the most effective outreach practices are.

Free Social Media Resources

- **HootSuite**: A tool for posting across multiple social media channels.
- **TweetDeck**: Use this to monitor hashtags and different accounts that you follow.
- **Canva**: A tool for creating graphics.
- **HubSpot Social Media Content Calendar**: Strategically plan and manage social media content.
What Comes Next? 
Orientation and Assessment

Picture this—Marketing your program is going well! The phones are ringing, and your inbox is full of requests for more information. What happens next? Of course, you should already have a plan for this at the outset. UnidosUS recommends the following:

Orientation Sessions

Host an information or orientation session for your program. Be up front about the program eligibility requirements, including the expected time commitment and dress code. For industry-specific trainings, be up front about employer requirements. Will they conduct a credit check, background check or drug test? Is it an industry standard that visible tattoos and facial piercings be covered? These are things that can help a participant decide if they are interested in a career in that sector.

Share information about other services offered at your organization that may help participants mitigate any barriers to participation. Many organizations have lots of programs and services offered on-site or may have partnerships to other agencies that can help participants meet their basic needs. In addition, your organization may offer support for program-specific needs, such as providing a transportation pass, referrals to childcare, or support in building a professional wardrobe.

Walk through the training syllabus so participants can see if the program aligns with their interests and career goals. When possible, invite a program graduate or alumni to attend the orientation, talk about their experience in the program, and offer a few words of encouragement to applicants. Reserve time at the end of the session for questions and answers. If time permits, have the program instructor and any case managers or coaches that will be working with program attendees be a part of the orientation so that they can begin to build rapport with potential participants.
Tips for Orientation Sessions:

• Schedule time for participants to complete intake paperwork at the end of the orientation session.

• If participants were required to bring intake paperwork to the orientation, have them complete any additional requirements (TABE testing, written assessments, interviews, etc.) to make the most of their time with you.

• Provide a brief overview and introductory training on any of the technology that participants may be expected to use during the program (ex. setting up an email account, accessing handouts and homework on a Google drive, using Zoom or another virtual platform for distance learning and blended programs).

Application & Intake

Most organizations have a standard set of intake paperwork that participants need to complete in order to receive services. If there is any program specific information, have participants complete this at the same time. If you are having participants complete this paperwork with you, it is a best practice to do it in a one-on-one setting to start building rapport. Make sure you cross-check your forms against funder deliverables (for example, a funder for a workforce development program may want you to collect pre-program data on a participant’s recent employment history, including wages and full-time/part time status). Make sure you’ve talked to the program instructor, too, to see if there is any information that they need up front to help them effectively plan to teach the class.

Interviews & Assessments

Program entry criteria may vary greatly, and program entry assessments reflect that. An assessment may be as simple as verifying baseline program entry criteria (age, ability to work in the United States, highest level of education) or may be much more extensive and involve testing on academic,
language, and workplace readiness skills. The type of assessments that you use for your program will depend on a variety of factors—the most important thing is to select assessments that will help you determine that if there is a good fit between a potential participant and the job that awaits them on the other end of the program. For sector-specific programs, a best practice is to talk to employers, and also to review a variety of applicable job descriptions for the traits, characteristics, and skills that employers are looking for, determine which are the most essential, and then include them in program entry requirements.

Program Eligibility Assessments May Include:

• An initial phone call to assess interest and confirm baseline qualifications.
• Testing for reading, writing and math abilities.
  o CASAS Life Skills Assessment
    ▪ Reading, math, and listening skills
  o Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
    ▪ Reading, math, language and spelling skills
    ▪ Available in Spanish
    ▪ Has independent tests that assess basic skills in work-related contexts
• Tests for English language comprehension and proficiency.
  o Basic English Skills Test (Best or Best Plus)
    ▪ Assesses communication, fluency, pronunciation, listening comprehension, reading, writing and pre-employment skills for adult English learners (ELs)
• Testing for work readiness.
  o ACT Work Keys
    ▪ Measures eight workplace skills: applied math, applied technology, listening, locating information, observation, reading for information, teamwork, and writing
• A formal interview (in one or more languages) to assess:
  o Career goals and aspirations
  o Motivation to participate in the program
  o Existing skills and abilities
  o Ability to connect former experiences to program requirements
  o Language proficiency
Program eligibility assessments for sector-specific trainings should verify anything specific that an industry employer would look for, such as education attainment (high school diploma/GED), language fluency for bilingual positions, and the ability or willingness to submit to a background check, drug test, or credit pull as applicable.

