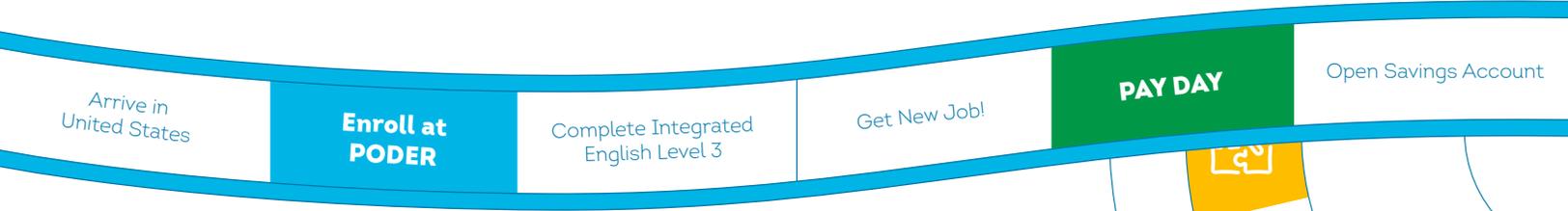


## 2019 Annual Report

# Equipping Immigrants with Strategies to Win at the Game of Life



Life is a balance of chance and choice, with challenges to overcome and decisions to make. Nobody feels this reality more acutely than immigrants.

The majority of Latino immigrants, despite a diverse demographic makeup, share an underlying common objective: to provide their children economic stability. So how do we ensure recent arrivals to the U.S. obtain the skills and support needed to achieve the American Dream? With a commitment to expanded workforce development pathways, **PODER** ensures this aspiration for intergenerational, upward mobility is attainable.

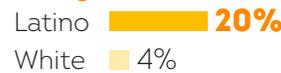
As highlighted in the sidebar to the right, there are formidable barriers facing southwest side Latino immigrants. PODER's answer is a **literacy + job skills + placement** strategy that offers multiple pathways to learn English and gain marketable job skills while providing wrap-around support from a growing community partner network. With this approach, each graduate from PODER takes a step towards his or her own **American Dream**, which in turn results in a more just and prosperous Chicago for all.

There is a direct correlation between socioeconomic status and race. Highlighted below are just a few of the disparities that affect Latinos' ability to close the skill and wage gap.

### Adults with less than a high school diploma



### Adults working full-time and living below 200% of poverty level



### Children in schools with high poverty levels



### Broadband internet access and adoption



Data compiled from National Equity Atlas for the Chicago Metro Area and Pew Research Center's "Digital Readiness Gap" report (2016)



## Three Pathways to Economic Mobility

PODER's Workforce Development program offers three industry-specific pathways for unemployed and underemployed individuals seeking careers with family-sustaining wages and advancement opportunities.

- 1. Customer Service.** Improves customer service, sales, and communication skills vital to any service industry position. Candidates who complete the training receive the Customer Service Institute of America (CSIA) industry-recognized credential.
- 2. Latinos in Finance.** Cultivates relationship banker and other financial services sector job skills. For those candidates with prior customer service experience, the training is a springboard to middle skill jobs.
- 3. Bilingual Insurance Licensing.** Develops essential insurance producer skills and prepares individuals to pass the Illinois Property/Casualty license exams, a requirement for employment as an insurance sales agent.

In addition to technical skills, all graduates participate in PODER's regularly held hiring fairs where we work with our social enterprise subsidiary, Oprima-1, to match candidates with employers who pay livable wages, offer benefits, and accelerate career mobility.



## Yolanda's Success Story

A first-generation Mexican immigrant, Yolanda arrived in the U.S. without lofty expectations, but full of optimism despite only basic English and a GED. Her job options were limited so she worked long shifts in a factory. Then, one day at her son's school, she noticed a PODER Integrated English class taking place. Seeing other parents like herself sitting in that classroom sparked something in Yolanda. She decided to enroll at PODER and in that moment her life took a new direction.



