

Economic and Workforce Development (EWD) Employer Engagement Funding Overview

Overview of funding, allowable activities, implementation models, and regional best practices

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California
Community
Colleges

California Community Colleges | Economic and Workforce Development

Purpose of Employer Engagement Funding

- Strengthen relationships between community colleges and industry partners
 - Help colleges and employers work more closely together so they can better understand each other's needs and create opportunities for students.
- Support regional workforce alignment and labor market responsiveness
 - Make sure education and training programs match the jobs employers are hiring for in the region, both now and in the future.
- Increase employer participation in program design, internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning
 - Encourage employers to help shape college programs and provide students with hands-on learning experiences that prepare them for real jobs.
- Advance equitable access to workforce opportunities for students and communities
 - Ensure that all students and communities, especially those who have faced barriers to education or employment, have access to quality training and career opportunities.
- Promote coordinated regional strategies rather than isolated college efforts



Core Objectives of Employer Engagement

- Identify current and emerging workforce needs
- Develop sustainable employer partnerships
- Support industry-informed curriculum and pathway development
- Expand work-based learning and placement opportunities
- Improve regional collaboration among colleges, employers, and workforce partners



Typical EWD Employer Engagement Funding Uses

- Regional employer outreach and convenings
- Industry advisory groups and sector strategy meetings
- Employer partnership staffing and coordination
- Equipment and Instructional Materials
- Workforce Program Development and Improvement
- Industry engagement technology platforms and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems (e.g., Hubspot)
- Labor market analysis and sector partnership development
- Marketing and communications aligned to workforce initiatives



Examples of Allowable Activities

- Organizing a regional manufacturing employer summit, hiring fairs
- Updating curriculum to meet industry needs
- Industry-standard instructional equipment
- Training supplies and materials
- Software licenses related to workforce training
- Developing industry-recognized credential pathways
- Creating noncredit and short-term training programs
- Travel related to approved employer engagement activities



Examples of Non-Allowable or High-Risk Activities

- Activities unrelated to workforce development outcomes
- Supplanting existing institutional operational costs
- Entertainment or unallowable hospitality expenses
- One-time purchases with no regional workforce impact
- Activities lacking measurable employer engagement outcomes
- Duplicative efforts already funded through another source



Regional Employer Engagement Models

- Centralized regional employer engagement teams
- Sector-based employer leads by industry
- Hub-and-spoke models connecting multiple colleges
- Shared employer relationship management systems
- Collaborative partnerships with workforce boards and chambers of commerce
- Cross-regional industry collaboratives



Best Practices from Other Regions

- Maintain a single coordinated employer outreach strategy
 - All staff, departments, colleges, programs, or partners interacting with employers work together under one aligned approach rather than contacting businesses independently or inconsistently.
- Use shared data systems to track employer interactions and outcomes
- Align employer engagement with labor market priorities.
- Conduct regular regional partner meetings
- Establish clear communication protocols among colleges
- Document measurable outcomes and success stories
- Integrate equity and access goals into all engagement efforts





Role #4 - Deep dive | Implementing set of best-practices can strengthen the employer engagement function of the Regional Consortia



Define and streamline team and reporting structures

Designated employer engagement lead at the Consortium, with college-based liaisons can enhance accountability of employer engagement teams (e.g., progress monitoring) [\[Los Angeles – Job Developers, San Diego/Imperial – Director of Strategic Partnerships\]](#)

Clear requirements and expectations for employer engagement teams are critical to alignment and impact, such as:

- **Develop regional and individual work plans** (i.e., by each college-based liaisons) outlining activities, roadmaps, and success metrics [\[Orange County\]](#)
- **Coordinate with CoEs** to align activities to labor market needs (i.e., LMI) [\[San Diego/Imperial\]](#)



Centralized performance and relationship management

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems (e.g., HubSpot) enhance ability to:

- **Manage relationships** with regional employers and **streamline outreach**
- **Track regional employer engagement activities** (e.g., # of networking events attended) and **promote accountability** for employer engagement liaisons [\[HubSpot currently deployed in San Diego/Imperial and Inland Empire/Desert\]](#)

Online repositories of college contacts (e.g., CTE Deans, faculty) create a single employer entry point, minimizing duplicative outreach and enabling faster connections [\[effort currently underway in Orange County\]](#)



Clear rules of engagement for partnerships

Standard operating procedures for employer engagement (e.g., who may engage, necessary approvals) **builds trust** and addresses concerns about conflicting outreach among colleges [\[developed in San Diego/Imperial\]](#)

