Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative
Technical Assistance through Partnership Resource Teams
Frequently Asked Questions
August 24, 2023

The Institutional Effectiveness and Partnership Initiative (IEPI) was launched in 2014 to help California's community colleges and districts improve their operational effectiveness. IEPI is uniquely positioned to help boost student success across the system by providing the high-quality technical assistance, professional development and resource tools needed to achieve the goals and commitments contained in the California Community Colleges' *Vision for Success*. A key feature of IEPI is that it draws on the expertise and innovation from within the community college system to advance effective practices and avoid potential pitfalls.

One main component of IEPI is providing technical assistance through Partnership Resource Teams (PRTs), which are available to institutions that express interest in receiving such assistance.

The PRT Process

How does an institution express interest in receiving technical assistance?
An institutional CEO can send a short Letter of Interest (LOI) for a PRT to provide technical assistance. The LOI specifies the Areas of Focus on which the institution would like the PRT to concentrate. The guideline for the LOI are on the IEPI website: https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Institutional-Effectiveness/Institutional-Effectiveness-Partnership-Initiative/Partnership-Resource-Teams/Letter-of-Interest. If you are interested in receiving technical assistance through a PRT, let your CEO know and indicate the area(s) in which you believe your institution would benefit from such assistance.

What is a Partnership Resource Team?
A PRT provides technical assistance to a client institution based on IEPI's positive, colleagues-helping-colleagues approach. Typically, it consists of five to seven community-college volunteers whose areas of expertise have been matched to the Areas of Focus identified in the LOI. The PRT includes one Lead (usually a president or chancellor, or a vice president or vice chancellor with PRT experience), along with members drawn from faculty, management, and staff, depending on the specific needs of the client institution.

Two cycles of PRT assistance are offered each year—one beginning in Fall and one in Spring. Between 10 and 15 client institutions typically participate in each cycle.

What is the process for selecting Partnership Resource Team recipients and scheduling visits?
- LOI submissions are accepted at any time. However, the priority deadline for PRTs beginning in Fall is in early March, and the priority deadline for PRTs beginning in Spring is in late September.
- IEPI reviews the information provided by each institution in its LOI, the timing requested in light of available PRT volunteers, and other factors. Notice of approval for assistance to begin in a particular cycle is sent to the CEO.
- We schedule the visits based on institutional need and readiness, and on the calendars of institutional personnel and PRT members.

- The IEPI Project Director or other member of the coordinating group may call the institutional CEO for additional clarification to ensure that we're not missing any important issues.

After this initial review, institutions scheduled for visits will be asked to provide a one- or two-page commentary on their Areas of Focus that is somewhat more detailed than the LOI, to help the PRT prepare for the initial visit. We ask your CEO to work with the local Academic Senate President in developing this commentary, particularly if the Areas of Focus include issues that fall within the purview of the 10+1 Faculty Academic and Professional Matters, or if collegial consultation with the Senate would help expedite institutional progress on any of the Areas of Focus. We encourage the CEO to involve other members of your institutional community, too, in the development of the commentary as appropriate, and to share the original LOI and final commentary document with those with whom the PRT will be meeting during the initial visit.

What role does the institution seeking PRT assistance have in selecting team members?
The Project Director assembles teams based primarily on matching the expertise of volunteers in the pool with the Areas of Focus identified by the institutions. The initial team composition is reviewed with the client CEO to ensure that there are no concerns with any of the members assigned, and approved by the CCCCO.

What is the Seed Grant, how do we get one, and what can we use it for?
Seed Grants of up to $200,000 are available to each institution that receives the full PRT process and submits its Innovation and Effectiveness Plan. These grants are intended to expedite implementation of Innovation and Effectiveness Plans, and are available each year until funds run out.

Your Innovation and Effectiveness Plan, which you will develop with the assistance of your PRT, must include a list of the additional resources (with descriptions and dollar amounts tied to plan objectives) you need to begin implementing the plan. As soon as you have completed your final plan, you will submit a brief application for seed money, which you can use to expedite progress on any objective included in your Plan. (Funds cannot be used for indirect costs, and fringe benefits are allowable only for newly hired employees funded by the grant.) IEPI staff will process your completed request as quickly as possible to expedite your receipt of the funds.

If we have already received full PRT assistance, may we express interest in receiving another round of full PRT assistance?
Yes, your CEO may file another Letter of Interest as long as the final expenditure report from the prior PRT process is filed well before the initial visit of the next PRT process. (See also "The Mini-PRT Process" below.)

