

# Regional Program Recommendation Process

This document provides an overview of the [Regional Program Recommendation Process](#) for the San Diego & Imperial Counties Community Colleges. It includes criteria from the [Program and Course Approval Handbook \(PCAH\)](#), which is the primary reference for curriculum development and approval for the California community colleges. The PCAH describes the Chancellor’s Office’s requirements for adding a new program or certificate and for modifying an existing program in a college’s inventory of Career Education programs. One of these requirements is a *recommendation from the Regional Consortium*, which can be obtained through the “Regional Program Recommendation Process.”

The San Diego & Imperial Counties Community Colleges [Regional Consortium](#)’s Regional Program Recommendation Process is described below. This process is intended to promote collaboration and coordination among the region’s colleges that result in viable and accessible Career Education for all.

## PROCESS OVERVIEW



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## PROGRAM IDEA / PROGRAM CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

A business, advisory board member, faculty member, or other industry expert recommends that one of the region's community colleges develop a Career Education (or Career Technical Education) program to train for certain occupation(s) or a set of skills. However, before the college moves forward with program development, a *needs assessment* must be conducted.

According to the [Program and Course Approval Handbook \(PCAH\)](#), one of the criteria that the Chancellor's Office uses to approve credit and noncredit programs and courses is **demonstration of need** (p. 26). In addition, "proposals for credit CTE [Career Education] programs must include a recommendation from the appropriate CTE [Career Education] Regional Consortium as per Title 5, section 55130(b)(8)E" (p. 26). In addition, Ed Code 78016 requires that all Career Education programs meet a documented labor market demand through a biennial review.

The San Diego & Imperial Counties Community Colleges [Regional Consortium](#) will only recommend a proposed program or course if there is a needs assessment, which confirms that there is a supply gap in the labor market. Needs assessments provide information about job openings, existing programs, job titles, wages, etc.

The Regional Consortium designated the [San Diego-Imperial Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research \(COE\)](#) as the primary source of labor market information (LMI) for the needs assessment.



### **What if Labor Market Information (LMI) from the COE already exists for the occupation(s) or skill(s) to be trained for?**

The COE posts all [labor market reports](#) for the Regional Program Recommendation Process on the Regional Consortium website. If LMI with confirmation of a supply gap already exists for a proposed program, then instead of requesting LMI from the COE, the college may want to consult their advisory committee(s) before proceeding with the next step in the Regional Program Recommendation Process, which is [Regional Discussion About Program Intent](#). According to the PCAH, all new and modified Career Education programs must include "Advisory Committee Recommendation - advisory committee membership, minutes and summary of recommendations" (p. 92).



### **Can any labor market research be submitted for the Regional Program Recommendation Process?**

No, according to the [PCAH](#), "Pursuant to Education Code § 78015 Labor Market Information (LMI) data is specifically required for all new CTE [Career Education] program proposals, where available" (p. 93).

The Regional Consortium designated the San Diego-Imperial COE as the primary source of labor market information for the [Regional Program Recommendation Process](#) to assure labor market information is gathered in a consistent and reliable manner. Such elements consist of the following:

- **SOC codes and titles:** “The proposal must include projections from LMI for the most applicable Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and geographical regions to be served by the program” (p. 93)
- **Regional and local data:** “Current LMI and analysis...must show that jobs are available for program completers within the local service area of the individual college and/or that job enhancement or promotion justifies the proposed curriculum” (p. 93)
- **Supply gap analysis:** “Program proposals will be evaluated in light of the data regarding expected job openings within the next five years and the number of students that will complete the program per year, taking into account the number of completers in similar programs at other institutions within the geographical region” (p. 93)



### How long are COE labor market reports valid?

Per the PCAH, labor market reports are valid for up to two years before they have to be re-evaluated for programs in the Regional Program Recommendation Process.



## LMI REQUEST AND SUPPLY GAP CONFIRMATION

To obtain the necessary labor market information (LMI), which confirms whether there’s a supply gap for the proposed occupation(s) or skill(s) to be train for, the college-designated Career Education Dean or Dean’s designee must submit [an online LMI request form](#) to the San Diego-Imperial Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE). For a current list of the designated Career Education Deans, refer to the [Regional Program Recommendation Process](#) on the Regional Consortium website.

If the requester is **not** a Career Education Dean (e.g., faculty, admin), then the requester must, at minimum, notify the designated Career Education Dean before submitting the [online LMI request form](#).

### Please prepare the following information before submitting an online LMI request form:

- Occupation(s) to be trained: The appropriate occupational codes and titles can be found on [O\\*NET Online](#)
- Six-digit TOP code for the proposed program: Career Education six-digit TOP codes are noted with an asterisk (“\* indicates a vocational program”) in the [Taxonomy of Programs \(TOP\) manual](#)
- Contact information of requester: First and last name, community college affiliation, email, etc.
- Additional research or information that may have already been conducted or collected

Upon receipt of the LMI request form, the COE will send an email to the requester, the Career Education Dean, and appropriate Regional Director for Employer Engagement. If a labor market brief already exists for the occupation(s) identified, then the COE will provide that information in the acknowledgement email. The existing labor market brief may be used in the Regional Program Recommendation Process.

