

# 21 Salinas Valley Adult Education Consortium

## Plans & Goals - Consortium Approved

### Executive Summary

Despite the setbacks caused by the COVID crisis, the Salinas Valley Adult Education Consortium (SVAEC) made notable progress toward achieving the goals in its Three-year Plan (2019-2022). Thanks to the Outreach & Transition Specialist, the SVAEC has increased its community-based outreach and marketing efforts through a local radio and TV ad campaign, expanded programs and services in underserved areas, and extended its referral network by leveraging more partnerships. The SVAEC considers its rapid response to the COVID crisis to be one of its greatest accomplishments of the year. Students were contacted regularly by phone, text, WhatsApp, and Zoom to check in, assess their needs, and inform them of support services for them and their families; laptops and hotspots were loaned to students in need; programs began training teachers and staff to effectively provide remote instruction and student services; and a Consortium Distance Learning PLC brought almost 40 teachers and staff together weekly to share and develop new tools, strategies, and resources to better serve students during the pandemic. Although enrollment dropped, persistence remained high for a majority of students, and a large number of students were able to continue with their classes as programs pivoted quickly to distance learning (online and paper-based). The Consortium kept teachers, staff, and students apprised of regional support services and referred them to providers who could provide assistance with food, housing, utilities, transportation, healthcare, and more. A local expert in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) (who is also an adult school teacher) provided a series of professional development opportunities for 22 regional educators to learn to help their adult students facilitate their children's learning at home during the pandemic. A similar SEL training (virtual with English-Spanish translation) was provided for students and community members; nearly 45 adults participated and learned how to apply SEL principles and practices at home with their children. A gap that was not originally identified but became increasingly clear is the need for social emotional support for staff and faculty. COVID affected students but affected staff as well. Thus, a special SEL workshop was held for 22 instructors to support their own SEL during the pandemic. Supporting the health and wellbeing of students, families, and instructors during the current public health and economic crises was a top priority for the SVAEC in FY20-21. Adopting a "Maslow's before Bloom's" philosophy, the Consortium makes every effort to provide services and referrals for services that will help students meet their basic needs (including physical, emotional, and mental health), acknowledging that learning and making literacy and workforce gains is nearly impossible when facing multiple barriers that are exacerbated by the effects of the COVID pandemic and economic downturn. Another top priority for 20-21 was maintaining student access to instruction and academic support services – now delivered almost entirely online. This required the continuation of laptop and hotspot lending programs and advocating for universal internet access across the region; increased technical support for students who struggle with distance learning; and the integration of digital literacy skills instruction into every class across the curriculum. A third priority is continuing to prepare students to re-enter the workforce through CTE and job readiness programming with the hope that, when the region's economy begins to recover, they will be able to work toward their own financial stability and contribute to the economic recovery. These primary goals for FY 20-21 – maintaining student enrollment by increasing services that help students access distance learning, remote services and that support the wellbeing of students and their families, and maintaining workforce readiness and CTE programming that will help students re-enter the workforce – will be carried over into FY 21-22, for the effects of the COVID crisis are far from over. Meeting these goals will be incredibly challenging, particularly given the continuing public health crisis and economic crisis caused by the COVID pandemic, the uncertainty around CAEP funding and other federal and state resources, and the unjust policies and practices that cause major inequities in our adult education system. Mitigating the negative impact of these crises will require systemic reform on a large scale. Our plan describes some of the strategies we will employ to do what is in our power to address these challenges locally and meet the needs of our communities in the Salinas Valley. Of course, our job day in and day out is to provide support for students; however, this year we went above and beyond to help our students to connect during this historic crisis.

