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 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.

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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. 25). 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)(7)(C)" (p. 26). In addition, Ed Code 78015 and 78016 requires that all Career Education programs meet a documented labor market demand through a biennial review.

The San Diego & Imperial 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 (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 briefs or 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 Career Education programs must include "*Advisory Committee Recommendation – includes* advisory committee membership and meeting minutes that clearly detail the recommendation for the specific program being offered by the collage and clearly details the committee's recommendation" (p. 88).

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. 99).

The Regional Consortium designated the 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. 99).
- **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. 26).
- **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. 100).

What are SOC codes, CIP codes, TOP codes, and NAICS codes?

a. Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes are used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data. The SOC system classifies all occupations in the economy and all workers are classified into one occupation. The COE uses 6-digit SOC codes, which in O*NET are codes ending in ".00." SOC codes can be found here.

b. Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes were developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the purpose of tracking, assessment, and reporting of fields of study and program completions of educational institutions. The COE uses CIP codes to identify program completion activity of non-community-college institutions in the region. CIP codes can be found here.

c. Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) codes were developed by the California Community Colleges as their own educational program classification system to collect and report information on programs and courses. A crosswalk is used to map TOP codes onto CIP code cited here. The COE uses TOP codes to identify program completion activity of community college institutions in the region. Program completion or program supply (e.g., degrees, certificates) by TOP code can be found here.

d. North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is a standardized system used by federal statistical agencies to classify businesses for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing data related to the U.S. economy. All businesses are classified using 2-digit codes and this classification is also used for industries developed in partnership with Canada and Mexico. The COE may use NAICS codes to understand business and industry patterns in a region. NAICS codes can be found here.

Can the COE create a labor market brief using only key words and online job postings data instead of SOC codes?

SOC codes are used instead of key words because it is a classification system that is public, reliable, and standardized. An advantage is that replication of a report is possible if a consumer wants to learn more information or do a follow-up report. Key words and online job postings are only used in special cases when LMI for an occupation is unavailable in a region, or when it is an emerging occupation. A limitation of using keywords to note, however, is that the information may not capture data specific to one occupation or industry, and a review of online job postings may be necessary to understand relevant nuances.

Why do SOC codes from one source not match another source (e.g., Lightcast vs. O*NET)?

The codes used to obtain labor market data are periodically updated by government agencies. As a result, data from different sources may not always match due to new changes in coding structures, updated codes, delays in reflecting the changes made, etc. For example, an SOC code used in a COE report may not match the SOC code used in O*NET because the site hasn't updated to the most recent SOC coding convention; the COE, however, will use the most up to date information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics when citing SOC codes. If you have any questions about the most up to date sources, please contact John Edwards (jedwards@miracosta.edu).

Instead of a labor market brief or report, can the COE just provide the raw data?

All reports produced by the COE provide a summary of labor market metrics and follow a rubric. As part of the Regional Prograrm Recommendation Process, a labor market brief will include an interpretation of the data that is used to inform the COE's recommendation. The COE uses proprietary data from vendors such as Lightcast; therefore, the COE cannot share raw data with external parties. The COE summarizes the proprietary data in reports and colleges can request additional reports or analyses, if necessary.

In terms of geographic boundaries, how granular can the report provide data for (e.g., zip codes, metropolitan statistical areas, counties)?

Data reported by geography is limited to the granularity of the data reported to state and federal government agencies and may not be available for specific areas. Most employer and wages data are available at the state, county, and metro area levels, with ZIP code estimates available for core data (employment, earnings, and demographics). ZIP code estimates are not available for online job postings.

What is the difference between traditional LMI and real-time LMI?

Traditional LMI is historical and projected data that is collected, analyzed, and reported by government agencies on the labor market. Although traditional LMI is comprehensive and reliable, it is limited in capturing current trends and it may not offer granular details about employer needs for specific jobs. Real-time LMI is data collected from online job postings, which could provide insight into daily changes in the labor market. Real-time LMI also offers information about employer needs related to different jobs, such as the types of skills requested, the job titles used, and companies advertising for those positions.

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 (COE). For a current list of the designated Career Education Deans, refer to 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 and Career Education Dean. 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 request labor market information (LMI), an LMI presentation, or workshop for my stakeholders?

All requests for labor market information related to program recommendations must be submitted using the online LMI request form. 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 request. An LMI presentation or workshop can be requested by contacting the COE Research Analyst John Edwards (jedwards@miracosta.edu). If possible, please provide the COE team with a minimum of four weeks advance notice.

What option do I select as the purpose of the request in the online LMI request form, which asks, "exploratory purposes," "regional program recommendation," "college/district program review," etc.?

In the submission process, only **one** of the following options can be selected:

i. **District or program review** may be selected if a program is being reviewed in the institution's program review process conducted every two years.

ii. **Existing low unit, local certificate(s) for state chaptering** may be selected if a college is seeking LMI for the development of a certificate that is six units or fewer.

iii. **New certificate or degree development (for credit)** may be selected if a college is developing a new for-credit certificate or degree Career Education program, and a needs assessment must be conducted for the occupation(s) or skill(s) trained for by the program.

iv. **Program modification (substantial change)** may be selected if an existing program is being modified (i.e., updated curriculum) and a needs assessment must be conducted for the occupation(s) or skill(s) trained for by the program.

v. **Noncredit program development** may be selected if a college is developing a new noncredit vocational program, and a needs assessment must be conducted for the occupation(s) or skill(s) trained for by the proposed noncredit program.

vi. **Undecided - exploratory purposes** may be selected if a college is seeking to develop a new program and interested in using LMI to guide program development. This option may also be selected for emerging occupations and traditional LMI may not be available.

