

14 Desert Regional Consortium

Plans & Goals - Consortium Approved

Executive Summary

Desert Regional Consortium (DRC) Board members represent adult education institutions from throughout the Coachella Valley and bring a deep understanding of the diverse population they serve. The initial push to expand access to English as a Second Language (ESL), High School Diploma (HSD) and High School Equivalency (HSE), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Citizenship (CIT) programs has been successful. These classes, including Spanish or dual-language options, serve the most basic underlying academic and linguistic needs of the region. CAEP funding has also enabled Coachella Valley Adult School (CVAS) and Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) to bolster existing Career Technical Education (CTE) offerings and access. The regional framework, along with the intent to share resources across historical boundaries, allows the DRC to expand and adapt programming based on current and future needs as opposed to specific institutional budget priorities and limitations. The DRC has found creative ways to leverage CAEP funding in order to provide critical student supports and overcome barriers to access. The 2019-20 program year will focus on increasing student achievement and opportunity in our region, with a focus on supporting college and career transitions. The DRC aims to work together to ensure that more students obtain employment in the industries for which they have trained, to ensure that more students earn high school diplomas (or equivalent) throughout the region, and that more students are empowered to earn certifications for job skills and workforce readiness. Beyond this, the DRC aims to increase the percentage of students who persist in working towards associate degrees for transfer or 4-year degrees. Members aim to increase the number of students who obtain a measurable skill gain, as assessed by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS). Finally, the DRC will collaborate in the 2019-20 program year on developing a collaborative pilot to support adults in gaining CTE and basic literacy skills through program co-enrollment. Using local labor and employment data, as well as surveying the needs of our students, the DRC will develop a pilot program to train adult learners for high-demand jobs while developing these learners' basic skills and level of literacy.

Regional Planning Overview

The DRC has worked collaboratively to develop a three-year plan that focuses on the collective strengths of our agencies and meeting ongoing and future regional needs. Our shared vision is to empower adult learners throughout the Coachella Valley as they pursue their educational and vocational goals. We work towards this vision by collecting and assessing data about regional needs, identifying areas of opportunity, and collaborating to maximize our agencies' shared impact. Planning activities have included assessing regional adult education agency's capacity, assessing programs and support services, and gathering data about our community and our learners. Further, the DRC surveyed the economic outlook for the Coachella Valley, including individual cities and the region as a whole. The DRC identified both challenges and opportunities in the region and created a plan for achieving short and long-term goals. The DRC also seeks partnerships and collaborations within and outside of the consortium to support student achievement. The DRC meets monthly to share best-practices, update one another on progress towards our shared goals, and to plan future initiatives. One best-practice developed in the prior program year is to regularly analyze our collective CASAS data across the consortium, and to compare data collection and analysis strategies. These insights have helped us to identify student goals and barriers to achievement. We will continue to center student and regional data in our planning efforts. Further, we collectively engage regional data about the labor market, employment trends, and the economic future of the Coachella Valley. Recent meetings have featured presentations from local stakeholders who share an interest in developing local residents' economic and academic opportunities.

Meeting Regional Needs

Regional Need #1 [Revised]

Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

Since 2014, the DRC has made substantial progress in rebuilding and bolstering the region's adult education system. The DRC Leadership Board has grown into a functional and collaborative body that has been able to form lasting and beneficial

partnerships. The DRC's efforts the past few years have increased accessibility to adult programs through impactful and innovative programs and services. While the DRC has addressed many of the adult education system's immediate needs, there are still challenges and gaps for the Consortium to focus efforts on moving forward. The following initial recommendations are intended to inform the DRC's planning process for adult education programs and services. They are also meant to support ongoing activities to strengthen and expand the region's adult education system. These recommendations and strategies are based on Resource Development Associates Needs Assessment findings, CAEP priority areas, and best or promising practices. Each of the recommendations fall into three categories: 1. Expanding adult education programs and services. 2. Strengthening adult education partnerships. 3. Increasing DRC capacity

