

## California REACH Network

### Rationale

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More than **4 in 10 California Community Colleges (CCC) students are “adult learners” (age 25+)**, making them a critical student population to help colleges meet the *Vision for Success* and Student Centered Funding Formula goals. Adult learners’ share of total enrollment is projected to increase as high school graduates decline through 2037<sup>1</sup> and as 6.8 million Californians ages 25-54 without degrees consider new skills and careers, post-pandemic.<sup>2</sup> In fact, dozens of CCCs are discovering that adult learners in their communities can be an antidote to lagging enrollment; a key to closing equity gaps, since **more than half of current and prospective adult learners are people of color**; and the answer to job fulfillment and economic recovery. **By optimizing Guided Pathways for adult learners**, colleges can ensure that, wherever adult learners begin in CCCs, they have a transparent path to a high-value postsecondary credential and living wage.

### What is the REACH Collaborative?

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CCCs in the Guided Pathways 2.0 project have an opportunity to complement and enhance existing Guided Pathways implementation efforts to benefit adult learners. CCC is one of six higher education systems nationwide<sup>3</sup> to join the Racial Equity for Adult Credentials in Higher Ed (REACH) Collaborative, which aims to **increase attainment of high-value non-degree credentials (NDCs) and associate degrees in community colleges by adult learners of color** (age 25+), particularly Black and African American, Latinx, and Indigenous learners. Colleges who join the REACH network will receive resources and technical assistance to **create more functional degree pathways** that incorporate employer-validated non-degree credentials and **embed comprehensive support** to increase likelihood of completion. California’s participation will be led by the Success Center at the Foundation for California Community Colleges on behalf of the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office.

### Benefits of participation

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- Access tools, expert guidance, and support provided by Education Strategy Group (ESG), Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) at University of Illinois, and WestEd
- Apply learnings from GP 2.0 institutes and learn and share in a statewide community of practice with up to 45 CCCs
- Receive mini-grants (minimum \$11,000, depending on the number of colleges that opt in) and access to other potential funding sources (see below)
- Be leaders in the state in developing innovative strategies to integrate non-degree credentials and adult learners into Guided Pathways
- Commit to the *Vision for Success* and [Call to Action](#)

### Expectations of network colleges

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- Establish this work as a commitment of your existing Guided Pathways implementation team; incorporate new members as appropriate to meet project deliverables
- Meet virtually with California’s REACH college teams 3-4 times per academic year from fall 2021 through spring 2023
- Collect and report required data with the support of REACH technical assistance and resources<sup>4</sup>
- Incorporate stackable credentials in 2-3 degree pathways

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/Projections/Public\\_K-12\\_Graded\\_Enrollment/](https://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/Projections/Public_K-12_Graded_Enrollment/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://californiacompetes.org/publications/untapped-opportunity>

<sup>3</sup> California, Colorado, New York, Texas, Virginia, and North Carolina

<sup>4</sup> Data requirements are being finalized but likely will include enrollment and completion data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and by program.

## Outcomes

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Technical assistance and associated outcomes will vary based on an assessment of the needs of each college and their local and regional employers. However, we anticipate colleges will receive support to:

- Analyze college-specific data to understand the journeys of adult learners of color
- Examine regional labor market data and understand the value of non-degree credentials in your regional context
- Better integrate CTE and Adult Education programs in Guided Pathways
- Identify best practices in program redesign and sequencing that place priority non-degree credentials early in the learners' path
- Integrate academic and career advising so students have tools to make fully informed choices about interim credentials and potential on-ramps to degree pathways
- Develop enhanced communication strategies to reach adult students of color to more clearly promote the full trajectory of pathways, including the value of stacking non-degree credentials to degrees, to lead to long-term career success
- Develop tools, approaches, and incentives to better align noncredit and credit functions at colleges
- Bundle and sequence supports in culturally sustaining ways to ensure students holistic needs are met

### Adult Learner-Focused Enrollment Management Grant

Colleges in the REACH network have an additional opportunity to access funds and resources to enhance their Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) activities to **support the enrollment, retention, and completion of adult learners and students of color**. The grant will support up to 15 CCCs participating in the REACH network to develop a comprehensive, equity and student-centered SEM plan. The American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) will provide technical assistance, coaching, and training to help colleges through the process of creating and refining their college's SEM plan.

From fall 2021 through spring 2023, colleges participating in this project will:

- Either assemble a new SEM team or commit an existing team to this project, with at least one member who serves on both the REACH Collaborative and Adult Learner-Focused SEM teams<sup>5</sup>
- Attend two Adult Learner-Focused SEM workshops with AACRAO staff
- Hold two town hall meetings with college community to share planning
- Check in with AACRAO consultant virtually (2 one-hour sessions)
- Complete a comprehensive SEM plan

Colleges will receive additional funding (at least \$30,000) to support the implementation of their new student-centered SEM plan. Lessons learned in the SEM development and implementation processes will be shared to inform other CCCs engaged in planning.

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<sup>5</sup> The Adult Learner-Focused Enrollment Management Grant complements but does not replace professional development offered in the IEPI SEM project of the Chancellor's Office.