



# Pathway to Higher Education Resource Guide

## Colectiva Learners

Rebekah Flores, Megan Naderi, Ivan Orozco, Jacqueline Robert, and Jacqueline Villanueva-Garcia



### INTRODUCTION

#### Project Purpose & Description

This project utilized a method of process intervention through the creation of a resource guide about higher education as a strategy to decrease poverty in Northern Santa Ana zip codes (92701, 92703, 92706). The intervention focuses on training our community partner's staff to effectively utilize and distribute the developed comprehensive educational resource to the participants in their programs.

#### Social Problem & Target Population

Through community research and observations, CSULB MSW students concluded that many families Santa Ana in the lower socio-economic bracket, as evidenced by community residents' challenges in finding affordable housing and higher paying employment. One discrepancy that was observed was the lack of higher education among Santa Ana residents, largely due to the need to work in order to "make ends meet" (personal communication). As an effort to address this, the comprehensive resource guide and training was created to decrease the barriers that may prevent Santa Ana residents from completing post-secondary education, and thus having greater chances at higher paying employment.

#### Scope of Social Problem

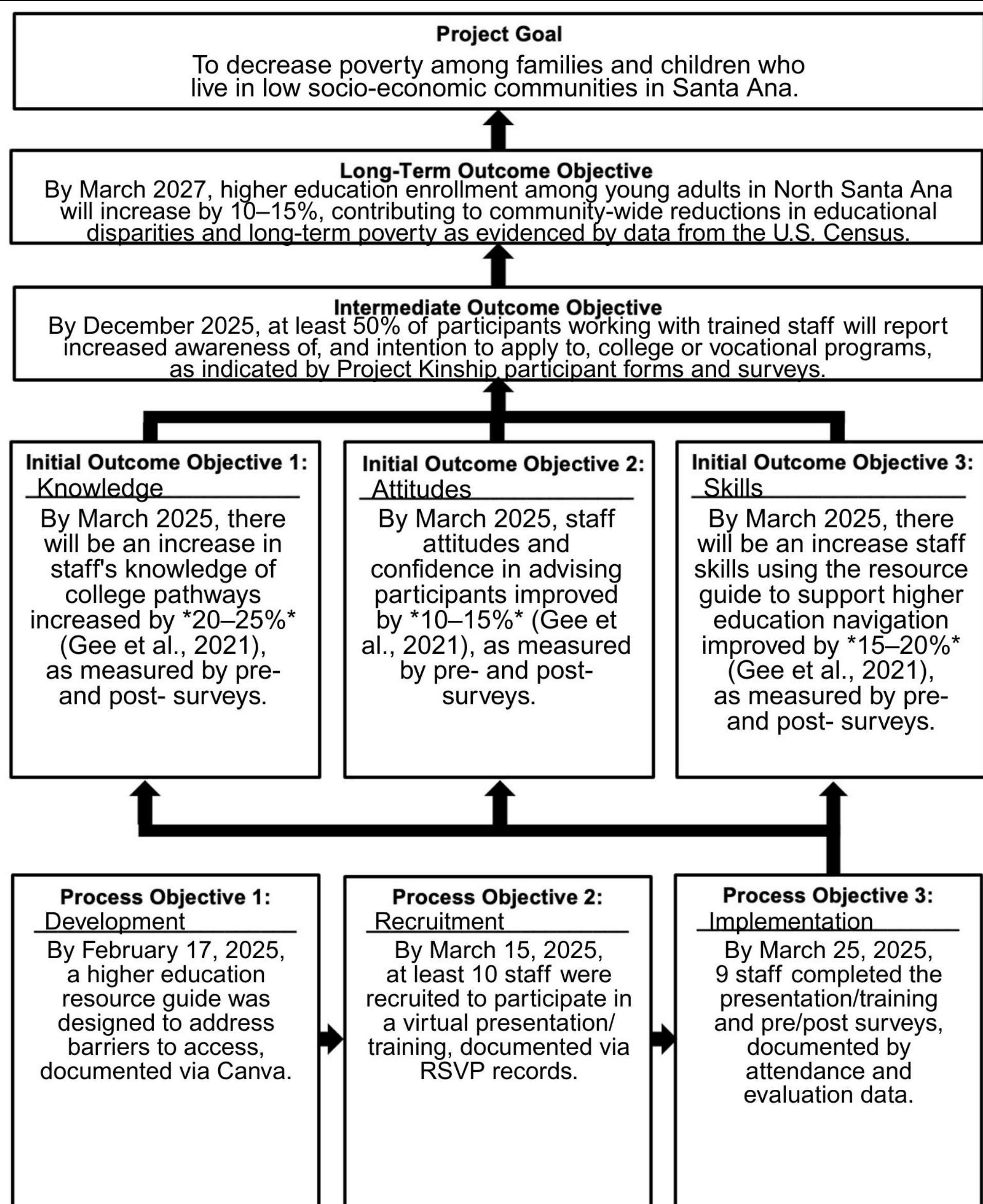
Through research on the community, community interviews, and observations, this group determined one contribution of poverty to be lack of higher education opportunities.