The next ten months were busy. Yolanda passed two levels of PODER's Integrated English and graduated from our **Customer Service and Bilingual Insurance Licensing** job training courses. At that point, she hit a bump in the road. For Yolanda, who had never taken a standardized test in her life, the licensing exam felt insurmountable. After three attempts, she successfully passed and began her career as a licensed bilingual insurance agent with Elvia Solis' **State Farm** agency.

Yolanda credits her move to the U.S. and enrolling at PODER as critical moments: "After moving to the U.S. I had the opportunity to experience independence and learned the importance of making good decisions. That led me to PODER, which gave me a new opportunity... a chance to be a professional working woman." Today Yolanda has a promising future at State Farm - crucial to building her family's economic security and showing her sons that with determination you can achieve anything.

## Employers Count on PODER Graduates

"What makes PODER's Latinos in Finance job training program significant is its ability to prepare participants to start a career in the financial service sector with core knowledge about our industry's procedures, regulations and the customer service skills needed to effectively communicate with clients. We are confident graduates from this program are well-equipped to join the Marquette Bank team and succeed."

- **George Moncada**  
President & CEO, Marquette Bank



"PODER's relationship with my agency office goes far beyond a transactional job match process. PODER has become a trusted partner in realizing our shared vision for the community."

- **Elvia Solis**  
State Farm Insurance Agency Owner



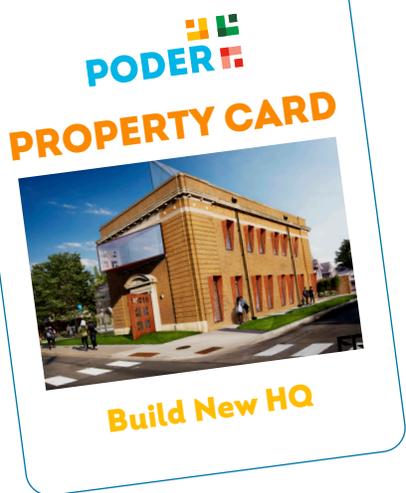
## Freddy's Success Story

Freddy, a second-generation immigrant living in nearby Cicero, came to PODER's **Latinos in Finance** (LIF) training working as a vault custodian, processing and tabulating millions of dollars in cash daily. But Freddy's shifts often didn't end until 1 AM and there was limited career growth opportunity. Freddy went online to start his job search, which is where he found PODER's LIF recruitment post.



LIF was a game-changer for Freddy and he credits the program for pushing him to find the best version of himself. After LIF graduation, Freddy participated in an Oprima-1 hiring event and received an offer from **Marquette Bank**, where he works today as a financial sales representative. With one semester left at Morton College, Freddy will graduate with his associate's degree and then pursue a bachelor's degree in business management. While reflecting on lessons learned, Freddy shared: "My parents had a dream that in this country their children would one day be able to achieve great things. They taught me that anyone has the ability to succeed, no matter what the circumstances. PODER empowers millennials like me with the skills and confidence to attain the type of success my parents envisioned for me."





# A Campaign to Build PODER HQ

In June 2019, PODER announced the launch of the first capital campaign in our 22-year history.



**PODER HQ** will be Chicago's first immigrant integration and job center, opening new windows of opportunity for our Latino immigrant communities. Our vision begins with a reinvented building and a reimagined PODER, resulting in a revitalized community.

Designed by the renowned architect Francisco Gonzalez Pulido, PODER HQ will be a series of artistic interventions that frame the building

and its history, support PODER's mission and programs, and empower individuals to explore this new gateway to opportunity. PODER HQ will be a place to learn new skills, find community, and envision a better future for our students and their children – a "first stop" to safely connect to a range of immigrant integration resources. We look forward to sharing more exciting details of this capital campaign in the coming months.

## PODER's 2019 Impact

<b>575</b> people served in 2019	<b>211</b> met with our Career Counselor
<b>64%</b> gained a literacy level on post-tested BEST exam	<b>11</b> new employer partners <i>banking, insurance, and customer service</i>
<b>90</b> workforce development program graduates	<b>\$15.50</b> average hourly wage at job placement
<b>90%</b> job retention at 180 days	<b>\$275K</b> contributions to economy from grads <i>income/sales taxes &amp; social security</i>

