

**Survey of Technical Assistance Needs, Spring 2020**  
**Report of Results, August 3, 2020**  
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**IEPI Project Director**

Planning for the next two years of IEPI Partnership Resource Team (PRT) technical assistance in light of the pandemic included gathering input from knowledgeable PRT clients and participants in the field. The IEPI Project Director posed the following question in an email on May 4, 2020 to a sample of 38 college and district CEOs who had received or led at least one Partnership Resource Team that had completed its visits on or before June 30, 2019:

**Consider the ripple effects of the pandemic crisis, and what your institution and the CCC system as a whole will likely be asked to do in the next 12 to 24 months by the Governor and our own communities as we recover and move forward. In light of these needs, as well as the other challenges that face you, please list up to three ways in which PRT assistance would be most helpful to you and your institution.**

One reminder was sent to each nonrespondent three weeks after the initial email, which quickly produced four additional replies. Overall, eighteen CEOs responded, for a response rate of 47 percent.

**Summary of Themes in Responses**

Responses varied, and several touched on topics well beyond the scope of the PRT process, but the following themes potentially applicable to PRTs recurred at least twice. They are listed in order of frequency.

1. Virtual Environment and Reopening: Best practices in learning, instruction, student services, operations, and infrastructure in a virtual environment, and guidance in reopening. (13)
2. Dealing with Budget Cuts: How best to plan, make decisions, and allocate resources in anticipation of deep budget cuts. (8)
3. Innovation and Change Management: How best to maintain and build on useful innovations during and after the pandemic. (4)
4. Student Equity and Student Needs: Best practices in student equity and in meeting student needs. (3)
5. Maintaining PRT Activities and Funding: Retaining PRT activities in the virtual environment, and extending the term of IEPI Seed Grants to accommodate pandemic-related delays. (3)

The first four themes suggest that interest in PRT assistance in these areas is likely over the next couple of cycles. With respect to the fifth theme, PRT assistance continued by virtual means after mid-Spring, and a full slate of 12 PRT processes will begin in early Fall, also by virtual means. In addition, Seed Grant term extensions are requested and approved through a well-established amendment process.

## Detailed Responses

The detailed responses, lightly edited for clarity, are presented in the table below.

Responses
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Technical assistance for virtual learning</li><li>2. Effective practices in tightening resource allocations</li><li>3. Cooperating with all external agencies and internal programs to serve non-academic basic needs (shelter, food, health, etc.)</li></ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How to best connect with and engage students in an online environment. I've been reading reports about how students are feeling isolated and disconnected given the move to DE. Colleges have been spending a lot of time on the mechanics of DE (e.g., how to use Canvas, Zoom) and not as much on student engagement. As we move into this "new normal" for the foreseeable future, we have an opportunity and responsibility to strengthen the way in which we connect with and engage students in the online space.</li><li>2. How do we approach inclusive and transparent decision making relative to drastic pandemic-induced budget cuts? Unfortunately, the health crisis has paved the way for a major economic crisis which will impact our community colleges in ways we haven't seen since the Great Recession.</li><li>3. I'm realizing that as leaders, we are being challenged in ways that we never have been before. We are grappling with both a pandemic and economic crisis all at once. So I'm thinking about something along the lines of "leadership during turbulent times"... Not only how to survive but to thrive....</li></ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. PRT teams could address more specific online program and course development needs of districts and colleges.</li><li>2. Frankly, one PRT team that I would recommend is for the CCCCO, specifically addressing our intrinsic instructional program and course structures within the credit and non-credit categories, as well as attendance accounting. Most of this structure was created 50 or more years ago and still has elements of K12 that are unnecessary barriers to responding to the needs of modern higher education. Non-credit should be allowed to emulate continuing education divisions operated by universities, for example; attendance accounting could be dramatically simplified and updated to recognize the value of online delivery in both credit and non-credit environments. Our system is not currently "built" to respond to the current pandemic because we cannot easily pivot and change our programming to meet the needs of our communities, except in fee-based and community education courses. We are also constrained by what we can "earn" for courses offered in any mode except face-to-face credit classes.</li><li>3. Local impact of PRT teams:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Our college will benefit from PRT consultation to help build a comprehensive and integrated system of credit, non-credit and fee-based programs and courses that will support students of all ages, socioeconomic backgrounds and educational needs.</li></ol></li></ol>

Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. We will build programs and courses that will support economic recovery of roughly a dozen small farming communities that we serve. To accomplish this, we will design mirrored non-credit courses to support adult students that only need industry certifications in areas such as welding and mechanical agriculture, pesticide certification, as well online business and marketing skills. We will also develop a vocational ESL program to support these skill-based non-credit classes.</li> <li>c. A PRT will also help us build an effective community education program to offer fee-based classes that can help our local businesses build skills to adapt and survive in the new pandemic (and post-pandemic) environment, and serve as pilots for new sustainable non-credit and credit programs.</li> </ul>
<p>Other IEPI Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The pandemic has revealed the lack of preparedness for delivering consistent high-quality online education across the California Community Colleges. There's a difference between moving courses online due to necessity versus strategic and operational planning to deliver online education with attention to structure, function, appropriate accommodations and proper instructional pedagogy and andragogy to engage and retain students. One significant contribution of IEPI processes could be to offer online academies in partnership with organizations like @ONE and our existing "master" online educators across the CCCs. These academies could deliver cost effective, standardized training to certify additional online educators.</li> <li>2. We need a specific emphasis on developing and deploying new simulation technologies across all skill-based disciplines, and the opportunity to partner with the CCCCO and Foundation to invest in new technologies that are identified as (a) useful and (b) an emerging standard.</li> </ul>
<p>Other Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Our system needs to re-assess opportunities that exist among all 72 districts to balance the use of (a) Not-for-credit training, (b) Non-credit courses that could emphasize industry certifications and/or digital badges, and (c) traditional credit programs that offer certificates (which may be of questionable value compared to stackable industry certifications) and degrees. Not-for-credit classes can be used to pilot new curriculum and serve as a proof of concept for new coursework required by industry as they move out of the pandemic, or adapt to it; examples are how we are offering workshops to our local businesses through the Chamber of Commerce. If these not-for-credit workshops and courses prove useful, they can be converted to either non-credit or credit courses for sustainability.</li> </ul>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to provide the opportunity for PRT activities to occur during this time of remote work and limited face to face interaction. I would encourage work on a remote process for the PRT to use whether with zoom or other platforms. Improvement and initiatives still need to move forward and the PRT funding helps tremendously to implement these projects.</li> </ul> <p>Other Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It would help to have in one place a resource for colleges to post best practices they are using to address challenges with providing services during the pandemic.</li> </ul>

Responses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Extend deadlines to use PRT funds by 12 months since response to the pandemic shifted priorities. Certain efforts are progressing more slowly or are on hold while dealing with remote instruction and work.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allow for extensions on PRTs during the pandemic. It is taking us longer to move things forward in a remote environment.</li> <li>2. Guidance in reopening our colleges. Within our district we have a Taskforce for Safe Return with seven workgroups that convened this month. Our global charge is to develop recommendations for restoring on-site operations while ensuring safety of students and employees. Our guiding principles are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. First and foremost, ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students and employees</li> <li>b. Employ equity minded decision making to ensure care for our most vulnerable students</li> <li>c. Decisions must lead to long term sustainability</li> <li>d. Maintain integrity of our programs and academic standards</li> <li>e. Balance efficiencies and flexibilities while ensuring maximum effectiveness in our ever-changing environment</li> <li>f. Be mindful of fiscal responsibility without compromising safety</li> <li>g. Proactively ensure consistent and coordinated communication district-wide</li> <li>h. Ensure transparency in process and clearly understood recommendations</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. A third area is related to distance education and ensuring a sustainable infrastructure to support increased reliance on distance education.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Responding to the Coronavirus pandemic has stretched our faculty and staff members' bandwidth and ignited innovative change that will have enduring effects. Our goals—Access, Equity, and Success—are not new this year or unique to the college; but our response has been. The PRT process is perfect in fueling this change even more, sharing ideas to help continue and sustain the innovation while supporting folks who are already stretched with additional support, both in expertise in sharing ideas and financial resources.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Covid-19 has changed several aspects of higher education. The most important is innovation and change management in a world where the status quo is jealously guarded and highly prized. Exploring alternative methods for delivery, hybrid modeling, virtual teaching assistants and AI modeling for both teachers and support services is critical.</li> </ol> <p>Other Considerations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brick and mortar facilities will continue to be important for some aspects of the teaching/learning model, but have been diminished in their importance.</li> <li>2. There are simply too many community college districts—leaders, managers and boards—for a successful operational future. The redundancy and duplication of effort in HR, IT, legal, management and leadership, BOTs is an enormous financial burden and unnecessary.</li> <li>3. The state is really a conglomeration of disparate groups with a few mega-centers. The LA District, San Diego CCD, SF CCD, and some other “giants” have very little in common with</li> </ol>