How many occupations (SOC codes) can I pick for a labor market brief (i.e., data request)?

One occupation to a maximum of five occupations that a program can train for can be selected in a request, which is the state's limit of occupations that can be selected for program alignment.

What if an SOC occupational title/description does not match what employers use at their companies? What is the difference between a job title and an occupational title/description?

Employers can use various job titles and job descriptions when referring to an occupation with similar tasks and responsibilities. For example, Interior Designers may be called Decorating Consultants, Interior Design Consultants, Designers, etc. Despite these varying titles, this job would still be classified under the SOC code and occupational title Interior Designers (27-1025). Therefore, SOC codes are used as a standardized method of collecting information about occupations for the purposes of analyzing, tracking, and reporting information, whereas job titles are used by employers and can vary across jobs. More information about occupational codes and job descriptions can be found on O*NET OnLine.

How do I select SOC codes/occupational titles with high labor market demand to show that there is a supply gap in the report?

The SOC codes/occupational titles selected should not be selected based on labor market demand, but should be selected based on what occupation(s) or skill(s) are trained for by the program. As specified in the PCAH, a program "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. 26).

Where can I find the TOP codes for each program by college? What if there is no TOP code, or more than one TOP code, for what our college is training for?

To find the TOP code for a program, please go to the following site: http://datamart.cccco.edu/Courses/Course_Details.aspx. You can filter by college, term, and TOP code. All programs must be assigned to one TOP code. If two TOP codes could potentially fit a program, the best suited code should be selected based on the program curriculum and TOP code description.

How do I know if my request was received?

Submitting an LMI request means that the request is pending. The 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 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 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 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 COE report demonstrates a need to fill a labor market supply gap in the region.

The 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 the PCAH.

The 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.

How does the COE make a decision about program endorsement or non-endorsement?

The COE uses available labor market information to determine endorsement or non-endorsement for a new program or program modification. A general rubric framework that specifies considerations is reviewed by the COE before endorsement or non-endorsement. **Please note that the rubric is intended to serve as a general guide and may not apply across all labor market brief reports.**

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 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. 99)
- **Regional and local data:** "Current job market 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. 26)
- **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. 100)

What if the wages in the labor market report do not match what we hear from industry?

Although the COE makes a data-informed decision when providing a regional recommendation, wage data is based on what employers report to California's Employment Development Department (EDD) or United States BLS; therefore, some data may be limited or incomplete. In cases when feedback from industry is inconsistent with wages reported in a labor market brief, the San Diego & Imperial Regional Consortium and

COE encourage the colleges to use the employer endorsement letter template. The letter acts as an employer endorsement for the proposed program and can certify that the occupation(s) meet the living wage standard in the region.

What are entry-level wages, median wages, and experienced wages?

Entry-level wages (25th percentile) are earnings that workers might expect to earn with some training (e.g., an associate degree), and 25% of workers in that occupation earn this amount or less. Median wages (50th percentile) are earnings that workers might expect to earn with some training and experience, and 50% of workers in that occupation make this amount or less. Experienced wages (75th percentile) are earnings that workers might earn with advanced experience in the field, and 25% of workers earn this amount or more.

Where can I find student enrollment, retention, and completion data?

This information is available through DataVIsta.

Could you help me survey employers or create a special report?

A special report or employer survey can be requested and completed in collaboration with the COE. This process can typically take twelve months from preparation to completion, but can vary depending on the scope of the project and scheduled upcoming projects. Both timing and cost considerations for a project include planning, recruitment and screening, data collection, analysis and reporting. A minimum of 120-150 surveys are recommended to meaningfully interpret the data. To discuss a specific project and obtain more accurate estimates on timing and costs, please contact Tina Ngo Bartel (tngobartel@miracosta.edu).

REGIONAL DISCUSSION ABOUT PROGRAM INTENT

At the monthly Deans' Council meeting, the Regional Consortium includes in the agenda a list of LMI reports completed in the previous month(s). This list informs the Career Education Deans about the LMI requests that the regional colleges submitted to the COE. If needed, the deans have an opportunity to 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. 120 of the PCAH) especially if other colleges also have an intent to create a similar program.

OFFICIAL REGIONAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

The PCAH requires evidence of regional recommendation for all new Career Education degrees and certificates, including baccalaureate degrees.

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. 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?

No, program modifications no longer need regional recommendation. However, designated Career Education Deans will notify the Regional Consortium of programs that need modification. The modified programs will be listed on the Deans' Council agenda as informational items. This communication will serve to inform other deans with similar programs. Changes to recommended electives, program descriptions or titles do not need to be submitted. (Note: LMI is required for program modifications.)

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 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 completer 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 one week to review and discuss programs with their faculty.

5. By the end of this one-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 for changes made by the majority of the Career Education Deans (six out of 10), then the proposing Career Education Dean will take these questions/requests back to their college for review and consideration.

3. The 10 regional colleges (Cuyamaca, Grossmont, Imperial Valley, MiraCosta, Palomar, San Diego City, San Diego College of Continuing Education, San Diego Mesa, San Diego Miramar and Southwestern) each 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 10) 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 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

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 Deans' Council Ad-Hoc Program Reconsideration Committee. The revised program proposal must be co-signed by the program's college dean and the CIO (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 Deans' 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 Deans' Council meeting agenda as informational items only. Apprenticeship programs do not follow the regional program recommendation process, meaning no advisory committee or regional consortia minutes are required. However, apprenticeship programs are required to submit labor market information from the San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence and an approval letter from the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS).

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's website.