

14 Desert Regional Consortium

Plans & Goals

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 driving principles since the creation of the DRC were to expand access to English as a Second Language (ESL), High School Diploma (HSD), High School Equivalency (HSE), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Citizenship (CIT) programs have been successful. These efforts, including Spanish or dual-language options, serve the most basic underlying academic and linguistic needs of the region. Due to the pandemic, remote and hybrid formats were created to meet the needs of the adults of the Coachella Valley. The regional framework, along with the intent to share resources across historical boundaries, allows the DRC to expand and adapt programming based on equity, current and future needs, as opposed to specific institutional budget priorities and limitations. Desert Regional Consortium Members: • Coachella Valley Adult School (CVAS) – School District • College of the Desert (COD) – Community College • Desert Edge School Adult Education Program (Desert Edge) – Riverside County Office of Education • Desert Sands Unified School District (DSUSD) – School District • Palm Springs Unified School District (PSUSD) – School District • Riverside County Office of Education School of Career Education (RCOE SCE) – County Office of Education.

Coachella Valley Adult School (CVAS) and College of the Desert (COD) are the region's largest providers of adult education programs and services. While CVAS focuses on serving adult learners in the Coachella Valley and southern parts of the region, COD serves adult learners throughout the entire region. DSUSD and PSUSD are K-12 districts that partner with CVAS and COD, respectively, to provide satellite adult education programs within those districts, but currently do not offer stand-alone adult education programs. The innovative resource sharing partnership between local school districts and their respective AE partners has been recognized by CAEP as a "Practice with Promise" and the partnership between CVAS and DSUSD is highlighted on the CAEP website. RCOE serves all Riverside County and is a member of two additional CAEP consortia: the Southwest Consortium and the Riverside Consortium. Within the DRC, RCOE members represent both Desert Edge in the Indio Jail, Indio Day Reporting Center, and the School of Career Education in Indio.

Institutional data provides insights into the reasons students enroll in the AE courses provided by DRC members. Students enrolled at each institution reported the following primary goals for their enrollment and by extension where the DRC will concentrate its efforts and funds:

CVAS students are interested in improving their basic skills, achieving a high school diploma/GED, learning English.

COD students are interested in basic skills, as well as entering college or training programs.

All RCOE SCE students are interested in obtaining employment, industry certification and higher learning.

Desert Edge students' goals vary, but include obtaining a GED/HSD, improving basic skills, and getting a job.

Metric data from CalAdultEd 2020-21 Fact Sheets, LaunchBoard, US Census Data, our DRC Research Development Associates Assessment and other professional assessments, reflect the need to continue expand course offerings to assist our adult students, who fall into low poverty, high unemployment, and low literacy levels to achieve their primary goals.

Regional Planning Overview

The Desert Regional Consortium established the DRC Three-Year Plan Committee of DRC Consortium members and partners to review and self-assess performance and the population it serves over a period of several months. Following the CAEP Three-Year Plan 2022-2025 Infographic as a timeline guide, the DRC spent several weeks conducting the CAEP Consortium Program Quality Self-Assessment tool with members and partners reviewing, and reporting on each assessment category. Consortium members and Partners were able to provide input at all collaborative committee meetings and describe monthly progress of programs at roundtable discussions. Members and partners also provided narrative using Google Doc or at in-person

meetings to finally achieve consensus for all six sections of the Three-Year Plan. The DRC used the following assessments to evaluate effectiveness and identify needs:

U.S. Census Data, specific to the Coachella Valley

Inland Empire/Desert Regional Career Education Programs, Pathways & Employers Report Labor Market Data - Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research

Desert Regional Consortium Needs Assessment - Research Development Associates

TOPSPro/CASAS Testing Data

American Community Survey 2020 Demographic Data by Key Subgroup - CalAdultEd Fact Sheets - 2021

California Employment Development Department

Agency attendance records Labor Market surveys from Workforce Investment Board Employment and Earnings Reports

Barriers to Employment Survey results

Quarterly and past years review of agency Data Integrity Reports

Based on the above data results, the DRC has established a committee to focus on specific needs established in the Three-Year plan to accomplish in 2023-24.

Meeting Regional Needs

Regional Need #1

Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

The summary of key data points as educational needs as identified by the American Community Survey for the Desert Regional Consortium:

Identified 57,868 limited English Speaking adults with 100% speaking less than well.

Identified 93,005 adults (21%) with no high school diploma.

Identified 93,880 adults at near poverty or less.

Identified 31,741 unemployed adults.

US Census, as well as other assessments reinforce the same key data points.

In 2017, the summary of key data points as educational needs as identified by Research Development Associates specific for the DRC:

Identified 27% adults with no high school diploma.

Identified the majority (79%) of residents in the CVUSD region speak Spanish. Identified more than half of households in the CVUSD (61%) and PSUSD (57%) areas make less than \$50,000 per year.

