

# Opportunities, Barriers, and Best Practice: Employment of workers with limited English proficiency in Western Wisconsin



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## Abstract

The intent of this study was to investigate the employment practices and support services available to Western Wisconsin employers who hire workers who are not proficient in English. The collaborative project also questioned employers who have not yet hired limited English speaking workers and identified barriers to their employment.

## Research Questions

- Where are LEP workers employed in West Central Wisconsin and what benefits are being realized by their employment?
- What services are employers utilizing in the employment of LEP workers?
- Why are employers not hiring LEP workers?

## Methods

- E-Surveys on Qualtrics (302)
- Paper surveys (253)
- Personal Interviews
- Secondary research sources

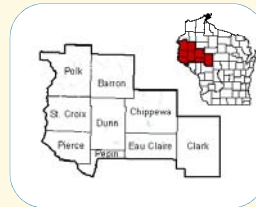
## Barriers

- Access to certain industries
  - Farming
- Sensitive Questions
- Limited hiring in today's economy

## Definitions

Limited English Proficiency: Defined for the purposes of this survey as one who speaks a language other than English at home and/or does not speak English very well.

For our surveyed area, western Wisconsin included:



## A Few Cool Statistics

3 companies enforce "English only" policies

84% of Limited English Proficiency workers are foreign born

3 out of 20 employers who employ LEP workers offer training in speaking and writing English

Only 2 businesses felt that they were leaders in employment of LEP workers

## Interviews

"I just found out the other day that one of our workers who only speaks Spanish has a degree from a university in Mexico. Here he is a grinder. He works on a grinding machine for 10 hours a day. You or me wouldn't want to do that."

"We have a workplace education program, in which our workers are paid an additional ½ hour during their lunch time as an incentive to learn English as the language of the business. It has been very successful."

## What's Next?

- Create a handbook of resources for employers in Western Wisconsin
- 2010 Census data could be used for further comparisons to our results
- Potential for business presentations

## References

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