



Regional Equity Partnerships

Supporting Regional Workforce Development Board and
Community College Consortia Partnerships

Evaluation and Technical Assistance

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Technical Assistance Grant Term - 12/1/2022 - 9/30/2025

Evaluation Grant Term - 12/1/2022 - 12/31/2025

April 2022

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND	1
PURPOSE	1
REGIONAL PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION BACKGROUND.....	1
REGIONAL EQUITY AND RECOVERY PARTNERSHIPS BACKGROUND	2
AWARD INFORMATION	3
ELIGIBILITY.....	3
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	4
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SCOPE OF WORK	5
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS.....	6
EVALUATION	6
EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK.....	7
RERP OUTCOMES FOR EVALUATION	8
<i>Credential Transparency</i>	8
CWDB EXPECTATIONS FOR EVALUATION.....	9
EVALUATION PROPOSAL APPLICATION	9
FUNDING	10
INVOICING	10
SIGNIFICANT DATES	11
APPLICATION & AWARD TIMELINE.....	11
<i>Technical Assistance Dates:</i>	11
<i>Evaluation Dates</i>	11
APPLICATION DEADLINE.....	11
SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION	11

Overview and Background

Purpose

The Labor and Workforce Development Agency and the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) recently announced \$24,050,000 in competitive [grants](#) to fund Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships (RERP) between Local Workforce Development Boards and Community College Regional Consortia. The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to solicit applications from technical assistance (TA) providers to support the awarded RERP projects and applications from evaluation teams to conduct a robust, rigorous, and objective evaluation of the RERP program.

Regional Planning Implementation Background

In 2014 the CWDB developed and implemented the Slingshot Challenge, an effort to accelerate income mobility through regional collaboration. Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) developed Slingshot regions to work with industry, education, labor, workforce, and economic development leaders to identify and solve regional employment challenges. The federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) gave statutory relevance to the Slingshot initiative requiring states to designate RPUs aligned with regional labor markets and requiring regional workforce plans to facilitate the implementation of sector strategies, the coordination and alignment of service delivery systems, the pooling of administrative costs, and the collective development of shared strategies among regionally organized Local Boards.

To support the implementation of the regional plans, the CWDB funded Regional Organizers (ROs) in each region to support ongoing efforts to enhance collaboration of regional workforce leaders. The CWDB also funded the implementation of the Regional Plans Regional Training Coordinators to ensure that the staff and partners involved in the regional workforce system receive training and professional development. The CWDB funding for the Slingshot Challenge also included funds for Regional Plan Implementation Grants that were designed to invest in the efforts of the Regional Planning Units (RPU) to implement the goals and objectives of their regional plan. The last piece of funding from the CWDB was used to fund TA providers to provide training, subject matter expertise, and address and overcome regional implementation challenges and barriers.

Since the implementation of the Slingshot Challenge, there have been four iterations now referred to as Regional Planning Implementation (RPI). A key objective of Regional Planning efforts is to connect America's Job Center of California (AJCC) services to a regional skills infrastructure that aligns with regional labor market needs. To that end, previous Regional Planning cycles utilized ten Regional Indicators to assess coordination and measure progress within the RPUs. The indicators provided a useful measure of processes and activities utilized by RPU partners to establish a foundation for driving a regional approach and aligning the needs of regional industry sectors and employers.

In the most recent RPI initiation, RPI 4.0, the goal was to further refine the number of indicators to assess progress, which has been narrowed to focus on the following four:

1. Region has a process to communicate industry workforce needs to supply-side partners.
2. Region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality.
3. Regional has shared target populations of emphasis.
4. Region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet target population needs.

As part of [Regional Plan Implementation \(RPI\) 4.0](#), RPUs were asked to work with the RPI 4.0 Evaluation and Technical Assistance Teams over the last two years to establish objective metrics associated with at least one of the four Regional Indicators. The CWDB does not see the development of metrics as a one-size-fits-all exercise that will result in one set of uniform metrics across the state. Rather, it was a chance for each RPU to jointly agree upon data points that considers their region's unique needs and demonstrate the impact regional work has on their residents. The CWDB sees RERP as an opportunity to further the progress made surrounding regional indicators while advancing its overall goal to expand high road partnerships.

Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships Background

The RERP initiative represents an acceleration and deepening of the existing RPI efforts that will support and invest in partnerships attempting to add high road approaches to existing sector strategies and career pathway programs. "High road" is a set of economic and workforce development strategies to achieve economic growth, economic equity, shared prosperity, and a clean environment. The high road program is meant to advance a field of practice that simultaneously addresses urgent questions of income inequality, economic competitiveness, and climate change. It aims to do this through regional skills strategies designed to support economically and environmentally resilient communities across the state. The industry-based, worker-focused training partnerships build skills for California's "high road" employers — firms that compete based on the quality of product and service achieved through innovation and investment in human capital and can thus generate family-supporting jobs where workers have agency and voice.

The strategies include, but are not limited to interventions that:

- Improve job quality and job access, including for women and people from underserved and underrepresented populations.
- Meet the skill and profitability needs of employers.
- Meet the economic, social, and environmental needs of the community.

RERP will also be measured by the progress made on the following Regional Indicators of Coordination and Alignment:

- Region has a process to communicate industry (demand-side) workforce needs to workforce system (supply-side) partners
- Region has policies supporting equity, job quality, and the improvement of job quality
- Region has a shared target populations of emphasis
- Region shares/pools resources to provide services, supports, training, and education to meet target population needs

The RERP seeks to enhance and expand existing cross-system planning of regionally organized workforce development boards in the [15 Regional Planning Units \(RPU\)](#) established in the [California 2020-2023 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan](#) , and the [7 Regional Consortia](#) of Career Education faculty and administrators representing 10 California’s Community College regions. It builds on the regional planning identified in the Governor’s 2020-2023 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan, the regional plans developed by California’s 15 RPUs, and [Strong Workforce](#) Program Career and Technical Education plans developed by the [Community College Regional Consortia](#) and will provide funding to implement partnerships to serve 2,500 individuals statewide over 3 years.

Projects will be focusing on successfully leveraging and integrating community college priorities such as industry-valued credentials, digital literacy, dual enrollment, credit for prior learning, and work-based learning, with workforce development priorities of economic recovery, racial justice and equity, and digital access and literacy.

Award Information

Technical Assistance: Up to \$450,000 will be awarded to TA providers to work with the CWDB Statewide Partnership Team and Regional Coordination Specialist to provide convening, facilitation, training, and technical assistance to the successful grantees as they implement the regional equity partnerships.

RERP Evaluation: Up to \$300,000 will be awarded to an organization that will work in partnership with the CWDB Research and Evaluation (R&E) Team to evaluate the progress and impact of the partnership at the State and regional level. The evaluation is expected to include the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The evaluation will focus on the partnership efforts of the community college consortia and the regional planning units and the ability of the partnership to attain the goals set out in their application. The evaluation will also identify best and promising practices to communicate to the CWDB and to regions throughout the state.

Eligibility

TA Provider Applicants

Public and not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions, and private for-profit businesses that meet the minimum qualifications outlined in this RFA are eligible to apply.

Evaluation Applicants

Public and not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions, and private for-profit businesses that meet the minimum qualifications outlined in this RFA are eligible to apply.

Technical Assistance

There is \$450,000 available to select TA Provider(s) to convene regional staff and their RERP partners on a regular basis to share information, provide expert advice, perform one-on-one consultation, provide ongoing technical assistance, and offer a variety of trainings.