- The drop-out rate at Santa Ana College is currently 51%, with a completion rate of only 18% (College Factual, 2024).
- 12.2% of adults over the age of 25 have a Bachelor's Degree as their highest level of education, and 17.6% of adults have a Bachelor's Degree or higher in Santa Ana (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).
- The average household income in Northern Santa Ana zip codes 92701, 92703, 92706 is \$50,000 (U.S Zip Code Stats, 2024), about \$30,000 less than the national average (Kollar, 2024).
- One community partner talked about how many of her clients, all aged 18-25, have paused or stopped their higher education journey to focus on work as their financial need is greater than their ability to remain in school (Female, Latina, Community Resident, personal communication, October 3, 2024).

#### Alignment to Specialization

Addressing one of the barriers that impact poverty is directly related to child and family wellbeing. Access to higher education is a protective factor—not just for youth, but also for adults. This project focused on empowering staff with tools to guide youth and adult clients toward opportunities that reduce recidivism, improve employment prospects, and foster long-term stability.

### PROJECT OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES



### METHODS

- Pre-surveys were collected before the intervention was implemented, and post-surveys were collected immediately after implementing the intervention (via Google Forms) to evaluate the effectiveness of the resource guide training.
- Quantitative data was analyzed using Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Tests to determine the changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes of training participants.
- Qualitative data was collected to supplement the evaluation of the Pathway to Higher Education" resource guide training intervention.

