

Workforce and Economic Development (including ESL): Identified Issues and Recommendations

Issue 1

Communities do not understand what documents are required when applying to work.

Recommendations:

- Better education to employers about the documents refugees, by law, are required to have
- Better education to communities about what documents they themselves need

Issue 2

Recertification of qualifications for jobs held in previous country is difficult for refugees.

Recommendations:

- Work to create a state agency to help refugees receive recertification
 - Conduct research on how other state agencies are formed and work
- Mentioned that Kay Trendell at Lutheran Services may have details about recertification for doctors

Issue 3

Barriers to employment include transportation to jobs that are far away, lack of English, and lack of jobs that meet the abilities of women and older people.

Recommendations:

- For receiving driver's licenses, ROA has produced a study guide on obtaining a driver's license in GA. It is targeted at community leaders and available on the RFS website for distribution.
- Center for Pan Asian Community Services offers funds for driver training programs

Issue 4

There is a need for more ESL courses, as they are difficult to get to and childcare is a challenge. **Open enrollment is not always a possibility at some DeKalb Tech sites and many students are required to exit ESL programs when they attain a certain relatively low score on a standardized test even though they might not have obtained enough English skills to get a job or advance to GED, post-secondary education, or job training.**

Recommendations:

- The technical college system will set up classes if a group of at least 10 people is organized
 - System needs to be informed of the communities' needs

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- Funds the technical colleges receive from the central office can be distributed to local churches and groups to host additional classes

Issue 5

New laws are passed by the state, but how they will be implemented and the effect they have is not clear. The community is not aware of the law and its impact on the services they need.

Recommendations:

- Inform people of the laws that will affect their lives
 - For example, the GA House Bill 2 goes into effect January 1, 2010 and prohibits those without the proper documentation from working though there is no clear picture for implementation and enforcement.

Issues without specific recommendations

- Lack of unified voice among the refugee populations when speaking to the government
 - Voice is needed to combat negative legislation, such as last year's proposed English-Only law.
- Lack of information flow among service providers
 - Throughout the session, people introduced the services that their organizations offered. Perhaps information about these services can be better disseminated among the refugee communities and service providers.