Some examples of activities for the provision of technical assistance are:

- Hosting and facilitating Regional Exchanges and Communities of Practice to share information and best practices.
- Facilitating systems change models to have an impact on outcomes
- Providing professional development opportunities for regional staff
- Promoting high road principles of industry-led problem solving, partnership as a priority, and utilizing worker wisdom in the design of training programs promoting job quality and income mobility.
- Expanding and strengthening sector strategies, career pathways, and apprenticeships
- Strengthening partnerships with community colleges and promoting strategies to ensure success of individuals with barriers to employment

TA provider applicants must show experience and qualifications in the following:

- Comprehensive understanding of the interactions and the interplay between the community college and workforce systems, publicly funded innovation initiatives, and public policy.
- Have experience with interacting with education and workforce development state agencies.
- Skill set of working with both public and private stakeholders
- Working with the broader education and workforce system, including local boards, community colleges, adult education providers, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), training providers, and workforce intermediaries as well if any members have a background in social justice advocacy; and
- Technical assistance for regional projects/work including but not limited to 1) capacity building, 2) knowledge sharing and partnership development, 3) project support and 4) regional coordination.

Technical Assistance Scope of Work

The technical assistance team will report to and work in coordination with the CWDB Program Branch. The key roles of the TA team are organized under two broad categories:

1. Expertise in Capacity Building

- Conduct needs assessments to determine gaps, priorities, and opportunities within each regional partnership.
- Provide ongoing coaching, consultation, and support to the regional partnerships in achieving RERP goals and objectives
- Work with the RERP Partnerships to develop strategies and expertise in recruitment, for priority populations, including but not limited to: participants from low-income households, women, underrepresented groups, disadvantaged youth, and formerly incarcerated individuals

2. Knowledge Sharing & Partnership Development

- Conduct In-person and virtual trainings and workshops
- Conduct and facilitate stakeholder convening, cross-system information sharing, and field building activities, including networking events, best practices/information sharing sessions for targeted groups, and larger Communities of Practice.

3. Project Support

- Work with RERP partnerships to troubleshoot innovative approaches to unique challenges the projects face.
- Work together with the projects to come up with roadmaps and action plans tailored toward achieving their specific RERP goals and objectives.
- Provide project support to the regions and their RERP partners.
- Strategic support aiding projects in meeting deadlines and deliverables.
- Hold regular check-in calls with the CWDB Research Data Specialist.
- Helping projects formulate appropriate questions and refine goals as needed.

4. Regional Coordination

- Help facilitate cross-regional collaboration.
- Assist regions in their efforts to establish partnerships with community colleges and other relevant stakeholders dependent on their project.
- Assist in logistical planning for collaborative efforts.

Technical Assistance Application Submission Instructions

All applications must adhere to the required format and, to be competitive, must include all requested information. Applications must use 12-point font and one-inch margins all around. Applications that do not adhere to these requirements.

1. Cover Page
2. Program Narrative (up to 10 pages)
3. Partner Roles and Responsibilities
4. Work Plan
5. Budget Summary (template provided)
6. Budget Narrative (template provided)

Please submit application documents in one .ZIP file using the following naming convention:

RERP_TA_ApplicantName

Applications must be submitted electronically to RERP@CWDB.CA.GOV.

Evaluation

There is up to \$300,000 available to select an organization to evaluate the RERP projects. The CWDB seeks a highly interactive evaluation team that will work in coordination with the CWDB's research and evaluation team. In broad terms, the evaluation will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the success of regional partnerships with Workforce Development Boards, community colleges and targeted industries in developing regional career pathway programs that result in the placement of populations with barriers to employment in quality jobs. All evaluation activities are expected to be data-driven and rooted in evidence-based practice that will result in deliverables on par with peer-reviewed publications.

The Evaluator should have the following minimum qualifications:

- Evidence-based research experience.
- Experience working with the broader workforce system including local boards, community-based organizations, training providers, and workforce intermediaries; preferably with a background in social justice advocacy.
- Experience working with community colleges.
- Accredited and published applied qualitative research.
- Experience working with economic development initiatives, including employer-led sector strategies and employer engagement strategies.

- Comprehensive understanding of the workforce system, publicly funded innovation initiatives, and public policy.
- Skill set of working with both public and private stakeholders; and
- Evaluation program management.