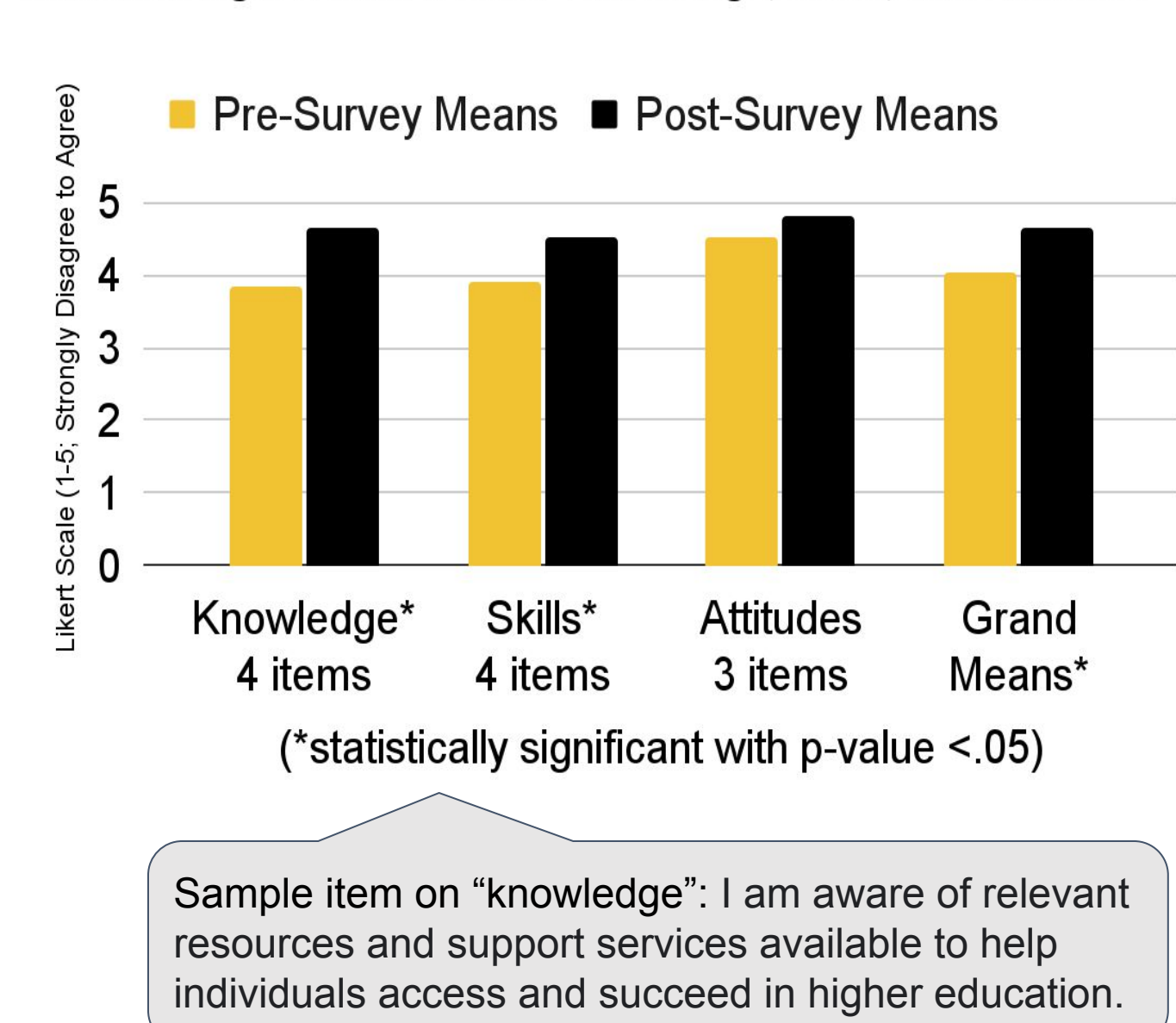
### RESULTS

#### Quantitative Results

Table 1.  
Characteristics of Participants (N=9)

Characteristic	f	%
<b>Level of Education</b>		
High School/GED	2	22%
Associate's/ Trade/ Technical/ Vocational	3	33%
Bachelor's or Higher	4	44%
<b>Experience in Current Role (in Years)</b>		
< 1 Year	5	55%
1-3 Years	1	11%
3 years or More	3	33%
<b>Project Kinship Staff</b>		
Yes	6	66%
No	3	33%

Figure 1.  
Wilcoxon signed-rank test for Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes



#### Qualitative Results

Table 2. Qualitative Themes and Participant Responses

Categories	Themes	Participant Response Examples
Initial Outcome Objective #1: <b>Knowledge</b> Resources available to access higher education	Gained Understanding on Resources	"My understanding into pursuing higher education was limited based on misinformation. Through this information, I have become more knowledgeable of the many resources available to the community that I endeavor to serve."
Initial Outcome Objective #2: <b>Skills</b>	Feel Prepared to guide clients	"I believe that we may use further information in regard to access to California Universities."
Initial Outcome Objective #3: <b>Attitudes</b>	Ease of resources to help staff in guiding clients	"The different options in financial aid and different routes to receive education (ex. Vocational or community) fostered a more positive attitude towards furthering education."
Additional Comments	Staff will use the resource guide during their sessions with clients	"I would use the resource guide in a session by notifying them on the different options for furthering their education and notifying them of the many different options they have whether it be vocational or community college."