### Regional Planning Overview

The SVAEC is still very much focused on the five goals set in its Three-Year Regional Adult Education Plan (2019-22); however, in 21-22, progress indicators must be adjusted and strategies adapted to the current environment, which has changed drastically since last year. New barriers have arisen and old ones are exacerbated by the COVID crisis and subsequent economic crisis; the

Consortium's priorities are changing as students' needs are changing; and resources are reduced, constrained, and unpredictable. How we operate, how we use resources, and what we will try to accomplish may look different from prior years. The needs and strategies described in the 21-22 Annual Plan all align with the SVAEC's 3-Year Plan Goals to 1) Increase student enrollment; 2) Increase the number of adult learners achieving their education goals; 3) Increase the number of SVAEC adult learners making workforce gains; 4) Adopt the new CAEP Immigrant Integration metrics and promote increased support for immigrants in the Salinas Valley; and 5) Adopt practices that ensure equity, efficacy, and efficiency through data-driven decision making and alignment of adult education services and resources with regional needs. However, it will be a struggle to restore student enrollment and persistence to pre-COVID levels; thus, we are removing the performance targets we had set for ourselves and will focus on improving retention rather than building capacity. In 21-22 and beyond, the SVAEC will measure success not only by its progress towards achieving these five goals, but also by its ability to weather the storms caused by the COVID crisis and the unemployment crisis, and its unwavering commitment to eradicating racial injustice and other inequities in its local adult education system. The SVAEC will navigate the COVID crisis by remaining flexible and responsive to changing needs and using this as an opportunity to enhance offerings and serve students in new ways. We will determine how to safely and effectively conduct student intake, placement, onboarding, testing, instruction, and transitional support in remote and/or modified settings; continue to develop and improve distance learning classes and remote services that promote student access and success (e.g., integrating digital literacy and social-emotional learning content into all curriculum); and provide as much support to students and their families as possible to help mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID crisis and subsequent economic crisis, both through our own services and those of community partners. In addition, we will work toward transitioning back to in-person instruction whenever the school districts give us the green light to do so; and, when we do, we will follow all CDE and CDC guidelines. Simultaneously, we will leverage the advantages of on-line and hybrid learning to offer our adult students options that best suit their needs. The SVAEC will navigate the COVID and unemployment crises by striving to make data-driven decisions; be strategic in its use of resources and leverage other sources; collaborate and leverage partnerships; and advocate within our districts, locally and regionally, and at the state-level, for maintaining funding (although increased funding is needed) and supporting adult education. The SVAEC will address racial injustice and other inequities in the local adult education system by taking these steps: educate ourselves about racial injustice, particularly in our education system, and learn how to become anti-racist educators; create learning environments that encourage our students to promote, respect, honor, and cherish cultural differences; examine and evaluate types and levels of inequities in our local systems and adult education programs using quantitative and qualitative data (student demographic, enrollment, and outcomes data; census data; student interviews, surveys, and focus groups; etc.) and auditing our policies and practices; address inequities in our programs by developing and implementing an action plan; engage students more and invite them to participate in the governance of our programs and the consortium; and advocate for equity and racial justice at the regional, state, and national levels.

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## Meeting Regional Needs

### Regional Need #1

#### Gaps in Service / Regional Needs

**Student Support:** Students' ability to participate in adult education programs and reach their goals is impeded by the many barriers they face, especially during the current COVID crisis. Already among the most vulnerable in our society, the crisis is exacerbating the conditions that cause great insecurity for students and their families, including food and housing insecurity; unemployment and underemployment; unsafe living and working conditions; limited access to transportation, childcare, and internet; and physical, mental, and behavioral health issues with limited access to healthcare. Many are ineligible for public assistance. Furthermore, many adult ESL learners in our community are ag farm workers who were considered essential and continued to work throughout the pandemic; they were impacted by the pandemic at disproportionate rates, and this was further compounded by expensive and scarce housing. In sum, ag farm workers were a very vulnerable population during the pandemic. As adult education providers, we know we are not able to meet all of the above needs; however, we are committed to fulfilling our roles as community resource centers and doing what we can to support the health and well-being of our students and their families so they can continue to achieve their goals. This may include, for example, ensuring that our adult students have access to the technology required to continue their education in a hybrid learning mode.