Identified residents of the CVUSD area age 20 years and older consistently have higher unemployment rates than any other region

The California Employment Department identified the City of Coachella with the highest unemployment rate in Riverside County for January 2022 at 11.5% and Mecca at 9%

Implications amplify previous needs assessments of the Coachella Valley by the DRC and current data points. Since the previous assessment in 2017, the DRC has expanded adult education programs and services, strengthen adult education partnerships, increased capacity and increased counseling services for transition of students.

The DRC issuance of High School Equivalency and High School Diplomas has begun to increase after being impacted the the COVID-19 Pandemic.

As the DRC moved from in-person to virtual learning and then transitioned to a hybrid platform during the 2019-20, enrollment and high school credentials have increased for the DRC, despite school districts dropping their graduation credits from 220 to 130, while adult education remained at 160 credits. Barriers to employment continue to be a challenge for our students. The DRC is committed to leveraging resources to reach and provide targeted services for our adults as they transition to higher learning and/or the Workforce.

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

Gaps were identified using:

U.S. Census Data, specific to the Coachella Valley

Inland Empire/Desert Regional Career Education Programs, Pathways & Employers Report

Labor Market Data - Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research

Desert Regional Consortium Needs Assessment - Research Development Associates

TOPSPro/CASAS Testing Data

American Community Survey 2020 Demographic Data by Key Subgroup - CalAdultEd Fact Sheets - 2021

California Employment Development Department Agency attendance records

Labor Market surveys from Workforce Investment Board

Employment and Earnings Reports

Barriers to Employment Survey results

Quarterly and past years review of agency Data Integrity Reports

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

ESL students' technology needs will be assessed and met. By June 30, 2024, the DRC will maintain or exceed the number of high school graduates by 3% as compared to the number of graduates from the 2022-23 school year. The DRC will monitor progress using attendance data, as well as TOPSPro data to ensure progress. Data Integrity Reports are reviewed quarterly at calendared consortium meetings. MOUs are used by members to provide additional resources where needed.

Improve Integration of Services & Transitions

2023-24 Strategies

Strategy Name

Integration of Services and Transitions

Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Enhancing Learner Outcomes

Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Student Barriers: Low Literacy (AE 311 - Overall)

Strategy Description

As stated in the Executive Summary, the 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

driving principles since the creation of the DRC were to expand access to English as a Second Language (ESL), High School Diploma (HSD), High School Equivalency (HSE), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Citizenship (CIT) programs have been successful. These efforts, including Spanish or dual-language options, serve the most basic underlying academic and linguistic needs of the region. Due to the pandemic, remote and hybrid formats were created to meet the needs of the adults of the Coachella Valley. The regional framework, along with the intent to share resources across historical boundaries, allows the DRC to expand and adapt programming based on equity, current and future needs, as opposed to specific institutional budget priorities and limitations.

In addition, the DRC maintains alignment of adult education and workforce services. Workforce representatives attend our consortium meetings and provide insights into programs or plans which consortium members can align into building additional career pathways, as well as the workforce sectors being used by the county workforce. In addition, consortium members attend CAEP webinars, CAEP Director's Conference, Annual CAEP Conference, and TOPSpro regional users groups, as well as the CASAS Institute. Members also attend professional organizations such as ACSA (monthly regional meetings), CCAE, CAAEA, and WASC. WIOA members attend WIOA regional meetings. The Riverside County Workforce Development Board (RCWDB) provides oversight for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs in the county. The WDB acts as a catalyst to provide seamless services among various workforce programs, and provides community leadership around workforce issues.

To ensure students have a seamless transition, College of the Desert has included a special web portal on their web page to assist Adult School students in their application process. 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. To accelerate the workplace transition of English as a Second Language students, the Desert Regional Consortium has begun to develop short term Integration of Education and Training programs. These programs allow English Language Learners to co-enroll into CTE courses and ESL classes allowing students to obtain industry recognized certificates at accelerated rates.

Address Educational Needs

2023-24 Strategies

Strategy Name

Addressing Educational Needs

Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Enhancing Learner Outcomes

Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Student Barriers: Low Literacy (AE 311 - Overall)

