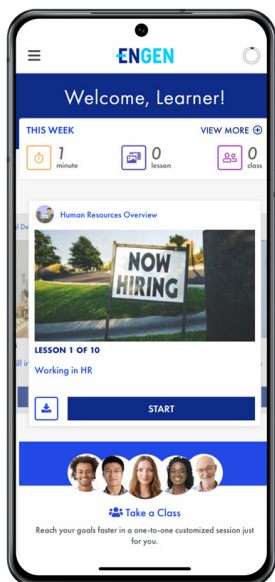


CASE STUDY

WCNP Promotes Inclusive Economic Growth Through Immigrant Integration

“EnGen is a fantastic platform that helps learners stay connected to learning and encouraged even when circumstances arise that can keep them away from class. All students have phones and many took really well to accessing EnGen on their phones - on the train, on the bus - even when they didn't do so as easily on the in class computer. The visibility into learner activity provided by the administrative portal gives us the ability to set goals more collaboratively.”

- Bryce Bayer,
Director of Education,
Welcoming Center for
New Pennsylvanians



THE ORGANIZATION

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians (WCNP) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia. The Center's mission is to promote inclusive economic growth through immigrant integration. At the core of its mission, the Center believes a steady influx of new customers, workers, and entrepreneurs can reinvigorate Pennsylvania's aging population, renew its neighborhoods, and re-energize the economy. WCNP works closely with government agencies, service providers, employers, business associations, trade unions, and other economic development groups. To help achieve its mission of inclusivity for immigrants with limited English-speaking skills, the Center provides training, case management and career coaching services, and facilitates community programs. WCNP also offers its own face-to-face classes that focus on workforce development, entrepreneurship, and community engagement that serve all English Language Learners (ELLs). However, there was a need to expand the curriculum to better serve immigrant learners. Bryce Bayer, Director of Education at WCNP, aimed to develop a bridge program for learners that would equip learners with online tools that focus on career planning, job searching and digital literacy skills, while also offering mobile continuity, or the ability for learners to continue courses online or on their mobile devices, on their own, should they, for example, accept a job offer. Accepting employment shouldn't prevent ongoing learning, growth and career advancement.

THE CHALLENGE

In the Philadelphia area, many workforce training programs exist, but few address the unique needs of ELLs. In these programs, the instruction offered is career- and industry-focused, but assumes English language proficiency as well as some workforce readiness and digital literacy skills. Taking these challenges into account, the Center's leadership team sought to empower its learners of all levels, including those who struggle with technology, with better access to instruction that creates opportunities for advancement. To this end, WCNP initiated an in-person, face-to-face training opportunity: Foundations for Communication in the U.S. (FOCUS). A free 12-week course for immigrants with low intermediate English levels and varying skill sets, **FOCUS** helps learners improve both communication and technology skills. To qualify for **FOCUS**, learners must be an immigrant or English Language Learner, have some formal education (eighth grade and above), and want intensive instruction in computer and technology skills, among other criteria. However, lack of visibility into learner engagement, satisfaction, digital literacy, and skill levels were initial challenges anticipated by the program based on their experience working with adult ELLs. Learners received nine hours of face-to-face classes a week but needed access to study material outside of class. Further, course designers and instructors anticipated that learners in the FOCUS course also would contend with transportation issues, variable personal schedules, and unforeseen circumstances that are often an impediment to consistent learning, motivation, and engagement.

CASE STUDY

WCNP Promotes Inclusive Economic Growth Through Immigrant Integration

ENGEN

Welcoming
Center for
NEW PENNSYLVANIANS

KEY OUTCOMES

235+

AVERAGE ACTIVITIES
COMPLETED PER LEARNER

77

TOTAL UNITS
COMPLETED

73%

OF COMPLETED UNITS
RELATED TO JOBS,
CAREERS AND
DAILY LIFE IN THE U.S.

90%

OF LEARNERS IMPROVED
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
TEST SCORES*

*Percentage of students from the first 12-week cohort from May 2019 to July 2019

SOLUTION

The Welcoming Center sees learners of all demographics, educational backgrounds, and digital literacy levels. Thus, it was important to provide contextualized English language and job readiness instruction to a diverse set of language learners. WCNP's leadership team needed to ensure the EnGen platform would be a good fit for anyone interested in career pathway training that supports learners of all proficiency levels, including distance learning for participants with high barriers to participation. After implementing EnGen as a supplemental option for learners in other WCNP programs, the Welcoming Center and EnGen teams devised a plan for incorporating EnGen as a supplemental platform for learners in the FOCUS pilot. As a result, in May 2019, WCNP decided to launch an EnGen pilot as a supplement to its in-person, face-to-face pilot of the FOCUS course. At the onset of the EnGen pilot program, learners were given a proficiency assessment, a standardized evaluation of each learner's English proficiency levels, to give WCNP administrators clear insight into learner needs. For a better idea of digital literacy, WCNP also conducted a formal digital literacy assessment using the NorthStar system. Next, to ensure learners were engaged and motivated, WCNP's classroom instructors encouraged learners to practice more with EnGen's real media content, word bank, and grammar guide.

THE RESULTS

As the EnGen pilot program progressed, WCNP instructors were able to monitor learner progress via the administrative portal, a comprehensive and user-friendly dashboard that helps to visualize data, observe trends, and develop insight into learner engagement. Through the administrative portal, administrators received more visibility into the highest performing learners and leveraged their usage to encourage the engagement of other learners. One of the best things about having a diverse group of learners is that the highest performing can assist their peers, and their instructor encouraged them to do so. The development of peer-to-peer relationships among learners freed up time for teachers to give more individualized attention to learners with the most need. Learners who onboarded with the EnGen platform quicker and had higher engagement were also able to help with the motivation of lower-performing learners. After implementing EnGen as a supplement to their FOCUS course, WCNP saw promising results. First, the high activity completion rate, with each learner completing an average of 235 activities. Next, learners completed a total of 77 units with 73% of learners completing units related to career and daily life in the U.S. Most significantly, 90% of learners from the May to July cohort, improved their proficiency scores. With promising results and new visibility into learner engagement, Bayer and WCNP's leadership team plan to explore how to use EnGen as a platform to help WCNP's future course content and curriculum planning. With EnGen, learners are now able to gain digital literacy skills while improving their English language skills. Learners said using EnGen helped them study outside of class, and be more independent.