MOUs between regional workforce partners (e.g., WDBs, EDOs) enhances regional employer engagement strategy, formalizing roles in outreach and regional talent pipeline management [\[MOU between San Diego/Imperial and WDBs/EDCs anchors collaboration\]](#)

Recommended Metrics and Outcomes

- Number of employers actively engaged
- Employer participation in advisory committees
- Internship, apprenticeship, and placement opportunities created
- Industry partnerships developed or expanded
- Student participation in work-based learning
- Employer satisfaction and repeat engagement
- Regional impact tied to priority industry sectors



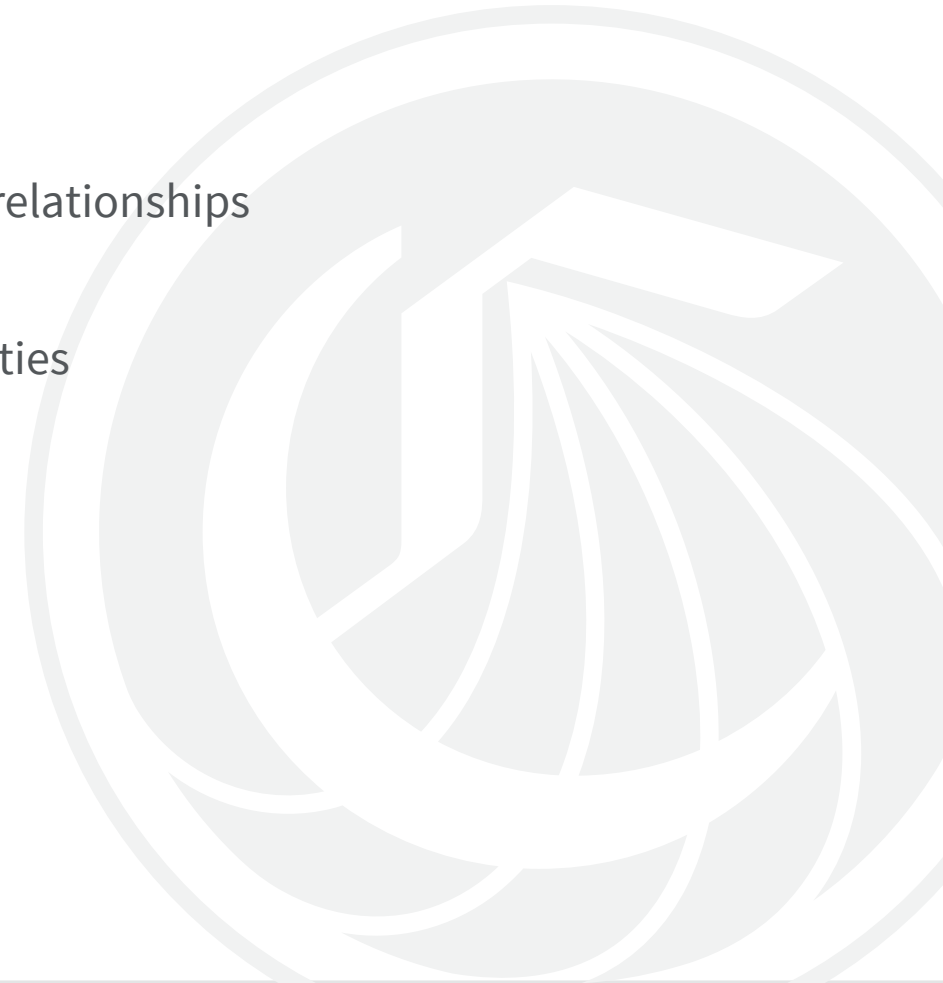
Fiscal and Compliance Considerations

- Maintain clear documentation for all expenditures
- Ensure activities align with approved workplans
- Track deliverables and measurable outcomes regularly
- Coordinate with fiscal teams on procurement and reporting
- Monitor timelines and performance periods
- Prepare for audits and program monitoring reviews



Strategies for Sustainable Employer Engagement

- Develop long-term employer partnerships rather than transactional relationships
- Leverage regional convenings to strengthen collaboration
- Align efforts with workforce board and economic development priorities
- Create succession plans for employer contacts and staffing
- Use data to demonstrate return on investment and regional impact



Discussion and Next Steps

- Review regional employer engagement structure
- Identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration
- Evaluate current funding utilization strategies
- Develop shared regional metrics and reporting processes
- Establish priorities for future employer engagement activities

