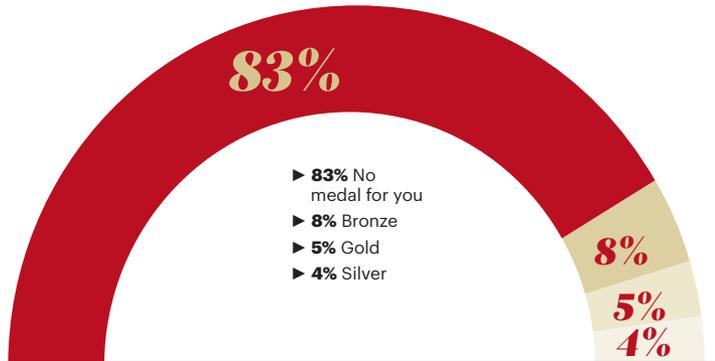


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CLAUDIA GREEN

Improving worker English skills is an investment

What if the state were giving money away to businesses to improve their bottom line? Massachusetts is doing this. The commonwealth has \$22 million to grant to businesses for employee training – money that comes from businesses themselves, who pay a surcharge on unemployment insurance. If you pay in, you can apply for a grant to train your workforce.

Last year, 139 companies used the Workforce Training Fund Program (WTFP) general fund to boost operations and train employees in sales, management, Lean, ISO 9000, and other areas. A Foxborough packaging company offered English classes and saw on-time delivery grow by 27 percent and lead-time shrink by 50 percent. That's money in the bank. A Lawrence-based manufacturer improved production accuracy by 49 percent.

And what if your ambitious immigrant employees could learn the business, contribute to quality improvements, and better yet, join your pipeline for supervisory and management positions?

Would your business benefit if your employees went home at night knowing the boss was investing in their future? Satisfied employees are your greatest asset.

Bringing English classes to your workforce is like putting your business on multi-vitamins: talent and leadership that lies dormant will boost operations, from customer service to quality control, to brainstorming and troubleshooting. And improved English is an investment that keeps on giving – for employees, their children, and our

communities.

What if Massachusetts offered a no-nonsense approach to our looming workforce crisis? One of six workers in Massachusetts is an immigrant – nearly half a million who need to improve their English to contribute to their capacity. Immigrants fuel every industry, especially manufacturing, health care, retail, and hospitality – our economic engines. Yet the state's adult education budget is insufficient and classes must be tailored to business and worker needs.

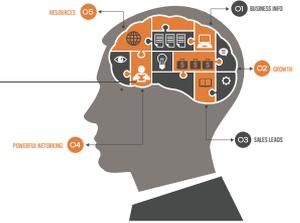
The truth is, the time needed for English learning is significant – but it pays off. Experts, training providers and government officials are here to help, including the 75-plus members of the state's English Works Campaign.

Take the first step toward applying for funding on June 9. Meet leaders deeply invested in economic growth and human capital, who are calling on businesses to invest in worker training, including State Sec. of Labor and Workforce Development Ronald Walker and Boston Chief of Economic Development John Barros. And on June 25, Lawrence Mayor Daniel Rivera, who chairs a monthly roundtable to address a desperate need for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in his city, will tell businesses: We are ready to make a shared investment for mutual opportunity.

Claudia Green is executive director of English for New Bostonians, a Boston-based nonprofit that works to increase access to high-quality English language learning opportunities for adult immigrant city residents.

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