How is the Partnership Resource Team assistance different from what is provided by consultants?
First and foremost, the Initiative is funded to bring resources to local institutions. Those identified as needing assistance will not have to pay for the technical assistance provided by IEPI. In addition to cost differences, IEPI draws heavily on community college personnel with the required expertise and familiarity with the system to assist institutions. Using this broad array of knowledge and skills, IEPI will provide technical assistance on a variety of issues, since Institutional Effectiveness is broad and covers almost any topic one could imagine.

What can institutions expect from the Partnership Resource Teams providing technical

assistance?
The team typically visits each client institution three times. The first visit is for gathering more information, the second visit is to help the institution as it develops improvement strategies and timelines in an Innovation and Effectiveness Plan, and the third visit is to provide follow-up support on early implementation of the plan and on sustaining progress. Additional follow-up visits are available if needed.

Team members are drawn from a pool of volunteer experts identified through or appointed by statewide professional organizations, the CCCCO, and others.

Each client institution can expect teams to work to understand the issues, provide options for addressing those issues, and help the institution as it develops solutions and plans implementation of those solutions with a focus on continuous, sustainable improvement. The teams will not simply meet with each institution once, deliver a report on what it should do, and walk away. Rather, each PRT provides support as the client institution develops its capacity and works to improve.

The cost to the institutions selected for IEPI technical assistance is zero.

What does IEPI request from each institution that receives PRT visits?
The Project Director asks each client CEO, primarily through the point persons whom she or he designates, to do the following:

- Provide logistical assistance in scheduling the visits, and ensure that the appropriate institutional personnel participate in each visit.
- Inform the institutional community about the nature and purposes of the PRT process, and of each visit.
- Provide crucial documents that will illuminate the Areas of Focus.
- Develop the more detailed commentary on the Areas of Focus, as described above.
- Designate a group to draft the institution's Innovation and Effectiveness Plan.
- Communicate as needed in timely fashion with the PRT Lead and Project Director, to help ensure that the institution's technical assistance needs are met, and that each visit goes smoothly.

The Project Director may ask client institutions to "report out" their lessons learned at statewide venues (e.g., Academic Senate Plenary, CCLC Annual Conference, ACCCA Conference). All necessary registration and travel expenses for such presentations are reimbursed by IEPI.

Does IEPI provide Partnership Resource Teams to districts and centers?
Yes. District-level leadership and administration is critical to deploying resources and personnel in support of local and systemwide goals. We have set up processes for Partnership Resource Teams to serve multi-college districts whose CEOs have submitted district-level Letters of Interest. Each such district that receives PRT services may also request up to $200,000 in seed money to expedite implementation of its own Innovation and Effectiveness Plan.

Centers, too, may submit LOIs, receive PRT visits, and request seed-money grants to expedite implementation of their Innovation and Effectiveness Plans.

Finally, the CCCCO may also submit LOIs and receive PRT assistance.

If my institution is having compliance issues, why would/should we contact the IEPI for

assistance?
PRTs assist local institutions in advancing their institutional effectiveness, which could include accreditation, audit, or other compliance issues. The three-visit process is an opportunity to identify the most efficient and effective path for coming into sustainable compliance, and begin to implement sound practices before sanctions might otherwise be imposed. Given the goals of the initiative, IEPI will treat information collected through the initiative with sensitivity. However, institutions can also choose to address compliance issues on their own.

How do I volunteer to serve on a Partnership Resource Team?
Periodically the statewide Academic Senate issues a call for faculty volunteers. IEPI seeks non-faculty volunteers through presentations, statewide associations/organizations, and the IEPI website. In all cases, volunteers are asked to complete a brief online survey of their areas of expertise. If you would like to serve on a PRT, please complete the survey applicable to you. You must complete the whole survey to be added to the PRT volunteer pool.

- Current non-faculty survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IEPI-PRT-Pool-Expertise-Inventory-202008
- Current faculty survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Faculty-Expertise-10-2020

The statewide Academic Senate consults with local Senate presidents before moving volunteers to the approved pool and transferring the data to IEPI. The IEPI Project Director consults with each non-faculty volunteer's home CEO or designee to ensure that he or she has no concerns about the volunteer's service before moving each volunteer to the approved pool.

If you have already completed the survey, but your contact information, position, or areas of expertise have changed, please do so again. In addition, as the survey questionnaire is updated with new areas of expertise, IEPI may request that you complete the revised survey containing the new fields.

Tentative PRTs for specific institutions are drawn from the combined approved pool based on a careful match between the institution's Areas of Focus and the volunteers' areas of expertise. Each final PRT is approved by the CCCCO and the receiving institution's CEO. If you are selected for a PRT, the IEPI Project Director will notify you by email at the address you submitted in the survey, to provide the necessary paperwork, arrange training, and begin the process of scheduling the first two visits to fit both team members' schedules and the receiving institution's preferred date options. (Part of that paperwork is a Participation Certification Form, which must be signed by the appropriate local administrator authorizing your service on a specific PRT, and then submitted to IEPI well before the initial visit.)