Evaluation Scope of Work

The evaluation team will collectively work with the State Board to develop a work plan, timeline, interim deliverables, and co-produce a final report with policy recommendations based on findings. The Evaluator will also work with the RPU's, the Regional Organizers, Community Colleges, and the TA Providers to evaluate the effectiveness and success of RERP, identify lessons learned and best practices, and recommend changes to improve coordination and collaboration between community colleges and workforce development programs and best practices.

The Evaluator will develop methods to evaluate efforts by regions to achieve the outcomes of the RERP including:

- Targeted Industries and Occupations
- Total number of individuals to be served and demographics of target population
- Total number of individuals served that enroll in higher education
- Employment – Percent of individuals served that will enter employment
- Training Related Employment – Percent of individuals served that will attain employment related to training
- Wages of individuals that enter employment
- Supportive services
- Credentials/ certificates awarded – Percent of individuals enrolled in higher education that attain credentials or certificates

The Evaluator will evaluate progress on the implementation of the Regional Indicators of Coordination and Alignment:

- Industry-led (demand-side) efforts communicate workforce needs to supply-side partners resulting in training for targeted jobs with high road employers
- Number of workers served, demographics, shared target populations
- Enrollment in higher education and attainment of credentials/certificates by shared target populations
- Extent of shared/pooled resources by partners to provide services, supports, training, and education to meet target population needs
- Participant employment, retention, and wages upon completion of the program

RERP Outcomes for Evaluation

As RERP projects build upon existing regional and industry planning efforts, they will start with the best quality jobs and build pathways to those jobs in close partnership with community colleges and multiple employers in the target industries. Related to this goal, the CWDB is committed to understanding the longitudinal implications including any unintended consequences related to the following categories and questions:

1. COVID
 - What are some notable implications of COVID on the RERP participants and stakeholders in terms of successful entrance and training competition for quality jobs?
2. Training
 - How do short-term targeted education interventions to increase workforce preparation, including English language, basic adult education skills, digital literacy, or certifications leading to successful entry into, or participation in training?
3. Supportive Services
 - In what ways are opportunities for earn and learn training strategies, including apprenticeship, on-the-job training, paid internships, and/or work experience helping to advance the overall RERP goals?
 - What types of counseling and mentoring, supportive services and/or income supports is most helpful for participants and why?
4. Placement Outcomes: Employment and Wages
 - What do the job placement activities in quality jobs tell us about the overall effectiveness of RERP strategies?
5. Credentials
 - What does the attainment of Industry-valued credentials and certificates for jobs in targeted industry sectors do for RERP participants?

Credential Transparency

A key component of the RERP program is the use of credential transparency. The CWDB recognizes how credential transparency can support both students and employers. Credential transparency does this by making information about credentials public and easily accessible allowing for a better understanding of what it takes to earn them, what they represent, and the jobs to which they can lead. Given this, each region under RERP is required to report on the credentials and certificates awarded, including the percent of individuals enrolled in higher education that attain credentials or certificates. All information related to the credentials awarded must be made publicly available using linked open data formats that support full

transparency. The relevant information required to be reported includes but is not limited to diplomas, badges, certificates, certifications, apprenticeships, licenses, and degrees of all levels and types) and competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities). The credentials and certifications are a critical component of RERP and should be a central element in the evaluation.

CWDB Expectations for Evaluation

The CWDB is committed to supporting all efforts to understand the impact of RERP and the implications of the partnerships for workers and the overall workforce system. To this end, the evaluator is expected to:

- Work closely with CWDB research and evaluation staff to develop and revise RERP evaluation questions for RERP-related programming and policies.
- Collaborate with CWDB research and evaluation staff to establish an evaluation plan.
- Coordinate data gathering with CWDB staff and RERP stakeholders
- Analyze the quantitative and qualitative data collected between CalJOBS, CWDB quarterly narrative reports, and original data gathered by the evaluator.
- Meet regularly with the CWDB Research and Evaluation team to assess progress and troubleshoot solutions to observed challenges.
- Produce a final evaluation report

