



EVALUATING JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR UNDER-RESOURCED COMMUNITIES

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OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM SOMALI FAMILY SERVICE'S WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Under-resourced communities, especially refugee and immigrant communities, are at high risk for unemployment with adverse implications for living conditions and health. In 2021, the unemployment rate for refugees in San Diego (SD), California, was three times higher than that of SD county as a whole.

In this study, we investigated the feasibility of a co-designed job training program for under-resourced communities in SD. Cohort 1 (SU22) included Community Health Worker (CHW), Medical Secretary (MS), and Motor Vehicle Operator (MVO) training. Cohorts 2 and 3 (SU23 and WI23) included only CHW training. Participants also received job preparation resources (e.g. mock interviews, resume prep, etc.).

METHODS

Our team co-designed 4-week training programs with CHWs from refugee backgrounds. Learners were recruited through community advertisements and events. Inclusion criteria were low socioeconomic status and high school certificate or equivalent. Exclusion criteria were holding full-time employment and/or having a college degree or higher.

The program was continuously evaluated and improved between cohorts. Between Cohorts 1 and 2, additional vetting of candidates was implemented, new and varied teaching techniques were introduced, and wrap around services were added to reduce learning barriers.

Successful program completion was marked by completion of all training modules.

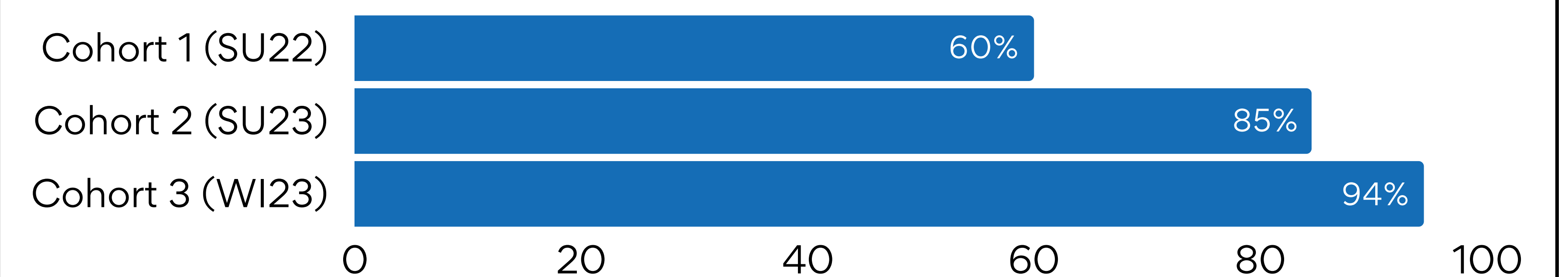


Fig 1: % learner retention across cohorts

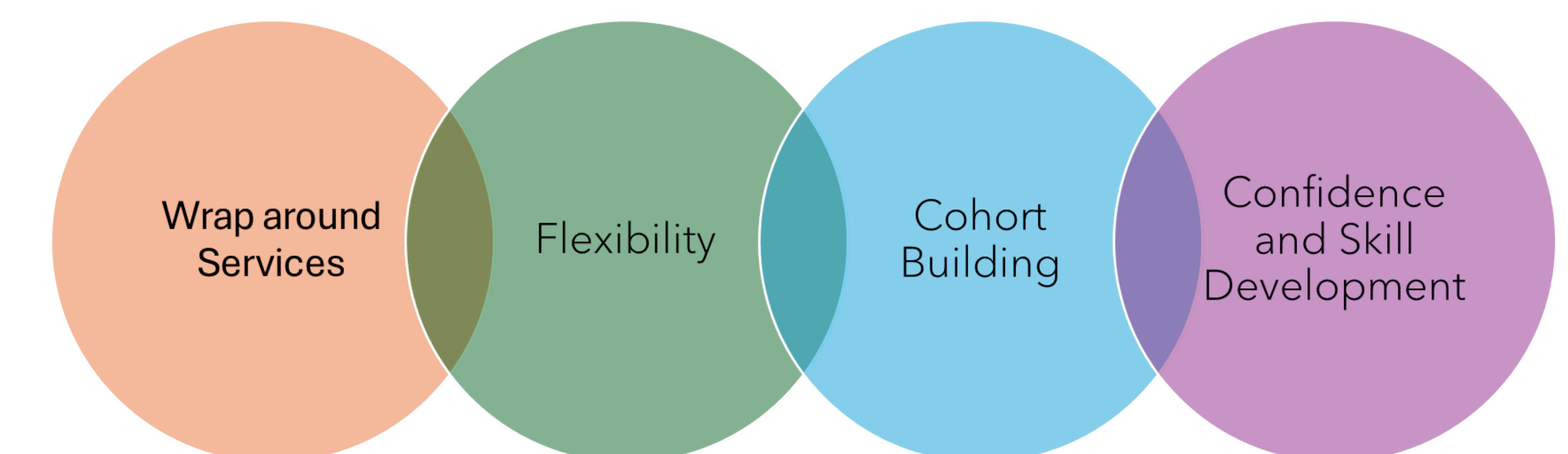


Fig 2: 4 pillars of learner success

RESULTS

Cohort 1 (SU22): 208 learners started the trainings (71 CHW, 92 MS, 45 MVO). 124 (60%) completed the training (40 CHW, 56 MS, 28 MVO) (Fig 1).

Cohort 2 (SU23): 84 learners started the CHW training. 71 students (85%) completed the training.

Cohort 3 (WI23): 72 learners started the CHW training. 68 (94%) students completed the training.

DISCUSSION

Improvements to learner retention across cohorts can likely be attributed at least partly to program improvements that strengthened the 4 pillars of learner success (Fig 2). Wrap around services, cohort support, and teaching techniques that are flexible and support confidence and skill development are particularly valuable for under-resourced communities.



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