

# Building Opportunity for Non-Native English Speaking Healthcare Workers

Empowering SEIU members with language skills that open new career pathways and upskilling opportunities.

## AT A GLANCE

### CHALLENGES

- English-language requirements for existing ongoing education and career pathways blocked speakers of other languages from participating.
- Many English-language learners lack digital literacy skills needed for digital language training and ongoing education.

### RESULTS

- EnGen is used to test and prove a learner's English proficiency level.
- EnGen's allied healthcare specific curriculum teaches members the language skills needed for their work.
- EnGen's Digital Literacy pathway provides the basic digital skills needed for continued participation.

## THE ORGANIZATION

The Education Fund is a partnership between 16 healthcare industry employers and six Service Employees International local unions (SEIU), funded by collectively bargained employer contributions. The Education Fund provides education and training benefits for over 100,000 eligible healthcare workers. Its organizational structure allows learners to connect with career advancement opportunities for in-demand, high quality jobs. Education Fund graduates who move on to new roles earn on average 36% higher wages in family-sustaining union jobs.

The Education Fund empowers the diverse healthcare workforce to advance in an ever-changing environment through innovative education and training solutions. The organization is committed to equity and inclusion by expanding opportunities for career advancement. These opportunities develop a diverse talent pipeline that reflects its communities' needs. In practice, the Education Fund offers no-cost access to career counseling, as well as a variety of programs designed to help healthcare workers excel in their current position and/or move up into a new job.

## THE CHALLENGES

The demand for healthcare-related labor is only expected to increase as America's population ages and life expectancy increases. Shifts in demographics predict that immigrants, refugees, and their children will be responsible for the vast majority of U.S. workforce growth by 2030. The healthcare industry is no different. According to the Migration Policy Institute, in 2018, more than 2.6 million immigrants, including 314,000 refugees, were employed as healthcare workers. Immigrants accounted for 28% of the 958,000 physicians and surgeons practicing in the U.S. and 38% of the 492,000 home health aides.

The Education Fund recognized an accessibility gap in its service offerings. A significant portion of eligible members are non-native English speakers, but many of the ongoing education and career pathway programs offered by the Education Fund have English language proficiency requirements. The Education Fund needed a partner that could help provide access to high-quality English language instruction and/or proof of language proficiency.

## THE SOLUTION

The Education Fund approached EnGen for help to make their member benefits more accessible to speakers of other languages. Deciding to partner with EnGen means that Education Fund learners can learn English that is relevant to specific healthcare careers and other interests, because the platform's digital curriculum uses Task-Based Learning to teach English.

The partnership allows EnGen and the Education Fund to offer a digital English language curriculum at important steps in the learner's program. Learners work with their assigned Career Counselor to identify the ongoing education, credentialing, and/or career pathways that are of interest and available them.

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## HEAR FROM LEARNERS

“Studying English [with EnGen] has been helping me on reading comprehension and building up my vocabulary.”

- Maria, Kaiser Permanente, Downey Medical Center

“The [EnGen] program provided good practice to remember vocabulary and reinforced my knowledge of English. It also helped me improve the proper use of phrases, especially at work.”

- Sara, Kaiser Permanente, Westside Oregon

If the course requires a certain level of English-language proficiency, learners can use EnGen to test and prove their proficiency level. If the learner needs additional English-language skills, EnGen's robust curriculum allows them to acquire language skills specific to their field of study and interests. And if the learner is interested in all of the above, but doesn't yet have the digital literacy skills needed to participate in digital instruction, EnGen offers Education Fund members a course that can open new doors: the Digital Literacy pathway for English Language Learners.

## THE RESULTS

So far, the Education Fund and EnGen have seen great success in their partnership. Sixty-two Education Fund learners have enrolled in the program at 11 different employer sites. These learners have gone on to complete 350 instructor-led writing and speaking classes and they have completed 177 unique course units. These units cover a wide array of subjects, from healthcare careers, to civics, and workforce and academic readiness. Education Fund learners score an average end-of-unit test score of 86%, performing well above the 70% needed to pass.

On average over a three month period, Education Fund learners spent more than 30 hours on EnGen, which is in line with the recommendations for language improvement. They spent those hours learning relevant English skills from their phone or computer, at work, at home, or wherever they had internet access! The Education Fund's career counselors are actively recruiting more learners to EnGen, preparing them for greater opportunity and access to career pathways, credentialing, and more.

“Supporting our English Language Learners (ELL) is one of the most important things we do daily to improve equity among all students. Providing the means to gain ELL proficiency is the key to opening up the entire world of learning and equipping them to improve educational outcomes throughout their lives. One learner, a Certified Nursing Assistant, working in Las Vegas, shared with us how helpful EnGen was; she loved the real-world content offered and how she could access the program at work during her breaks. She was even spending her vacation days using EnGen to practice and improve her language skills. Throughout her year on EnGen, she completed 844 activities and attended three live group classes.”

- Patrice Madu, Director of the Education at Education Fund



\* In a period of three months, in line with recommendations for improvement

\*\* Passing score is 70%

**EnGen can help organizations and employers prepare for the workforce of the future with custom career pathways. [Learn more with a demo](#) from one of our workforce development experts.**