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

Student surveys and direct student outreachRegional data related to unemployment, housing/homelessness, food insecurity, public health, etc.News reports on how pandemic has widened the educational gap in 2021-22

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

Student surveys and interviews (pre- and post-)/WIOA II Wages & Earnings SurveyStudent data in TE, especially update recordsTrack student outreachTrack referrals (how many were referred; make sure they connected - follow up)Track how many people access and link from our Resources page on websiteStudent/community member participation in workshops/eventsStudent use of technical assistanceRegional data related to unemployment, housing/homelessness, food insecurity, public health, etc.

### **Regional Need #2**

#### **Gaps in Service / Regional Needs**

Student Outreach: There is an ongoing need to increase awareness of adult education programs and educate the community about how to access their classes and services, particularly now that programs are operating remotely. In the age of COVID, new strategies are needed for outreach and recruitment.

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

Census data, member student data, and data from the SVAEC regional AE needs assessment surveyFeedback from teachers, staff, students, community members, partners, and other stakeholdersLCAP planning meetings

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

Student enrollment dataPartner referralsQuantitative and qualitative data collection (including current and former student surveys)

### **Regional Need #3**

#### **Gaps in Service / Regional Needs**

Student Access: Student access to adult education programs is more important and yet more challenging during the COVID crisis. Limited access to computers and internet, limited digital literacy skills, social-emotional challenges, and having to manage their children's learning at home make it incredibly difficult for many students to access distance learning and remote support services.

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

Surveys conducted by AE programs and districtsDrop in enrollment and participation (tracking attendance and participation in online learning platforms)

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

Enrollment and persistence dataNumber of devices lent out and usedTrack students receiving technical assistanceAssessment for digital literacy skills and keyboarding skills

### **Regional Need #4**

#### **Gaps in Service / Regional Needs**

Student Persistence: Many students either stop attending before they reach their goals; stay at the same level when they should progress to a higher level; or do not ever attend classes after intake/registration or orientation. And now the move to distance learning has impacted enrollment, retention, and progression to a much greater extent.

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

Student data – enrollment, attendance, persistence, outcomesCensus data – Member student data comparisonQuantitative student data, particularly data showing insufficient transition to postsecondary educationFeedback from teachers, staff, and students

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

Student enrollment dataStudent outcomes data, including data indicating transitions to postsecondary (TE, MIS, and Launchboard)Quantitative and qualitative data collection (including current and former student surveys)

### **Regional Need #5**

#### **Gaps in Service / Regional Needs**

Workforce Readiness: The economic crisis has caused the unemployment rate in Monterey County to jump to almost 15%, and it may continue to rise. Students need to prepare to re-enter the workforce with transferable technical and employability skills needed to transition into new industries and occupations as the economy shifts and begins to recover.

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

Student data LMI – especially unemployment data Wage & Earnings Survey by WIOA II Assessment in workforce readiness classes (e.g., CareerReady 101, Virtual Job Shadow, Odysseyware)

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

Student outcomes data, including data indicating employment, wage gains, transitions to job training, or other workforce gains or occupational skills gains (TE, MIS, and Launchboard) Quantitative and qualitative data collection (including current and former student surveys)

## Regional Need #6

**Gaps in Service / Regional Needs**

Equity: Systemic inequities – racial, socioeconomic, gender, age, residency status, ability – lead to large numbers of individuals not receiving the services and opportunities they need to achieve their goals, including education and career goals (compounded, of course, with numerous other negative effects, including trauma). Adult education programs exist to serve the underserved and marginalized. The adult education system is also sorely underfunded, thus inequity is inherent and only a fraction of those in need are served. There are inequities in our local adult education system, as well, that will require intentional inquiry into the effects of policies and practices on students and personnel.

