



November 4, 2021

TO: SDICCC Presidents, Chief Instructional Officers, Chief Student Services Officers, Counseling Deans, and Career Education Deans

FROM: San Diego-Imperial Regional Consortium

Regional Strong Workforce Program Request for Application for Pathway Navigation Project

Please review this RFA carefully before completing and submitting the Application for the Pathway Navigation Project below. The Application will be used as a scope of work for the contract with your college after a consultation meeting with the Regional Consortium. The Application will also be used to complete the Strong Workforce Workplan in the statewide NOVA system.

The funding for this project must be spent by June 30, 2023. The region will ask for quarterly [Progress Reports](#) in May, August, and November 2022 and February and May 2023 to assess investment progress. If progress is not being made, funds may be reallocated to other colleges.

If you have questions about the intent and scope of this RFA, please contact Danene Brown at danene.brown@gcccd.edu. If you have questions about the RFA process and details, please contact Sally Cox at sally.cox@gcccd.edu.

Please submit the Letter of Intent/Application by December 3, 2021 to Sue Fisher at sue.fisher@gcccd.edu and Danene Brown at danene.brown@gcccd.edu.

Please submit final Application by January 14, 2022 to Sue Fisher at sue.fisher@gcccd.edu and Danene Brown at danene.brown@gcccd.edu.

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

The community colleges of San Diego and Imperial Counties serve a population with critical economic and educational needs. Thirty-five and 46 percent of families in San Diego and Imperial Counties, respectively, live below the California self-sufficiency standard.¹ According to federal census data, 12 percent of the San Diego population lives in poverty, and in Imperial County, poverty rates are nearly twice as high at 24 percent.² While unemployment overall is below the state average, nearly 11 percent of African-Americans and almost eight percent of Hispanics within the civilian population are unemployed.³ Thirteen percent of San Diego adults over the age of 25 lacks a high school diploma; in Imperial County, that number is 30 percent.⁴ Without further education and training, these adults have little opportunity to advance beyond low-wage jobs.

Forty-nine percent (49%) of students across the region are over 24 years old, with needs ranging from childcare to work commitments that must be considered when planning programs.⁵ Many also face additional challenges in the form of food and housing insecurity. In their report of findings from 2016 and 2018 #RealCollege surveys of basic needs among community college students nationwide, the Hope Center found that 50 percent of respondents in the San Diego and Imperial region reported food insecurity in the previous 30 days, 60 percent were housing insecure, and 18 percent experienced homelessness.⁶

Despite past reforms, these needs remain largely unmet within the community college system, which has ripple effects on student persistence and achievement. For example, completion rates across the region's colleges range from 42 to 56 percent, and attainment of a living wage after exit remains low — 56 percent for Career Education students and only 34 percent for General Education students who do not transfer.⁷

Strong onboarding practices are essential to identify student needs, interests, and goals and to ensure that they successfully start and complete their college experiences, transition successfully to further education and careers, and attain economic security. This is a fundamental “pillar” of Guided Pathways and is consistent with the principles underlying the Student Equity and Achievement (SEA) Program. The Strong Workforce Program (SWP) adds value to these initiatives by intentionally connecting students to

¹ <https://insightcced.org/family-needs-calculator/>

² 2019 ACS 5yr Estimates, Table S1701

³ 2015-2019 PUMS

⁴ 2019 ACS 5yr Estimates, Table S1501

⁵ LaunchBoard Community College Pipeline, 2018-19 program year

⁶ Goldrick-Rab, S.; Baker-Smith, C.; Coca, V.; Looker, E. (2019). California Community Colleges #RealCollege Survey. ⁷Obtained <https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/RealCollege-CCCCO-Report.pdf>

Completion rates obtained from https://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/Student_Success_Scorecard.aspx and reflect the 2011-2012 cohort year; Living wage data obtained from LaunchBoard Student Success Metrics tab and reflect values for the 2018-19 reporting year.

<https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics.aspx>⁷

programs and services that are relevant, engaging, and support their long-term career goals.