The goal of these recommendations is to provide the DRC Leadership Board with an initial framework to continue to address the region's gaps and barriers, leverage the Consortium's resources and strengths, and implement lasting changes to the region's adult education system. Streamline course offerings to reduce redundancies and make clear, marketable pathways for students. DRC Board members discussed identifying course sequences that DRC institutions can share, instead of duplicating efforts by having similar classes offered at each location. For example, ESL courses could be split, with the lower course levels offered by CVAS and more advanced levels offered by COD. Identifying additional pathways across institutions can be a beneficial strategy for sharing resources and supporting students who wish to advance their education, potentially even to a four-year degree. The process of identifying additional pathways should include students, teachers and faculty perspectives to best standardize curriculum and instruction. Additionally, DRC members are leveraging resources like career counselors to help students identify and navigate these pathways. Continue growing CTE course offerings that align with the region's economic needs. A review of the projected economic and employment trends, as well as the region's economic priorities, indicates that the DRC is considering the following CTE activities to best align with the region's economic needs: 1. Create offerings for supply chain management and logistics and technology and renewable energy fields. 2. Explore possibility of CTE or short-term CTE programs for information technology and computer science. 3. Expand offerings for healthcare and construction fields. 4. Maintain offerings for administrative/office skills and real estate fields. 5. The use of multiple measures to include TOPSPro data, ASAP attendance data, graduation rates and CTE certificate completions, survey student data will be used to measure student progress. In addition, data will be disaggregated to faculty, staff, students and administration. The DRC primarily serves a largely Hispanic and low-income communities, especially in the more eastern and western areas of the region. Communities to the east include a large non-English-speaking migrant population. Sixty-nine percent of teachers noted a very common reason for student enrollment was to improve English skills in order to better communicate with others. Twenty-four percent of students surveyed felt that a lack of English-language skills was a barrier to attendance; however, the ESL population is diverse. One member noted that there is a noticeable population of professionals who have immigrated to the U.S. and just need to hone their English-language skills. Many students need childcare and other supports, including financial supports, to be able to attend classes. Adults with disabilities often need specialized supports and, depending on the type of disability, this may include equipment, modified curriculum, and/or specialized instruction. Students are juggling multiple jobs or working to find a job in a region with highly seasonal employment options. Many DRC members described both the urban and rural populations as "transient;" thus, personal information can quickly become outdated and outreach efforts or attempts to provide educational continuity are difficult. The Desert Region is also large and there are many sparsely populated areas. Transportation options are limited throughout the region. Public transportation can take several hours to navigate what is normally a one-hour car trip, putting education and employment out of reach for those without access to vehicles. The DRC has met this challenge by providing Sunline bus passes to students in order to attend classes.

How do you know? What resources did you use to identify these gaps?

The RDA Needs Assessment identified that DRC adult learners encounter a wide array of barriers and challenges to achieving academic or career success. The DRC will continue to use CAEP funds for programs and services that support smooth transitions, accelerate progress, and mitigate barriers for adult learners. The DRC will continue investing in transition services, such as counselors and advisors. It has established regular cross-agency meetings for transition and student support staff to coordinate services. The DRC is working to help accelerate student progress by aligning and articulating courses from adult schools to community colleges, developing resources for students (e.g., an inventory of CTE and academic course sequences), and integrating soft and workforce skills into ESL and ABE curricula. DRC is considering forming a workgroup of faculty and administrators from the adult school and community college to identify, develop, and implement strategies to reduce barriers to adult learner success.

How will you measure effectiveness / progress towards meeting this need?

Historically, DRC members adopted or augmented new systems and technology depending on their own individual needs. Some, like RCOE, were motivated to improve data capacity after going through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

(WIOA) review process. Several data personnel across DRC institutions noted that CAEP reporting requirements motivated institutions to grow their data capacity and staff resources. All data staff interviewed noted the adoption or imminent adoption of new technology at their institution. The California Department of Education now requires all CAEP members to report a variety of student information (e.g., attendance, testing, demographics, and student goals) via TOPSpro Enterprise. As an adult school, CVAS was already compliant, while others have worked to enable a smoother interface with TOPSpro Enterprise. The data was used to maintain the Professional Learning Community model: Standards Based, Data Driven and Results Oriented. The consensus among data personnel was that data capacity will continue to grow as institutions are expected to meet both new CAEP requirements and more sophisticated data needs, such as sharing data with other DRC members or tracking students through various programs and employment. In addition, RCOE SCE is required to collect completion, placement, and licensure student outcome data as part of their Annual Institutional Report. This data is collected from all comprehensive, short term, and job upgrade courses. To maintain its Council on Occupational Education (COE) Reaffirmation accreditation status, benchmarks must be maintained. Therefore, the DRC is highly confident measuring effectiveness across all DRC members and identifying additional gaps to be addressed or positive practices identified. Metrics for effectiveness and increasing capacity include increased graduation rates, GED completion, industry certificate completion, attendance data, and common member TOPSPro data. Maintaining regular calendared consortium subcommittee data meetings for the purpose of increasing data integrity, data-driven decision-making, and strategic program improvement. An emphasis will be to address CTE gaps and increase enrollment in ABE, ASE and ESL programs consortium wide. In an effort to ensure educational integrity and effectiveness, the DRC will require that all student programs be offered through agencies accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and/or other recognized accrediting institutions.