<b>Responses</b>
<p>rural, suburban or moderate sized colleges. In essence we offer a different products—but this is not a recognized notion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The UC and CSU systems in CA are irretrievably broken. The financial disparities in funding, the objectives and goals of transfer students create a series of “Jekyll and Hyde” moments for individual colleges/leaders and programs. Trade and technical Community Colleges differentiated from Transfer community colleges (traditional in CA, but highly differentiated in other states, i.e., Washington) are likely to emerge.</li> <li>5. The higher education industry (from bookstores, consulting, technology software, etc.) is established and focuses on deepening silos not flattening the organizational structures.</li> <li>6. Finally, the number of staff and personnel required to operate and conduct business at a CA community college is staggering (honestly). Labor and union restrictions, limited work roles and duties, built in barriers to providing integrative work environments may keep the teaching/learning aspects of a college as secondary, overridden by staffing mandates.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have teams work as facilitators to help schools identify what practices learned through COVID should be maintained and institutionalized. Too many schools, I fear, want to go back to "the way it was," and that's not going to happen for years--if ever.</li> <li>2. Explore how to build effective communication channels--or rebuild communications (and trust) that may have been fractured as a result of "safe at home" directives.</li> <li>3. Help campuses who are barely into distance education develop a strategy for building infrastructure that will allow them to use distance education more effectively as part of their strategic enrollment management initiative.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How to more effectively infuse equity into the Guided Pathways implementation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Data analysis within the metamajors</li> <li>b. Identification of disproportionate impact within the metamajors</li> <li>c. Designing scalable interventions and support services to close equity gaps</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Best practices for reopening campuses for students <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Social distancing within classroom and open spaces</li> <li>b. Cost effective cleaning standards that meet OSHA, CDC and County Dept. of Public Health requirements</li> <li>c. Class schedules that are responsive and flexible with social distancing, yet are aligned with class sizes that maximize funding</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meeting our Vision for Success benchmarks and goals during a time of dramatic fiscal decline: There is no question that the fiscal impact will mean reductions in staffing and course sections. In lean times, it is more important than ever to think creatively and focus efforts on fewer and most impactful solutions to guide our efforts.</li> <li>2. The Pandemic has taught us ways to work differently, and in some ways more effectively. For example, using online forms and digitizing signatures have made it much more convenient to get things done remotely – saving time and effort for students and staff. Identifying practices to keep and share among us with an eye toward effectiveness could be helpful.</li> </ol>

Responses
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A team that is competent in epidemiology to make sense of the data.</li> <li>2. Provide strong recommendations for how to bring people back to work.</li> <li>3. Best practices for an equity lens for student support and teaching and learning.</li> </ol> <p>Other Considerations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Something that I think would be helpful would be pulling a team together to advise the Chancellor's Office so they can help make sense of all the information we receive and share it with us. We spend hours reading and trying to interpret the regional variances we live with in this. Imperial Valley, South County San Diego, and pieces of LA are experiencing higher infection rates. For us it is the fluidity across the border. The problem impacts my local area and I have very different population per 100,000 infection rates than most of California. Making sense of all of this is extremely time-consuming.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How to manage our Budgets with potentially depression era cuts.</li> <li>2. How to orchestrate instruction, schedules and classes both virtually and face to face during the pandemic that requires social distancing to keep students and staff safe while delivering the highest quality instruction especially in the hands-on CTE and science courses.</li> <li>3. Technology upgrades and training are becoming more critical.</li> <li>4. Emergency preparedness focused on healthy environments will be part of our uncertain foreseeable future.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Financial best-practice action steps on moving from the previous FTES model to the new SCFF model augmented with the "new norm" of having more classes taught online, augmented with the complexities of going into a recession. What will that do to institutional budgets?</li> <li>2. Best practices for assessing and improving online teaching effectiveness.</li> <li>3. Best practice action steps for program portfolio management. This is different than today's program review process, which focuses mostly on resource distribution. We need to figure out how to trim back ineffective programs and increase the productivity of the remaining ones. This activity will become even more important as we move into more difficult budgetary times.</li> <li>4. How to convert our Financial Aid activities from an operational, something we have to do, activity to a strategic operation that sees student success fully tied to students' ability to obtain financial aid.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What to do with the classes that cannot be effectively taught online.</li> <li>2. What to do with faculty and staff that work in those areas.</li> <li>3. How to implement effective and practical social distancing practices for students and employees who return to the campus in the Fall.</li> </ol>