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

Student data Regional data – census, public health, unemployment Offerings – types of classes or services we are NOT offering faculty input (based on student observations)

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

Surveys - students and personnel Student participation in our meetings Student participation in curriculum development Student participation in assessment of curriculum Solicit suggestions from students Data analysis - improved enrollment, persistence, and outcomes for students in targeted groups

## Regional Need #7

**Gaps in Service / Regional Needs**

Data & Assessment: Continuous improvement in data and assessment practices is always a need. Conducting assessments and collecting data are especially challenging in the current COVID crisis, as federal and state agencies, testing providers, and local adult education programs grapple with the question of how to do so in ways that are efficient and effective, maintain the integrity of the data, and keep people safe. AE providers need additional guidance, training, and resources to place, test, and track the progress of students in remote and/or modified modalities, and to evaluate their own effectiveness in serving students.

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

Program feedback about new challenges in conducting intake and assessment, pre- and post-testing, due to COVID-19 – have to do remotely and/or in much smaller groups Many students were not post-tested due to shelter-in-place restrictions and only a small number of students were tested remotely Gaps in student data, especially update records

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

Integrity of data Adapting to remote testing or modified in-person testing Additional assessments developed/adopted

## Gaps In Service

### New Strategies

#### Strategy #1

Increase student access to remote instruction and services: Ensure students have the technology to access classes and services by lending laptops and hotspots to those who need them, and find other creative ways to help them access the internet (e.g., wifi in school parking lots and other community hubs). Utilize digital learning platforms that are effective and accessible. Continue support for blended/hybrid instruction along with referral to local nonprofits that help with technology acquisition (Internet and hardware). Students needed and received access to technology and also received technical support on how to use the tech. Although many of the adult schools will continue to offer online instruction, we also need to recognize that others are transitioning back to in-person instruction. In this regard, it is worth recognizing that we are not going back to the way things were two years ago, for instructors now have a whole new repertoire of skills that they gained during the COVID crisis, and they will continue to apply those skills in the classroom. Furthermore, we must also recognize that our communities may require assistance to return to in-person instruction (e.g., transportation and childcare services).

#### **Strategy #2**

Strive to maintain current levels of instruction, as well as maintaining retention: As resources allow, provide instruction in ESL, HSD/HSE, Citizenship, and Workforce Readiness through distance learning and hybrid classes. Offer existing CTE programs, if possible, through distance learning and hybrid instruction (hands-on portions of classes may have to wait until in-person training is permitted, unless creative solutions can be found).

#### **Strategy #3**

Increase instruction in two areas: 1) Provide continued Digital Literacy instruction, with more stand-alone computer and keyboarding classes, modules teaching students how to work and study from home, and digital literacy skills instruction integrated across the curriculum. 2) Provide more programming to train adults, especially parents, to support K12 children's success in school, for students who may still be receiving instruction through distance learning.

#### **Strategy #4**

Increase academic support services: Develop strategies to support students remotely through virtual onboarding, tutoring, and testing. Provide technical assistance to help them access and navigate online instruction, through live assistance by phone or computer and with how-to videos posted on websites and social media. Explore the possibility of having students serve as tutors or peer mentors who can provide supplemental instruction.

#### **Strategy #5**

Increase student support services: Provide virtual college and career pathways support with individual advising and virtual events like job readiness workshops and resource fairs. Offer programming that provides social emotional support and promotes the health and wellbeing of students and their families. Collaborate with community partners to share information about support services through resource guides, social media, and partner presentations/workshops. Refer more students to partner agencies as needed for assistance with housing, utilities, food, healthcare, mental/behavioral health, transportation, etc. Appoint and train at least one person at each program/site to serve as a "Resource Navigator."

#### **Strategy #6**

Maintain outreach and recruitment efforts: Continue to conduct outreach and recruitment remotely, using tools and strategies like radio and television advertising (English and Spanish), social media (posts, events, videos, and ads), website improvements, virtual events (open houses and workshops), and leveraging partner activities.

#### **Strategy #7**

Address inequities: Educate ourselves about equity, conduct research and data analysis, assess our programs (including curriculum and instruction, hiring practices and pay), and make changes to policies and practices that create barriers, cause harm, and perpetuate inequities. Make equity a standing agenda item, engage students in decision-making, and use a human-centered design approach to improve services and serve the underserved. Advocate for more resources for our students and their families, including education and training, transportation, healthcare, and child care.