Gaps In Service

Existing Strategies

Strategy #1

The DRC has made great progress in developing resource-sharing agreements between specific members to expand the regional AE system. The consortium has benefited from examining additional strategies such as developing a shared process to develop articulated curricula and share resources for students across different agencies. Increased coordination of counselors, for example, could result in an exchange of best practices that would benefit the consortium as a whole and would contribute to a more consistent student experience. While the DRC has moved toward collaboration as it has expanded the geographical reach of programs, it is still working to reconcile historical or traditional boundaries between providers with current and future capacity needs. Often, organizational red tape and system misalignment among DRC members can hinder program and service coordination. This contributes to inefficiencies such as duplication of administrative efforts and transition barriers for students. The move to a more fully integrated, regional AE system is the next logical step in the DRC's evolution. In an effort to ensure educational integrity and effectiveness, the DRC will require that all student programs be offered through agencies accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS-WASC).

Seamless Transitions

Existing Strategies

Strategy #1

DRC Consortium members will coordinate adding transition counselors to assist adults and create a pathway higher education possibilities. The DRC will establish transitional support collaboration between member agencies for the purpose of guiding students through post-secondary college and career educational pathways. Creating smoother pathways for students to achieve their educational and vocational goals may include improving communication and outreach, hiring cross-agency

personnel to support student success and achievement, and collaborating to create student-centered college and workforce-readiness training.

Student Acceleration

Existing Strategies

Strategy #1

An identified DRC strategy which has worked well is short-term courses: CVUSD and DSUSD Short-Term CTE: Computer Operator/Business Applications, Microsoft Certification, Real Estate Licensing, Notary Public, Electrician Pre-Apprenticeship, Multiple online courses. RCOE - Short-term CTE: EMT, Medical Clerical Bootcamp, Nurse Assistant, Pharmacy Technician Bootcamp. Comprehensive Programs: Administrative Office Professional, Dental Assistant with (Registered Dental Assistant Eligible), Medical Clinical Administration.

Professional Development

Existing Strategies

Strategy #1

The DRC will continue to engage in available Professional Development resources from CALPRO, OTAN, AEBG, and CASAS – both in-person, online (synchronous and asynchronous) and in hosting local events for the benefit of the entire consortium (i.e., localized workshops). Possible topics may include data-driven decision-making, equity-minded practices, growth mindset practices, and raising awareness about the needs and motivations of adult learners.

Leveraging Resources

Existing Strategies

Strategy #1

DRC will continue to partner with Local Work Force Development Board. DRC members will coordinate with the LWDB by regularly meeting and communicating with LWDB and partner agencies to improve coordination and alignment of services, with the creation of shared goals and meeting outcomes.

Fiscal Management

A narrative justifying how the planned allocations are consistent with the annual adult education plan which is based on your CAEP 3-year plan.

All CAEP allocations are approved unanimously and managed by the Desert Regional Consortium. All members use Galaxy software to maintain funds and is audited annually. Allocations are used to maintain, develop and foster adult education programs which support a pathway to the workforce, military, and post-secondary education, as per the DRC Three-year plan. The programs include English as a Second Language, Citizenship, High School Diploma, General Educational Development (GED), short-term Career and Technical Education, Pre-Apprenticeship, and Jail Programs. The DRC uses CAEP labor force data, Coachella Valley workforce data, and DRC survey data provided by Resource Development Associates from its own

commissioned strategic plan for adult education for establishing spending needs within consortium boundaries. To assist adults as they complete their diplomas, certificates and programs, DRC members have hired Pathway Counselors for seamless transitions to workforce entry, reentry or post-secondary education.

An approach to incorporating remaining carry-over funds from prior year(s) into strategies planned for 2019-20.

All CAEP funds from present and prior years are used to fund DRC adult education programs. If a member is unable to use all their funding, the DRC will meet to determine additional needs and to determine how to expend said funds to address any pending needs. MOUs are created between members after a unanimous vote for the expenditure of unused funds.

Certification

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