Responses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How to determine and handle the likely fiscal impact of the still-emerging budget calamity, in an environment of shrinking enrollments, plummeting success rates, and increased costs.</li> <li>5. How best to serve all students—but especially our most vulnerable students---in the above environment.</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reorganization for cost savings and alignment with Guided Pathways</li> <li>2. Managing in times of budget reduction</li> <li>3. Building community in times of adversity</li> </ol>
<p>PRT Assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First, I want to reiterate an earlier conversation about the ongoing needs of colleges that benefit from PRT Technical Assistance Initiative. While I believe that the IEPI project continues to provide colleges with support, technical assistance, and professional development (even during the assessment process, professional development occurs), the new normal initiated with the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic has rendered this type of detailed assistance even more relevant. Colleges are struggling at the very core with having to reinvent themselves and all that they do in a completely different modality. Sure, colleges were offering online courses and programs, but that was optional and not in an environment that has been enforced by seclusion and quarantine. Colleges have the same issues – governance structure, decision making processes, campus climate and morale, integrated planning and resource allocation, and of course online delivery. Colleges are now dealing with all of those issues and many more.</li> <li>2. On-demand professional development requirements – Faculty, staff, and administrators converted their organizations in two to three weeks. This has required very quick professional development options that were intended to provide a skills bridge for a few weeks. More advanced professional development is now needed in the current environment, which has extended without a discernable end. A PRT might provide additional support in this regard with an assessment for ongoing professional development needs related to the current and likely highly changed return environment.</li> <li>3. Sustainability &amp; Recovery – Colleges are trying to sustain processes and operations in the current remote environment. At the same time, they are tasked with putting recovery plans into place without a full understanding of when their recovery and reentry will launch. Employees and students are expressing grave concerns, from detachment from campus, to equipment deficiencies, to feelings of isolation, to concerns for their livelihood, to mental and emotional health episodes. Crisis and Recovery management might be another area for PRT intervention.</li> </ol> <p>Other Considerations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. With all of this said, and as a fairly seasoned IEPI PRT Member and Lead, I suspect that the level of professional development for the PRT core volunteer team will need to increase as well, and the resources for later referral will likely include more emphasis on crisis management, realigning teams, and possibly retooling organizational structures to accommodate some of the innovations that are evolving during our current environment.</li> </ol>

## Responses

### PRT Assistance

1. Assist in ways to transition all classes to online in a way that meets the system office requirements and ACCJC standards. This would help prepare us for future pandemics or occasions where face to face classes might not be possible.
2. Work with the college and faculty to see that all courses can be taught online in a way that does not violate faculty intellectual property. In other words, would there be a way to have every course in construct owned by the college in a LMS shell, but not violate individual faculty academic freedom? This would include working with the college to see that all faculty have the expertise to teach, at least at a basic level, online.
3. Assist the college in developing effective student services that can be provided strictly online. This would include ways that employees could work productively from home in a time of crisis.

### PRT Assistance

1. We will be asked to provide retraining opportunities for recent jobless people, of course. However, they are also proposing huge cuts to Strong Workforce. Therefore, figuring out how to balance expensive CTE offerings with funding cuts will be challenging. As well, I suspect we are seeing signs of low enrollment in CTE courses for summer and fall – courses where people basically have to be face to face. If this pandemic continues into fall/spring, we may have longer term impacts with enrollments in these areas. Tackling that challenge will be tough.
2. The May Revise is out with the expected devastating cuts in funding proposed. We do not know how to model this time we are in – there are no comparisons with prior recessions. Cuts coming this steep and fast will be very difficult to manage. I fully expect that this 8% plus no COLA is just the first round of cuts. I foresee potentially another 8% and no COLA by 2020-21 (and maybe mid-year cuts in 2020-21). I hope I am wrong. If this happens, I think there will be districts in real financial peril. All this is to say that I think there will be needed help in how to plan to get out of this time, but the districts who need it most may be in such a deep crisis mode that their leaders will not have the bandwidth to plan for coming out of this time. Perhaps help in this area would be a possibility for PRT.

### Other Considerations

1. For our college specifically, I know we will be slashing travel and professional development over the coming 18 months. Should we get back to a recovery time, it will be difficult to rebuild such budgets. Opportunities for gatherings like the Far North Partnership Resource Community of Practice may be more important once we can gather again, as we will, as a system, not be able to equally fund such things. So I think that could be a good help, as travel costs and such have been covered outside our regular budgets.