## **Seamless Transitions**

### **New Strategies**

**Strategy #1**

Adapt intake, orientation/onboarding, assessment, placement, and data collection practices to the virtual landscape.

**Strategy #2**

Modify and improve data collection and assessment/testing tools and practices.

**Strategy #3**

Better utilize student assessment data and pathways tools (which include pathways maps, course sequences, and placement guidance) to inform placement, instruction, and progression. Ensure student placement is individualized and aligned with students' goals, skills, and interests. Focus on student goals and "next steps" in individual educational/transition plans.

**Strategy #4**

Inform students of online course offerings across the region, as they are no longer limited by location or transportation. Continue to align adult school curricula with Hartnell college. Develop Bridge classes to promote student transitions to college.

## Student Acceleration

### New Strategies

**Strategy #1**

Implement new strategies to intentionally create connection, increase engagement, and build community with students so they feel supported by their peers and program personnel and thus are able to persist and even accelerate their progress towards reaching their goals. This may include team-building activities inside and outside of class, peer tutoring and mentoring, conversation and study groups, social events, or student-led committees or clubs.

**Strategy #2**

Integrate digital literacy, workforce readiness, college readiness, resilience, and social-emotional learning into our curriculum. As we make the transition back to in-class learning, place a special focus on social-emotional learning. Search for or develop assessment tools to track progress in these areas.

**Strategy #3**

Encourage co-enrollment in basic skills (e.g., ESL/HSE/HSD to a CTE, Community College or short term pathway class), technical skills, and employability skills courses. Explore alternative and accelerated delivery of basic skills and adult secondary programs (integrated HSE, workshops, bootcamps, online, short-term classes). Formalize consistent new (lower) graduation requirements among consortium's adult schools, with portable credit. Continue to help students connect to post secondary education through the consortium liaison.

**Strategy #4**

Develop and implement strategies to convert current integrated education and training programming into distance learning or hybrid programs. The following contextualized courses offered by various adult schools may continue in 21-22 if possible: Registered Dental Assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant, Culinary and Food Safety, Homecare Health Aide, Forklift Certification (all career training integrated with English Language Development support). Explore the development of new programs such as fire science, as well as programs to help agricultural workers adapt to the automatization of agriculture.

**Strategy #5**

Develop apprenticeship programs that have a special focus on education-to-career pathways and provide extensive ELL support. Start with an apprenticeship in ECE and expand the apprenticeship opportunities to other areas in CTE. Register the apprenticeship programs with the state so that students enjoy the full benefits of apprenticeship programs: (1) free classes, (2) paid apprenticeship, and (3) job upon graduation.

## Professional Development

### New Strategies

#### Strategy #1

Continue to convene the Consortium's Professional Learning Community to foster regional collaboration, development of new strategies and tools, peer support, and professional development. Assess key professional development needs. Develop Annual Consortium PD Plan and Calendar. Post that calendar on the consortium's website. Produce consortium orientation materials for new hire packets. Identify and disseminate member best practices consortium wide.

#### Strategy #2

Provide professional development for teachers, staff, and administrators related to the 21-22 strategies, including the following: a Distance Learning Assessment, particularly Remote Testing; Data Collection & Reporting; Social-emotional learning; trauma-informed instruction; Equity in Adult Education; Consortium Fiscal Training (refresher on reporting requirements and how to use SmartSheets and NOVA); Student Pathways Support (encourage staff and teacher familiarity with local intake, enrollment, and placement processes, course sequences, and college and career pathways). Ensure that curricula are instructor-friendly and incorporate aides to ensure that instructors are including the above elements into their lessons. Assess the above elements when providing teachers with feedback.