SECTION II: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT FOR PROJECT

Three years ago, the regional Pathway Navigation workgroup created an action plan to strengthen practices related to student entry into the colleges and navigation into and through their career and educational pathways. In an effort to address this action plan, a RFA was released to support colleges' work toward adopting and embedding onboarding strategies for all students — namely, improved pre-enrollment engagement, orientation, and career exploration processes — integrated with the colleges' Guided Pathways and SEA Program efforts. This RFA will provide continued support for the expansion and development of the work initiated by the regional Pathway Navigation action plan. Similar to the first Pathway Navigation RFA, *Adoption and Integration of Onboarding Practices with Guided Pathways, SSSP, and Student Equity*, this RFA focuses on three best practice areas that align with the “Entering the Path” principles of Guided Pathways. However, this RFA also asks the colleges to approach these practices with an intentional focus on making onboarding activities more equitable for all students.

1. Specific attention to the **pre-enrollment outreach and engagement** process with students that establishes initial relationships with peers and staff. Outreach and in-reach efforts offer students the opportunity to become connected through key contacts and touch points; support and complement comprehensive intake processes; and provide early introduction to pathways/majors, and career exploration.
2. **Differentiated orientation** processes that welcome students to the college, effectively informs students — through interactive as well as electronic means — of all the programs and services available to them and serves as the first step to integrating students into their pathways or learning communities.
3. **Ongoing and integrated career and education planning** processes that include career assessments, exploration, and career preparation courses, along with consistent advising/counseling and mentoring. These processes begin early and ensure informed decision-making, promoting student agency in selecting majors and courses, and supporting ongoing motivation, engagement, and eventual completion.

Research:

The following section highlights the research and best practices identified, through a review of the literature, interviews, and focus groups, as critical for student success. The summaries below focus on the three onboarding strategies described above and provide a frame for this RFA.

Research suggests that early engagement for college and career planning with prospective students increases the likelihood of successful completion of high school diplomas, and also correlates with higher persistence rates in postsecondary (Edwards & Belfield, 2012; Barnett, 2016; Barnett, Fay, Trimble, & Pheatt, 2013). Research conducted into Guided Pathways

colleges also found that mandatory pre-enrollment orientation for first-time students, when conducted in conjunction with cohesive integrated advising procedures, results in higher persistence rates and student satisfaction (Completion by Design, 2016).

Transitioning into the college environment begins with coordinated “high-touch” engagement to assist students in aligning skills and interests with career and educational goals; help students understand and effectively navigate administrative requirements, timelines, and financial aid; and to provide guidance with course selection and scheduling, as well as access to student supports. Further, according to, *How to Achieve More Equitable Community College Student Outcomes: Lessons from Six Years of CCRC Research in Guided Pathways* (Jenkins, Lahr, & Mazzariello, 2021) the goal is not only to provide information and advising, but to “ensure new students participate in guided exploration to choose a pathway of interest, and help them make connections with other students and faculty in academic and career communities.”

Pre-Enrollment Outreach and Engagement & Differentiated Orientation

Intake and orientation provide opportunities for colleges to acquaint new students with the full spectrum of pathways, courses, experiences, and services available at the college. Intake processes begin prior to matriculation. Focus group participants and interviewees stressed the importance of learning about student interests and needs early on, so that students could be referred appropriately to programs and services at the outset of their college experience.

Orientations are also most effective prior to matriculation, so that upon entry, students are equipped with information and supports needed to successfully navigate and complete programs of study (Completion by Design, 2016). Student focus group participants corroborated the need for better information and navigational support. Focus group participants also expressed a desire to front-load career planning into orientation, which ideally would be customized based on students’ interest, program area, and/or needs.

In addition, orientation to campus programs and services needs to be comprehensive and differentiated.

For example, young first-generation college students may need orientation to different services than mature students returning to college for advanced certificates. Similarly, students need information on the variety of pathways available and on the specific opportunities offered in a given pathway.

Ongoing and Integrated Career and Education Planning

Early in students’ enrollment processes, academic skills are evaluated using a multiple measures approach and conducted in conjunction with career assessments and skills inventories (Completion by Design, 2016; Jenkins & Fink, 2015; Mejia, Rodriguez, & Johnson, 2016). Measuring attainment of student learning outcomes through the use of targeted assessments is a key feature of effective pathways (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017).

