

California Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI) Overview

What is CAI? Why does it Matter?

- The [California Apprenticeship Initiative \(CAI\)](#) is a state-funded program under the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office that supports planning, launching, and expanding registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs—especially in sectors where apprenticeships are not yet well established.
- CAI's "New & Innovative" funding is explicitly intended to seed new apprenticeship pathways in priority or emerging sectors, or areas with little existing apprenticeship activity.
- The policy rationale: California aims to scale "earn-and-learn" models, reduce barriers between education and workforce, and extend apprenticeship models beyond traditional trades.
- Because funding is scarce and competitive, demonstrating innovation, employer buy-in, sustainability, equity, and strong project planning is key.

Funding Structure & Expectations

- CAI proposals have traditionally included one of three categories: planning, implementation, or expansion phases. In prior grant agreements, grantees were required to register at least one new apprentice per ~\$15,000 awarded.
- Project durations typically span multiple years (e.g. 3+ years), with funding tranches disbursed over time (e.g. an initial advance, then semiannual invoicing).
- Matching or leverage: Some proposals may need demonstration of employer commitment (monetary or in kind) or institutional support.
- Funds are reimbursement-based (after submitting invoices and required fiscal reports) though some advance payments are allowed.

Allowable Expenses & Activities (typical)

Below is a summary (not exhaustive) of costs and activities proposals might include. All spending must be necessary, reasonable, allocable, and not supplant existing funds.

Category	Examples of Allowable Use	Notes / Caveats
Personnel / Staffing	Project director, coordinator, employer liaison, apprenticeship support staff, student support/case management staff	Only the portion of salary/benefits aligned with CAI project may be charged (e.g. 80 %). (California Community Colleges)
Instructional / Curriculum Development	Designing related & supplemental instruction (RSI), aligning with industry	Must tie to the apprenticeship domain and coordinate with employer/industry

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	standards, writing syllabi, course materials development	partners. (California Community Colleges)
Training / Learning Materials & Supplies	Textbooks, software, simulation tools, professional development for instructors	Purchases generally allowable if integral to the training.
Equipment & Technology	Tools, computers, specialized software, lab equipment used in apprenticeship training	Equipment with initial cost > \$5,000 often subject to inventory, tagging, and disposition rules. (hub.miracosta.edu)
Employer engagement / recruitment	Employer stipends, outreach events, industry advisory meetings, travel to employers, marketing and recruitment of apprentices	Justifiable as enabling the establishment and maintenance of employer partnerships
Support services for apprentices / pre-apprentices	Case management, counseling, wrap-around supports (transportation, childcare, stipends)	These strengthen retention and equity.
Indirect / administrative costs	District overhead, fiscal management, audit costs	Must adhere to allowable percentage (districts often propose a modest indirect rate).
Other operating expenses / services	Leases, facility rentals, software licenses, utilities, subcontracting for specialized services (e.g. subject matter experts)	Must show direct connection to the project objectives.

Non-Allowable / Disallowed Items

- Supplanting (i.e. replacing funds that would otherwise have supported the activity)
- Costs of preparing the CAI application itself
- Excessive/unreasonable costs not tied to project goals
- Using funds for non-project unrelated operational overhead beyond allowable indirect costs

Key Success Factors / Design Considerations

- **Employer buy-in & partnership structure**
 - Proposals will need to show credible employer partners willing to commit to employing apprentices, supervising on-the-job training (OJT), and contributing to the model.
 - Define how many apprentices, wage progression, mentoring, supervision responsibilities.
- **Registration via DAS & compliance**
 - The apprenticeship must be registered with the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS).
 - Program must meet requirements for RSI, OJT, wage progression, and federal/state standards.
- **Curriculum & competency mapping**
 - Proposals will need to define the knowledge, skills, competencies, and certification path for the substance use counselor role.
 - The RSI portion must integrate with the workplace learning and be rigorous.
- **Equity, access, retention strategies**
 - Propose strategies to recruit underrepresented populations, provide support services (tutoring, counseling, wrap-around), address barriers (transportation, childcare).
 - Include metrics and accountability.
- **Sustainability beyond grant**
 - Show how the college and employer(s) will sustain the program (financially and operationally) once CAI funding ends.
- **Measurable outcomes & reporting**
 - Define metrics (number of apprentices registered, retention, completion, placement, wage escalations).
 - Be able to report progress per the Chancellor's Office's NOVA / fiscal reporting protocols.