#### Strategy #3

Collaborate with community partners and neighboring consortia to provide regional professional development opportunities for teachers, staff, and administrators. Encourage participation in professional development opportunities by paying any fees associated with the training and/or compensating participants for their time. Collaborate with community partners to leverage our resources when we have common goals. For example, the SVAEC is collaborating with Bright Beginnings and the United Way in the development of the ECE Pathways Program for ELL adults.

#### Strategy #4

Encourage participation in PD by CAEP, CalPro, OTAN, CASAS, CATESOL, CCAE, COABE, etc. Pay for group memberships in CATESOL, CCAE, and COABE.

## Leveraging Resources

### New Strategies

#### Strategy #1

Conduct more community outreach and targeted recruitment through engagement of stakeholders, leveraging of partnerships (especially K-12 schools, libraries, and employers), improve cross-referral processes, and increased presence in the community (even virtually/online). Compile information from consortium overview on statistics. Include discussion of this information in board meetings. Have each member present to their local board on their AE program, including information from the SVAEC.

#### Strategy #2

Engage partners to collaboratively address four of the top barriers to adults accessing adult education: lack of or limited access to internet and computers, transportation, accessible child care, healthcare (including mental healthcare), affordable housing, and food. While this was challenging to do during COVID, we shall continue to strive to improve our performance in these areas. Develop a shared presentation template about SVAEC for member presentations to school boards and stakeholders. Develop fact sheets for school boards and stakeholders to serve as a secondary source of data. Continue outreach activities: radio/TV spots, virtual job fairs, K/12 Back to School Activities, and workshops (e.g., workshops done in collaboration with MCWDB).

## 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.**

Activities in the 3-year plan, Consortium Annual Plan, and individual Member District Workplans all align, and all budgets align with the strategies and activities in the plans. The full fiscal impact of the flat funding and rising costs plus changing needs is still not entirely clear. With soaring salary + benefits costs, new constraints on districts' resources due to the COVID crisis, and uncertainty about funding in the future, our adult education programs will be under a lot of strain this year. More staff time is needed for remote testing, extra facility cleaning, and extra class sections due to small class sizes. More devices are needed so students can access distance learning. And more academic and non-academic support services are needed for students, especially those with low digital literacy skills and limited English. Every attempt will be made to maintain current levels of service, which will require leveraging internal and external partnerships (including with our own districts), and to promote equity in our services. As in prior years, the majority of funding is dedicated to teacher and support staff salaries for direct student services like instruction, intake and assessment, outreach, and transitioning to secondary education; more emphasis will be placed on supporting distance learning, student access, and student support (especially for parents of K12 school children), thus some shifting of resources may occur. The SVAEC's overarching approach in 21-22 will be as follows: continually reassess needs and effectiveness in meeting them; continue to be adaptable and responsive to changing needs; make data-driven decisions and use resources strategically and creatively; and redistribute resources, if needed, to ensure our funding aligns with regional needs and gaps in services.

**An approach to incorporating remaining carry-over funds from prior year(s) into strategies planned for 2021-22.**

The SVAEC's Shared Fund is carrying over \$114,212 of its 20-21 funds into 21-22; the member agencies are not expected to have significant carryovers. The Shared Fund's carryover was unexpected and due to two events in the 20-21 fiscal year. First, the position of the SVAEC Director was vacated, and this resulted in salary and benefits savings. Second, shelter in place went into effect in March 2021. This, too, resulted in savings in many line items (e.g., travel, conferences, mileage, supplies, water, printing, etc.). On the other hand, there were unexpected increases in salaries and benefits that are beyond our control and depend upon negotiations between the unions and the district. Therefore, we propose the following strategies for using the carryover. First, save a portion in case there are additional unexpected increases in salaries and benefits. Second, continue the successful advertising campaign that was started at the end of FY 20-21. Third, invest a substantial portion of the carryover in the development of apprenticeship programs. The first one that we are developing is an ECE Pathway/Apprenticeship program. If the model is successful, we intend to reproduce it in other CTE programs. Finally, return part of this carryover to the members to support the scope and quality of their programs.

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