Many interviewees noted the importance of incorporating career assessment and early exploration activities (or minimally meeting with a career advisor) into the orientation process.

The preferred sequence of steps involves 1) identifying students' interests, 2) career exploration activities, 3) pinpointing a preferred pathway, and 4) creating a detailed education plan. However, interview respondents reported that this sequence is not common practice.

Career exploration is a key element of high-quality career technical education (CDE & CCCCCO, 2008). It is also a key element of Guided Pathways (Jenkins et al., 2017). Career exploration should be iterative and developmental, providing opportunities for students to develop their decision-making and metacognitive skills (Karp, 2013). It should also precede academic planning, and continue throughout a student's tenure at the college, with successive work-based learning experiences, and even during the job placement stage, to help students respond flexibly to the outcomes of job-seeking.

Best practices documented in the literature suggest career and education planning is a long-term endeavor (Scrivener, Weiss, & Sommo, 2012), informed by outcomes of pre-engagement activities, assessments, and skills inventories (Karp & Stacey, 2013), which should culminate in academic and career plans that are utilized by both students and advisors throughout college (Jenkins et al., 2017; Kalamarian, Karp, & Ganga, 2017a). Career advising and planning should precede academic advising, enabling students to explore options before making selections about coursework (Karp, 2013). According to research, outreach should continue well into a student's matriculation in order to support success (Barr & Castleman, 2017; Scrivener & Weiss, 2009). In addition to career and education planning, many students need more holistic, frequent, and proactive advising. Regular meetings with students can develop relationships that allow students to share their challenges in order for those challenges to be addressed. Research has found that such ongoing, enhanced outreach and advising by student major and career plan can improve students' academic outcomes, increasing semester-to-semester retention, and average credits earned (Jenkins, Lahr, & Mazzariello, 2021).

SECTION III: RFA OVERVIEW AND FUNDING ALLOCATION

The purpose of this funding is to support regional colleges in expanding and developing innovative onboarding practices to improve: pre-enrollment engagement, orientation, and ongoing and integrated career and education planning with an intentional focus on equity for all students.

To provide continued support of colleges' improved onboarding practices, this RFA allows colleges to select the area(s) of onboarding to address. Colleges may elect to continue work in their current area of focus, or decide to address another onboarding area in need of improvement. Colleges may select to address one or more of the following onboarding areas of focus:

Pre-enrollment Outreach and Engagement

- Building relationships and connection to students of focus (e.g., adult school, continuing education, high school, BIPOC, veteran, Foster Youth, and justice-involved students).

- Improving (or providing) outreach and “in-reach” through the outreach departments, peer ambassadors, First Year Experience teams, and faculty members that can not only help students navigate onboarding, but also proactively connect students to their desired major or pathway.
- Linking students to key supportive contacts (e.g., career ambassadors, peer ambassadors, mentors, and learning communities) through a set of deliberate touch points in the onboarding process.
- Introducing and educating students about pathways.
- Developing a comprehensive intake form and processes to connect students with supports and resources.
- Providing additional career exploration opportunities throughout the onboarding process, based on students’ prior exploration and interests.

Differentiated Orientation

- In-person and online orientation that is tailored to students’ needs, interests, background, career pathway, career goals, and education goals.
- In-depth career and educational pathway information with links to careers, faculty, and courses.
- Ongoing support from student ambassadors, mentors or learning communities.

Ongoing and Integrated Career Planning and Education Planning

- Structured and ongoing career assessments, connected to counseling or advising, that provides students with an overview of their interests and assists with clarifying career goals.
- Career preparation courses that introduce students deeply and meaningfully to a career pathway or major.
- Focus on career exploration — ranging from career assessment to exploratory work-based learning — that allows students to explore and learn about career options and develop career plans before their education plans. The ideal planning process would include faculty, counseling, and career services staff to review and revisit plans regularly with students.
- Consistent, coordinated counseling, and mentoring through the ongoing career and education planning process.
- Creation of a transfer education plan, when relevant, that is aligned to career and education plans

Other Innovative Onboarding Practices: If a college has identified another on-boarding practice to address, please contact the Regional Consortium Chair to discuss.

Note: these funds cannot be used to supplant activities or expenses. These funds must be used to improve on-boarding practices related to pre-enrollment engagement, orientation, and ongoing and integrated career and education planning.