#### Analysis of Findings

##### Quantitative Data

- Wilcoxon signed-rank tests indicated that the resource guide workshop demonstrated a significant difference on the Grand Mean of the pre- and post-survey results, meaning that the overall workshop was found to be effective.
- Initial Outcome Objective #1: There was a significant difference with  $p=.027$ , meaning participants found the workshop to be effective in increasing their knowledge on the resources available to access higher education.
- Initial Outcome Objective #2: There was a significant difference with  $p=.038$ , meaning participants found the workshop to be effective in increasing their skills to guide clients in seeking higher education.
- Initial Outcome Objective #3: There was no significant difference with  $p=.102$ , meaning participants' attitudes around seeking higher education did not significantly change.

##### Qualitative Data

- The clarity of the resources guide, the accessibility of the information shared through QR links, and the amount of information shared was shared by the participants to be the most helpful parts of the resource guide.
- Participants shared how they would use the resource guide with their clients in future sessions in order to better provide assistance in seeking higher education.

### RESOURCES

- College Data Analytics Team Unbiased Factual Guarantee. (2023, October 16). Santa Ana College Graduation Rate & Retention Rate. College Factual
- Gee, K. A., Beno, C., Lindstrom, L., Lind, J., Gau, J., & Post, C. (2021). Promoting college and career readiness among underserved adolescents: A mixed methods pilot study. *Journal of adolescence*, 90, 79–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2021.06.002>
- Kollar, G. G. and M. (2024, August 30). Income in the United States: 2023. *Census.gov*.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-year estimates: Educational attainment (Table ACS05-01). U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved November 15, 2024, from [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSSTBY2022.S1501?\\_a=education&q=180XX00US0669000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSSTBY2022.S1501?_a=education&q=180XX00US0669000)
- U.S ZIP Code Stats (2024). 92706 Map, Demographics, More for Santa Ana, CA.

### CONCLUSION

#### Limitations & Improvements

##### Limitation 1: Lack of Ongoing Engagement

The training provides useful insight, but its one-time format limits long-term learning and skill reinforcement. Without follow-up or refreshers, knowledge may fade, reducing its lasting impact in a field that requires ongoing development.

##### Limitation 2: Limited Inclusivity and Adaptability

Though designed for flexibility, the guide may quickly become outdated due to shifts in politics, DEI funding, and federal aid programs. Its focus on internal staff limits community involvement and excludes lived experiences, reducing broader impact and buy-in.

##### Strategy for Improvement: Build a Sustainable, Participatory Model

To boost long-term impact and inclusivity, the project could add recurring trainings and a digital "living document" for updates. Involving impacted community members in revisions and facilitation would also enhance cultural relevance and real-world use.

#### Recommendations & Implications

##### Practice

The training and guide improved staff's knowledge and confidence in advising justice-impacted clients on higher education. To maintain impact, regular follow-up trainings and reflection sessions are recommended. Ongoing development will support sustainability and integration, especially in high-turnover settings.