Strategy Description

The DRC members may have the opportunity to leverage additional funding sources and make creative use of current funding streams thereby closing Gaps in Service. Several institutions such as CVAS, COD, and RCOE receive WIOA funds, and the opportunity exists for more regional funding through this and other government grant programs. Some members, such as CVAS, are working with community-based organizations or nonprofits that already receive grant funding. These relationships

could lead to additional grant funding for joint programs. Local businesses may also be willing to support AE efforts through financial aid and paid apprenticeships, as they are doing for K-12 career academies. Currently Desert Sands USD leverages district funds at the Eisenhower Education Center to provide adult education services in conjunction with consortium members CVAS and COD. 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. The DRC is committed to recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified staff to teach adult education ESL, High School Diploma and CTE classes in the Desert Region remains a challenge due to the pandemic. Regional economic planning efforts do not specifically nor consistently include Adult Education efforts. DRC urban and rural populations can be described as “transient;” thus, personal information can quickly become outdated and outreach efforts or attempts to provide educational continuity are difficult. Nonetheless, the DRC is committed to reviewing DRC and Workforce analysis data on a quarterly basis to ensure not only appropriate classes are placed in the correct regions of the Coachella Valley, but also classes that reflect the needs of the student for academic and/or workplace success

Improve Effectiveness of Services

2023-24 Strategies

Strategy Name

Improving Effectiveness of Services

Activity that Applies to this Strategy

Enhancing Learner Outcomes

Metrics that Apply to this Activity/Strategy

- Student Barriers: Low Literacy (AE 311 - Overall)

Strategy Description

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 has resulted in an exchange of best practices that has benefitted the consortium as a whole and has contributed 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. In the past, organizational red tape and system misalignment among DRC members has hindered program and service coordination. This contributed to inefficiencies such as duplication of administrative efforts and transition barriers for students. The move to a more fully integrated, regional AE system has eliminated previous gaps in service areas. Regional unemployment data and community input is examined on a quarterly basis to ensure classes are placed in the locations of most need targeting adults with high unemployment, poor English skills, and adults with no high school diplomas. DRC will partner and consult with Local Workforce Development Board and Riverside County Agencies to improve student transitions into the workforce. Additionally, the three Coachella Valley school districts (Desert Sands USD, Palm Springs USD and Coachella Valley USD) will continue to maximize resources by utilizing the instructors and administrative staff from College of the Desert and Coachella Valley Adult School. Given the high unemployment rate that transpired as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the DRC will continue collaborate and to create shared goals. DRC will create a shared workforce employer advisory with Riverside County College of Career Education. The DRC will continue to engage in available Professional Development resources from CALPRO, OTAN, CAEP, 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. The

DRC will continue to invest time and energy in professional development activities that will strengthen the efficacy of their work and the unity of the consortium.

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 Desert Regional Consortium members unanimously approved the previous DRC Three-Year Plan, which contains various ongoing /new programs, as well as pilots to be implemented. CAEP funds are allocated for administering existing /new school sites, purchasing required administrative reporting software/hardware, staffing, maintaining faculty, providing counseling, professional development, and upgrading /replacing equipment. The DRC annual plans reevaluate and focus on specifics of the Three-Year plan to be accomplished or updated. As the DRC proceeds, additional adjustments and funding will be made to our new Three-Year Plan to deal with unplanned changes via the CFAD and DRC Annual Plan. WIOA members use funds to supplement current programs. Other non CAEP funds also supplement current CAEP programs.

The DRC is committed to completing the objectives stated in the Three-Year Plan. As per the CAEP memo of February 26, 2020, all Desert Regional Consortium members are eligible for the COLA. The COLA distribution for 2022-23 will be based on the member's allocation percentage from the prior year's CFAD. The DRC is a Direct Funded Consortium and approved unanimously the 2023-24 allocation. DRC Administrative Expenses once approved by the DRC will be deducted from member allocations. The total of Administrative Expenses will remain with CVUSD but is not part of its base allocation. Coachella Valley Unified School District, as the administrative unit, will pay Administrative Expenses as designated by the DRC. Continuing forward, the DRC will utilize the same format for distribution of funds to members.

An approach to incorporating remaining carry-over funds from prior year(s) into strategies planned for 2023-24.

Following the CAEP recommendation of First in First Out (FIFO), the DRC Consortium Director, in conjunction with the member business departments, monitor the rate of expenditures to determine the first allocated budget is spent in a timely basis and adequate carryover funds are available for subsequent years. The CAEP Adult Education Program Fiscal Program Guide recommends spending targets of 15% Quarter 1, 30% Quarter 2, 45% Quarter 3 and 60% Quarter 4, targets based on the current active funding for the 12-month period (July 1st to June 30th), which includes all active carry-over funds and any new funds. The member fiscal year or 12-month budget in NOVA reflects all active funding. Failure to meet targets will result in a corrective action plan. In the event a member is unable to spend its allocated budget, the funds may be allocated after an agreed upon majority vote by the DRC. Via MOU unspent funds will then be allocated to other DRC member(s) with the proviso that the funds will be fully spent, and invoices fully paid by the end of Quarter 4. All funds must be spent as per the CAEP Adult Education Program Fiscal Program Guide.

Certification

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06/14/2023 10:31 AM PDT

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06/29/2023 03:17 PM PDT

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06/19/2023 10:08 AM PDT

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06/15/2023 12:06 PM PDT



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