FUNDING DETAILS

Due to the SWP funding rounds, this RFA will be split into two funding sources:

- Round 5: Up to \$50,000 per college Funding must be spent by June 30, 2022.
- Round 6: Up to \$75,000* per college Funding must be spent by June 30, 2023.

The maximum allocation per college is \$125,000*.

**Note: Amount of funding may increase based on additional SWP funding*

FUNDING TIMELINES

- Round 5 funding activities must be completed by June 30, 2022.
- Round 6 funding activities must be completed by June 30, 2023.

SECTION IV: RFA PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Milestone 1: Complete *Section V: Letter of Intent/Application* and submit it to the Regional Consortium

Complete *Section V: Letter of Intent/Application* and submit it to the Regional Consortium. The letter of intent will represent your institution's intent to respond to this RFA. In the letter of intent, you will provide the contact information of the project lead, the project team members, and the Career Education Dean/Associate Dean overseeing this project.

Milestone 2: Attend consultation meeting(s) with the Regional Consortium to discuss *Section V: Letter of Intent/Application*

The Regional Consortium will schedule a consultation meeting with your college after receiving Section V: Letter of Intent/Application. During this consultation meeting the Regional Consortium team will confirm the project plan, outcomes, timelines, and budget. The Regional Consortium team strongly encourages the CTE Dean/Associate Dean, project lead, and appropriate senior administrator (VPA/I or VPSS) to attend the consultation meeting. After the meeting, a college may be asked to revise their plan, outcomes, timeline, and budget. The process is designed to be iterative as it is customized to each college's RFA response. Consultation meetings with the Regional Consortium are intended to be collaborative.

The purpose of the consultation meetings is to confirm that the college's plan and goals align and support the purpose of this RFA, which is to expand and develop innovative onboarding practices to improve: pre-enrollment engagement, orientation, and ongoing and integrated career and education planning with an intentional focus on equity for all students.

Milestone 3: Submit *Section V: Letter of Intent/Application* to the Regional Consortium

After completing the consultation meeting(s) with the Regional Consortium, submit the *Section V: Letter of Intent/Application* including administrative approval. Your college should have met and finalized the following with the Regional Consortium:

1. Scope of work of the contract based on the final application
2. Total funding amount
3. Deliverables that the college must submit to receive payments
4. Payment schedule and distribution amounts based on the deliverables' due dates
5. Quarterly Progress Reports

Milestone 4: Execute contract with Regional Consortium and submit quarterly reports

After the Regional Consortium receives the final application, an award letter will be sent to your institution, followed by a contract, which will include the scope of work, deliverables, etc. as discussed in the project consultation meeting(s). The period of performance of the contract will begin when the contract is finalized.

Once your institution and the Regional Consortium execute the contract, the Regional Consortium will make payments based on the agreed upon payment schedule from the consultation meeting(s).

As a requirement of this funding, the Regional Consortium expects quarterly progress reports to be submitted to the Region and reported in the NOVA system, based containing the information as discussed in the consultation meeting(s). Regional quarterly Progress Reports are due in May, August, and November 2022, and February and May 2023.

Timeline

Submit <i>Section V: Letter of Intent/Application</i> to the Regional Consortium	December 3, 2021
Attend consultation meeting(s) with the Regional Consortium to discuss <i>Section V: Letter of Intent/Application</i>	December 3, 2021 – January 14, 2022
Submit Final <i>Section V: Letter of Intent/ Application</i> to the Regional Consortium	January 15, 2022
Execute contract with the Regional Consortium	February 1, 2022
Submit Progress Reports for the duration of the project	Quarterly

SECTION V: LETTER OF INTENT/APPLICATION

Complete the fields below with the appropriate information. This form represents your college's intent and application for this RFA. This Letter of Intent/Application will be reviewed in consultation with the Regional Consortium.