For each monthly Deans’ Council meeting, the Regional Consortium will include LMI requests in the meeting agenda. The Deans’ Council consists of the designated Career Education Deans for the Regional Program

Recommendation Process (and other subject matter experts). This step encourages regional collaboration and discussion about a college's intent to develop a new program.

### **How do I know if my request has been received?**

Submitting an LMI request means that the request is pending. The San Diego-Imperial COE will send an acknowledgment email and may have follow-up questions regarding the request. Therefore, it is important to provide the contact information of the person who can help clarify or elaborate in the request form.

### **How long do I have to wait for a report?**

Due to the volume of requests that the San Diego-Imperial COE receives, the COE asks for a minimum of 30 business days to produce one report. If the requester asks for more than one report (e.g., data for more than one occupation), then the production time may be longer. The San Diego-Imperial COE completes LMI requests in a first-in, first-out manner. Therefore, a best practice would be to submit LMI requests to the COE as soon as a college begins exploring a program idea.

The San Diego-Imperial COE will produce a report based on available labor market information and the submitted LMI online request. The resulting report acts as the **COE's endorsement or non-endorsement** for the proposed program. An endorsement means that the San Diego-Imperial COE report demonstrates a need to fill a labor market supply gap in the region.

The San Diego-Imperial COE reviews the following information before endorsing (or not endorsing) a program:

- How does the labor market demand (annual job openings) compare with other occupations? Is demand at or below the regional average for a single occupation?
- How many institutions train for the program in the region? Will there be an unnecessary duplication of efforts if the region creates a new program?
- Does the occupation or group of occupations pay a living wage?

For more information, refer to Table 10 in the PCAH: [Discussion Points for Labor Market Analysis \(p. 94-95\)](#).

The San Diego-Imperial COE will also provide the following information in the report for the Deans' Council discussion:

- Minimum educational requirements for the occupation(s)
- Student outcomes for similar programs based on TOP codes
- Online job postings data (e.g., number of postings, top employers who posted online, top skills posted online)

For examples of COE reports, visit the [Labor Market Briefs](#) page on the Regional Consortium website.

### **What if LMI from the COE does not show evidence of need or a labor market supply gap?**

If the COE explicitly does not endorse the proposed program (e.g., the COE does not identify a labor market supply gap as indicated by a red dot in the report), **then the college must obtain employer endorsements**. As a best practice, a college may choose to obtain employer endorsements while the

COE conducts labor market research. In other words, collection of employer endorsements could be done before, during, or after the labor market research process.

The San Diego-Imperial Regional Consortium and COE developed an [employer endorsement letter template](#), which meets the minimum PCAH requirements for LMI, for colleges to use in the Regional Program Recommendation Process. This letter acts as an employer endorsement for the proposed program, similar to how COE reports represent the COE's endorsements.

Additionally, similar to the COE labor market reports, this employer endorsement letter template follows the LMI requirements in the [PCAH](#):

- **Occupational codes and titles:** “The proposal must include projections from LMI for the most applicable Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and geographical regions to be served by the program” (p. 93)
- **Regional and local data:** “Current LMI and analysis...must show that jobs are available for program completers within the local service area of the individual college and/or that job enhancement or promotion justifies the proposed curriculum” (p. 93)
- **Supply gap analysis:** “Program proposals will be evaluated in light of the data regarding expected job openings within the next five years and the number of students that will complete the program per year, taking into account the number of completers in similar programs at other institutions within the geographical region” (p. 93)



## REGIONAL DISCUSSION ABOUT PROGRAM INTENT

At the monthly Deans' Council meeting, the designated Career Education Deans discuss their college's intent (if any) to create a new program. This discussion helps avoid “unnecessary duplication of other employment training programs in the region” (p. 113 of the [PCAH](#) and Ed Code § 52300)—especially if other colleges also have an intent to create a similar program.

Regional discussion about program intent may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Is there a labor market supply gap in the region for the occupation(s)?
- How does the labor market demand (annual job openings) compare with other occupations? Is demand at or below the regional average for a single occupation?
- How many institutions train for the program in the region? Will there be an unnecessary duplication of efforts, or oversupply of graduates, if the region creates a new program?
- Does the occupation or group of occupations pay a living wage?
- What are the minimum educational requirements for the occupation(s)? Should this program result in a certificate, associate degree, or an associate degree for transfer (ADT)?
- If a program does not currently exist in the region, what do student outcomes for similar programs across the state look like? Do students who complete the program and exit the community college system obtain living wages?

- What is the online job postings activity for the occupation(s)? Are employers increasing the frequency of how often they're posting?
- Who are the top employers with the most online job postings?
- What skills are employers posting?

The college may or may not decide to move forward with program development after this discussion. If the college does decide to move forward, the college will follow its local curriculum review and approval process that will include the requirement of a Regional Consortium recommendation.