Evaluation Proposal Application

The following provides an overview of what the CWDB is asking evaluation applicants to submit for their application. The CWDB is looking for evaluation proposals (up to 12 pages) that cover the following elements:

1. Evaluation Objectives: This section should detail specific aims, objectives, and evaluation milestones.
2. Research and Evaluation Design: This section should include an overview of the research and evaluation framework proposed for RERP. Please include potential research questions, methods, and analytical approach. This section should guide the reviewer through the sequential steps of the evaluation and intended outcomes.
3. Experience/Qualifications: This section should include details on the evaluation team's experience and expertise to demonstrate their ability to complete a robust and rigorous evaluation.
4. Budget: Each line item is exactly titled as in your contract Budget Summary Form 7. It is also in the same sequence as listed on the Budget Summary Form 7. Do not combine or separate budget line items. Use your Budget Summary Form 7 to assist you in aligning your expenditures with your approved budget.

Please submit application documents as a PDF using the following naming convention:

RERP_EVAL_ApplicantName

Applications must be submitted electronically to RERP@CWDB.CA.GOV.

Funding

Funding under this RFA will be provided through the California General Funds RERP allocation. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and to any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law. The CWDB reserves the right to adjust the total number, duration, and amount of each grant award.

Funding amount requests should be clearly justified and outlined within the Narrative, Budget Summary, and Budget Detail – including breakdown of all costs within a line item and thorough descriptions captured under “Narrative Details”. If this level of detail is not provided, the application may be disqualified due to inability to review scope of work, activities, outcomes, and deliverables due to unclear budget and use of grant funds. If additional information is needed to justify funding requests, the CWDB reserves the right to request additional information.

The applicant, also referred to as the Fiscal Agent, is responsible for releasing and distributing funds to partnering organizations once awarded. Each partnering contractor receiving money must be identified, with services provided and funds allocated clearly outlined on Form 9: Contracts.

No obligation or commitment of funds will be allowed prior to or beyond the grant term end date. Any grant funds not expended during the grant period will be returned to the State.

Invoicing

Under no circumstances can the State pay for services provided prior to the start date or the final contract approval of the State, whichever is later. Final approval occurs when all parties have signed the Standard Agreement, with the latest signature date being the date of final approval.

For services satisfactorily rendered and upon receipt and approval of the invoices, the CWDB agrees to compensate the Contractor in accordance with the approved Budget Summary. The total invoiced amount shall not exceed the award amount. Grantee shall maintain thorough accounting ledgers to support all charges and year-to-date expenditures of grant funds.

This grant operates on a reimbursement structure, and Fiscal Agents are required to invoice monthly to receive payment. Invoices are due by the 20th of the month each month. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, the report will be due the following business day. Under the [California Prompt Payment Act](#), payment should be received within 45 calendar days from the date the invoice is received from the Fiscal Agent.

Significant Dates

Application & Award Timeline

Technical Assistance Dates:

Event	Date*
RFA Release Date	April 25, 2022
Applications Due	June 10, 2022
Award Announcement*	August 1, 2022
Estimated Grant Term*	December 1, 2022 – September 30, 2025

Evaluation Dates

Event	Date*
RFA Release Date	April 25, 2022
Applications Due	June 10, 2022
Award Announcement*	August 1, 2022
Estimated Grant Term*	December 1, 2022 – December 31, 2025

*Note – All dates after the final proposal submission deadline are approximate and may be adjusted as conditions dictate, without addendum to this RFA.

To adhere to the legality and transparency requirements of the solicitation process, individual CWDB staff cannot respond directly to inquiries or engage with potential applicants during the solicitation period.

All questions regarding this RFA shall be sent via email to Paige.Mustain@cwdb.ca.gov.

Application Deadline

The deadline for applications is June 10th, 2022, date at 3:00PM Pacific Time. Late applications will not be accepted.

Submitting an Application

Applications must be submitted electronically to RERP@CWDB.CA.GOV.

Applicants are encouraged to apply early to allow adequate time to make any corrections to errors found in the application during the submission process by the due date.

No late applications will be accepted.