Institution Name	
Project Lead(s) (First & Last Name)	
Project Lead(s) Email(s)	
CTE Dean/Associate Dean (First & Last Name)	
CTE Dean/Associate Dean Email	

Project Team Members: *In the box below, please list the members of the Pathway Navigation team that will be working on this project. The Regional Consortium strongly encourages team members include representatives from both Student Services and Instruction, such as Counseling Faculty, Instructional Faculty, Outreach, and other departments that support student entry to the college.*

Team Member Name	Title	Role on Team

Self-Assessment: *Provide a narrative that assesses your college's current on-boarding practices and goals. (If helpful, a [self-assessment tool](#) is available.)*

Problem Statement: *Describe the problem your college would like to address regarding onboarding practices, including the student populations of focus. Provide the data used to determine the problem to be addressed.*

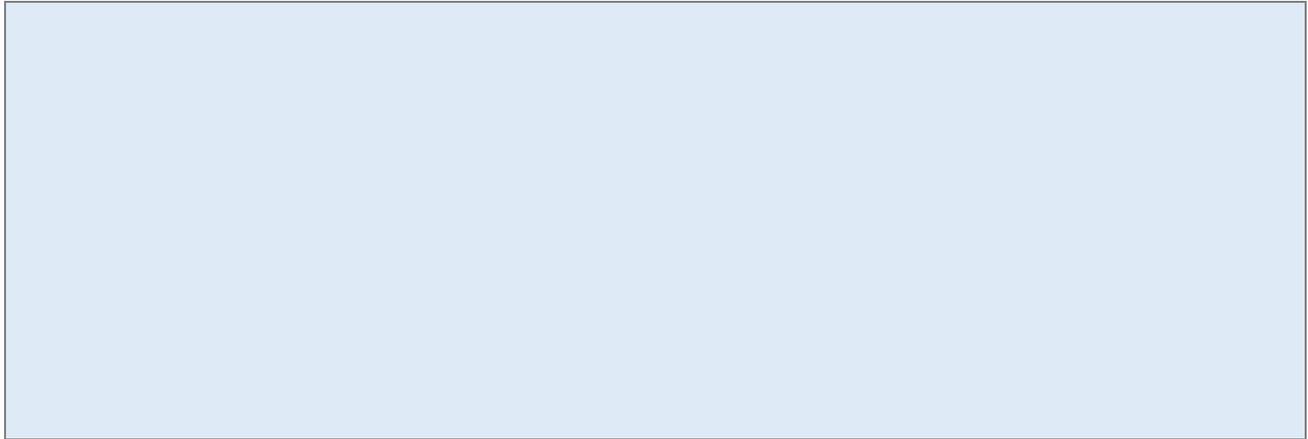
Project Plan Description: *Provide a narrative describing the project plan and addressing each of the following questions:*

- What onboarding practices are proposed to change/implement?
- How will this project address the needs identified in the problem statement?
- What changes will occur, in processes and services, as a result of the project?
- How will these changes impact the college?
- How does this project align to the college's Guided Pathway efforts?

Focus Population(s): *Provide a narrative regarding the focus population(s) for this project, including the following questions:*

- What is/are the focus population(s) for this project?
- How will this project address an intentional focus on equity and disproportionately impacted populations?
- How will the proposed onboarding changes impact the focus population(s)?
- How does this project align to the college's Equity initiatives?

Program Codes: *Please list the Program names, SOC codes and TOPS codes covered or included in this project.*



Budget: *Please provide a detailed budget, which includes budget items by object code.*

Round 5: Start date: January 1, 2022 End date: June 30, 2022

Object	Classification	Itemized List of Budgeted Expenses	Total
1000	Instructional/Academic Salaries		
2000	Non-instructional/Classified Salaries		
3000	Employee Benefits		
4000	Supplies and materials		
5000	Other Operating Expenses & Services		
6000	Capital Outlay		
Total Program Costs			

Indirect is not permitted on this project.

Round 6: Start date: July 1, 2022 End date: June 30, 2023

Object	Classification	Itemized List of Budgeted Expenses	Total
1000	Instructional/Academic Salaries		
2000	Non-instructional/Classified Salaries		
3000	Employee Benefits		
4000	Supplies and materials		
5000	Other Operating Expenses & Services		
6000	Capital Outlay		
Total Program Costs			

Indirect is not permitted on this project.

Approvals: *Please include an email chain with approvals from the CE Dean responsible for this RFA, the appropriate CIO or CSSO and President with the application.*