If an employer requires a certain technical skill, such as that all applicants have at least two years of cash handling experience in order to get a job, the training program should also make this a baseline entry requirement. Be selective when building a cohort of participants—making compromises can lead to challenges with participant retention, which can affect morale for the entire cohort.

Some organizations require applicants to fill out an application online, perhaps via Google Form, or to submit materials via email—this has the bonus of testing an applicant’s digital literacy skills.

For programs that allow participants to earn a certificate of completion and community college credit, or that are run in partnership with a community college, there may be an entry assessment such as the Accuplacer test.

**Program Eligibility Assessment Example 1**

A bilingual banker training in Wisconsin requires:

- Standard organizational intake paperwork
- Presentation of original documents: proof of work authorization, high school diploma/GED and Wisconsin State ID or Driver’s License
- Background check
- Accuplacer Test score of 60+
- Scholarship application form
  - Participants are applying to receive a scholarship to the program which offsets their costs. Accepted participants may pay a small commitment fee ($50-$75) to participate in the program. The rest of the actual program costs are covered via a ‘scholarship’ provided by the nonprofit organization.
- Short essay describing interest in the program and in the financial services sector
- Two recommendation forms/letters
  - These do not need to be professional references but may not come from a family member.
- An in-person interview with the program manager
Program Eligibility Assessment Example 2

A digital literacy and job readiness program in Texas requires:

- Standard organizational intake form
- Presentation of original documents including proof of work authorization
- Short essay/interview describing interest in the program and digital literacy (this helps assess interest and language level)
- Assessment of interest in field where digital literacy would help with job placement or upward mobility
- Digital Literacy Level Assessment (NorthStar)
- Background check and drug testing as applicable (based on industry/employer partner requirements)

UnidosUS hopes that this information provides a helpful framework for organizations launching new workforce development trainings and has at least a new idea or two for organizations with existing programs. For additional information, technical assistance, and support, please reach out to the workforce development team:

Leanne Ryder, Senior Program Manager, Workforce Development: lryder@unidosus.org

Cynthia Guevara, Program Manager, Workforce Development: ccguevara@unidosus.org

Roger Figueroa, Program Manager, Workforce Development: rfigueroa@unidosus.org
COVID-19 Considerations

Considerations for Program Design

- Check in with employer partners to understand how the pandemic has impacted their hiring strategy for 2021, as well as any skills or abilities that have become more important in an increasingly virtual world.
- Check in with community members to see what their needs are, and what support they need to be successful in a training program.
- Ensure that your program model considers local, county, and state guidelines put in place during the pandemic to keep people safe and healthy. This may include limiting class sizes, providing personal protective equipment (PPE) or following sanitation protocols.

Outreach Strategies

- Online outreach should be a priority during the pandemic. Consider creative strategies, like hosting a Q&A session or a short interview with a program graduate over Instagram or Facebook live. A study from April found that social media engagement has increased by 61% over normal usage rates. Capitalize on that!
- Radio advertising is another way to safely reach a large audience. Local radio stations may be able to help share program information. Identify a phone number and website that interested individuals can use to contact your program.

• Word of mouth remains one of the most important ways to attract participants. Could your program incentivize referrals with a gift card?

Orientation and Assessment

• You may need to host orientation sessions virtually. The good news is that people will not have to take time out of their busy schedules to travel to your office, so more people may attend. The challenge is beginning to develop relationships with potential participants in a virtual space.

• Consider reaching out to attendees one-on-one after the session to provide a space for them to ask questions that they may not have been comfortable asking in a group setting.

Program Eligibility Assessments

• If your training will take place in a virtual or blended setting, it is important to ask participants about their access to technology and internet. Will they be using a smartphone, tablet, or laptop computer to access course materials? Do they have a strong and consistent internet connection? If not, is your organization able to assist?

• UnidosUS also recommends asking participants about their previous experiences with online learning to establish a baseline for the class, as well as conducting a formal or informal digital literacy assessment.

• Program eligibility forms and documents may have to be submitted virtually. Secure online file sharing platforms like Dropbox or Sharefile may be helpful for this purpose.