## OFFICIAL REGIONAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

The PCAH requires evidence of regional recommendation for all new Career Education degrees and certificates as well as modified Career Education certificates of achievement.

Once documentation of need is established and local curriculum approval process is completed, only the Career Education Dean designated to the Deans' Council may submit the program for regional recommendation to [regionalcte.org](http://regionalcte.org). A current list of college-designated Career Education Deans can be found on the [Regional Consortium website](#).



### **Do modified programs have to be submitted to the Regional Program Recommendation Process? If so, what does “modified” mean?**

Colleges must submit modified certificates only when the modifications include changes to required courses for the major, including required electives. Changes to recommended electives and changes to program descriptions or titles do not need to be submitted.

When submitting modified programs into the regional program recommendation website, the designated Career Education Dean will identify the program as a modification within the notes and include what the changes are.

### **Program Submission to RegionalCTE.org**

1. Programs must be submitted at least two weeks before the next Deans' Council. Dates for the Deans' Council meetings are posted on the [Regional Consortium website's calendar](#).
2. Submission to [regionalcte.org](http://regionalcte.org) must include the following information:
  - Submitter's information
  - “Career Education Dean Contact” must reflect the current college-designated Career Education Dean for the institution
  - Program information (title, submission type, TOP code, projected start data, description, and completion projections)

- Program attributes (program type and goals)
  - Course units and hours
  - Course report (course requirements narrative and program requirements)
  - COE labor market brief (LMI must be uploaded—regardless of whether the COE endorses the proposed program; if the LMI does not confirm labor market need for the program, **then the college must upload employer endorsement letters**)
  - Employer endorsement letters (if applicable—see above)
3. Prior to the Deans' Council meeting, the Regional Consortium will send all programs for recommendation to the COE for review. Once the COE reviews the submissions, the Regional Consortium will send all programs for recommendation to the Career Education Deans for review prior to the upcoming meeting.
  4. The Career Education Deans will have two weeks to review and discuss programs with their faculty.
  5. By the end of this two-week period, each designated Career Education Dean must submit feedback via the regionalcte.org platform. If there is no feedback to relay, Career Education Deans will submit either a "recommended" or "not recommended" comment to ensure that review has taken place. Comments, feedback and objections will be electronically submitted to all current designated Career Education Deans via the regionalcte.org platform.
  6. At the regularly scheduled Deans' Council meeting (typically the second Friday of each month), programs for recommendation will be placed on the agenda for open discussion and vote.

### **Deans' Council Meeting and Voting Process**

1. During the Deans' Council Meeting, a discussion is held for each program under review for regional recommendation. Representatives from the program are welcome to attend to answer any questions that may arise. This is not required, but program representatives are welcome.
2. During the discussion, if there are questions, requests for clarification, or requested small changes made by the majority of the Career Education Deans (six out of ten), then the Career Education Deans will have one additional week to make adjustments, review, provide feedback, and consultation.
  - a. On the final day of the month, the Regional Consortium Chair will convene the designated Career Education Deans to cast a vote on any outstanding programs.
  - b. The final vote stands and will be reported to the Regional Consortium Chair for inclusion on the following month's agenda as an information item.
3. The nine regional colleges (Cuyamaca, Grossmont, Imperial Valley, MiraCosta, Palomar, San Diego City, San Diego Mesa, San Diego Miramar and Southwestern) and Continuing Education have one vote.
4. The designated Career Education Dean may appoint a designee to cast a vote if the Career Education Dean is not available to attend the meeting.
5. Six Career Education Deans (or designated representatives) are needed to establish a quorum.
6. Programs must receive simple majority (six out of ten) of votes to obtain a positive recommendation.

7. When the final vote on a proposal is made, it is the responsibility of the proposing college's representatives to include the Deans' Council meeting minutes in their proposal to the state Chancellor.
8. If a program fails to obtain a positive recommendation from the Regional Consortium, after completing all required steps (above), then the Deans' Council (WDC) chair must provide written documentation to the college as to why the program was denied a positive recommendation. If the college would like to follow up and have an additional conversation with the chair, then the chair will coordinate a meeting with the college. After the discussion, the college may decide to submit a revised program proposal to the Dean's Council Ad-Hoc Program Reconsideration Committee. The revised program proposal must be co-signed by the program's college dean and the VPI or (VP of Instruction or VP of Academic Affairs). The Ad-Hoc Program Reconsideration Committee consists of the Deans' Council (WDC) chair, one appointed Career Education Dean from the Dean's Council who is not associated with the program's institution, and COE director. The Ad-Hoc Program Reconsideration Committee must provide a written response within 30 days of the program proposal resubmission.

### **Apprenticeship Programs**

**New** apprenticeship programs will be included on the monthly Dean's Council meeting agenda as informational items only. Apprenticeship programs do not currently need to follow the regional program recommendation process.

### **Records**

The Regional Consortium will maintain the official listing of the status of all program recommendations. [A list of programs recommended by the Regional Consortium \(through the Deans' Council\) can be found on the Regional Consortium website.](#)