##### Policy

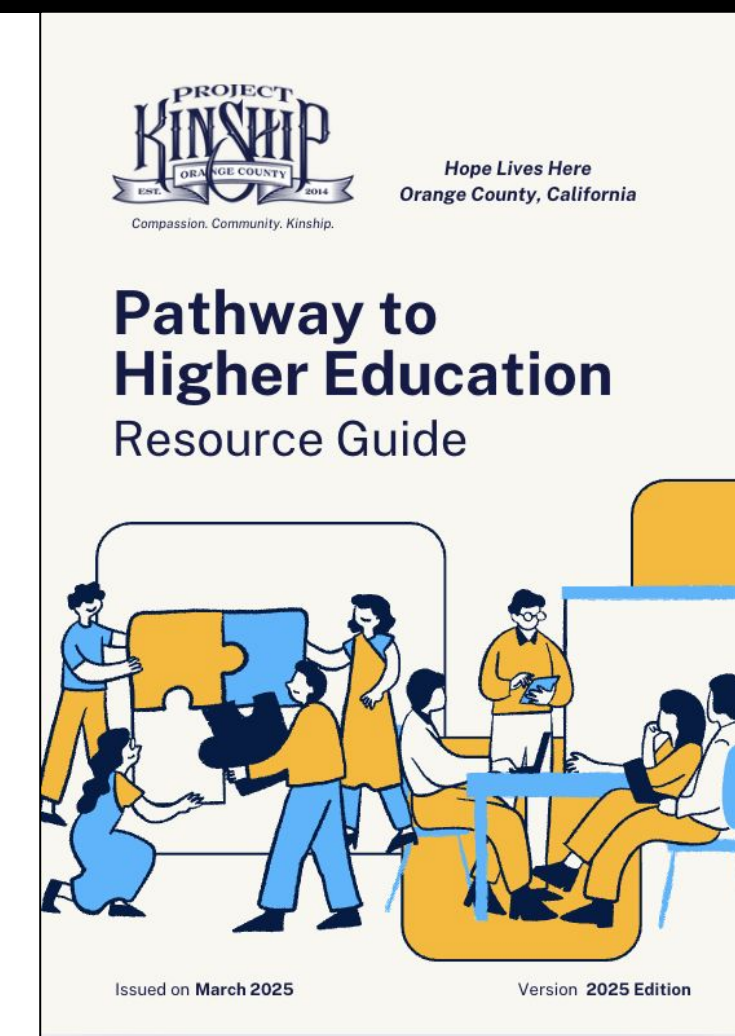
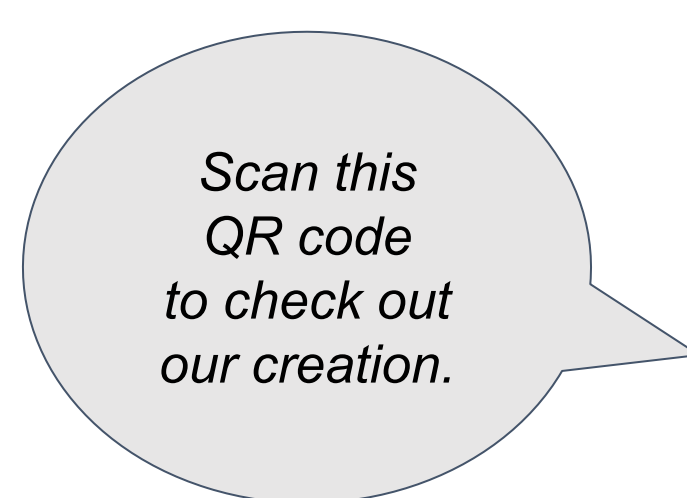
The project highlighted systemic barriers to education for marginalized groups. It recommends advocacy at local and state levels and integrating advocacy tools into future guides. Sustained advocacy efforts can help protect long-term access to educational resources despite political changes.

##### Research

Although the training improved staff knowledge, the guide's impact on participant outcomes wasn't measured. Future efforts should include long-term tracking of educational progress using mixed methods. Demonstrating outcomes can support funding, adoption, and expansion.

### RESOURCE GUIDE

#### Pathway to Higher Education Resource Guide



### COMMUNITY PARTNER



#### Project Kinship, Orange County

The mission of Project Kinship is to provide support and training to lives impacted by incarceration, gangs, and violence through hope, healing, and transformation.

Name of Community Partner	Contributions
<b>Elizabeth Ochoa</b> <i>Employment &amp; Education Coordinator</i> Project Kinship elizabeth@projectkinship.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assisted with needed information for project.</li><li>Recruited staff to attend presentation and training.</li><li>Helped collect pre/post surveys.</li><li>Provided guidance and feedback during implementation process.</li></ul>

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our group would like to thank our community partner, **Project Kinship**, for their trust in us and the opportunity to create a new tool that gives hope to the community in Santa Ana seeking opportunities for and access to higher education. The work Project Kinship carries out helped guide our project. Lastly, we would like to show our appreciation to **Dr. Joanna Barreras** for providing us guidance and support throughout the school year.