- PRT preparations for the initial visit vary depending on the Areas of Focus, but typically include the following steps:
  - Read the *Model Process for Partnership Resource Team (PRT) Visits* and other documentation to get fully acquainted with the PRT process.
  - Receive training in the IEPI approach to technical assistance through a one-hour webinar and then a PRT Workshop. The training covers the entire PRT process, including creation of the Menu of Options for the client institution's consideration as it crafts its Innovation and Effectiveness Plan. It also covers the use of Appreciative Inquiry in developing a set of

questions for interviews during the visit.
  - o Review a small set of crucial documents provided by the institution related to the Areas of Focus.
  - o Participate in one or more PRT phone or Zoom conferences to discuss the crucial documents and complete preparations.

Team members receive reimbursement of travel expenses. They may also receive a stipend for each visit and the Workshop, if their employer's policy and/or agreements allow them to do so.

PRT members may be asked to share their experience with others at PRT training workshops or at presentations to statewide organizations and conferences.

Experts who have already participated on PRTs report that it has been a rewarding and useful experience, and the need is great, so we encourage you to volunteer!

The Mini-PRT Process

What is a Mini-PRT?
A Mini-PRT, as the term implies, is a smaller version of a Partnership Resource Team (PRT) that provides technical assistance to interested institutions with a narrow set of issues. The Mini-PRT process is a simplified and accelerated version of the full PRT process, as follows:

- Mini-PRT members are drawn from the PRT pool of volunteer experts (see above). Team composition for each client institution is approved by the applicable CEO and the CCCCO.
- Prospective Mini-PRT members receive training to ensure that they adhere to the IEPI approach to technical assistance. Mini- PRTs employ the positive, colleagues-helping-colleagues IEPI approach, and suggest options for action consistent with sound practice.
- Institutions express interest in receiving Mini-PRT assistance related to a specific Area of Focus through a formal Letter of Interest from the CEO.
- Those institutions that are approved receive typically one visit from a small team of experts (typically two to three) whose expertise matches the Area of Focus. Team preparations for the visit vary depending on the Area of Focus, but typically include the following steps:
  - o Review a small set of crucial documents related to the Area of Focus.
  - o Participate in a phone or Zoom conference with the CEO and other client-institution personnel to gather additional information.
  - o Develop and discuss a set of comments and questions as needed for interviews during the visit, to call attention to successes, progress, quality, and innovation, and to elicit more information about challenges.
  - o Develop a preliminary Menu of Options for the client institution to consider as it drafts its Innovation and Effectiveness Plan, and/or other activities or documents designed to assist the institution.
- During the visit:
  - o The team gathers further information on institutional needs and practices, and refines its preliminary Menu of Options.
  - o The team then helps as the institution begins to draft its Innovation and Effectiveness Plan, which lays out the steps it will follow to address its Area of Focus.
  - o The final Plan may support a request for a Mini-PRT seed grant of up to $75,000, which must be used to expedite implementation of the objectives and action steps in the Plan. Funds may not be used for indirect costs; fringe benefits are allowable only for newly hired employees

funded by the grant.

What are some Areas of Focus suitable for Mini-PRT assistance?
Institutions may express interest in receiving Mini-PRT assistance for any relatively narrow Area of Focus related to institutional effectiveness. Among the possibilities are the following:
- Improving systems and practices in, or identifying a sound approach for evaluating and choosing among options for, campus communications, institutional research, professional development, technology solutions, or other discrete aspects of institutional operations
- Prior to the beginning of full PRT assistance, helping define the issues on which the full PRT will focus, and/or helping the institution organize and prepare for the full PRT process
- After the institution has received full PRT assistance, further advice and guidance on one of its original Areas of Focus
- After participation in an IEPI workshop on a given topic, helping the institution's team develop an action plan to answer the "Now what?" question.

Note that if an Area of Focus turns out to be larger or more complex than Mini-PRTs are designed to help address, IEPI may suggest the full PRT process instead.

Will the Mini-PRT come in and resolve the challenges related to our Area of Focus?
No. The client institution is responsible for resolving the challenges itself. The Mini-PRT, like the PRT, is intended to provide advice and guidance on the steps that the institution might take toward that resolution.

Must we have received full PRT assistance in order to receive Mini-PRT assistance?
Not necessarily, though we expect that many institutions already familiar with the IEPI approach to technical assistance might express interest in receiving Mini-PRT assistance after completing their full PRT cycle.

May we express interest in receiving full PRT assistance after receiving Mini-PRT assistance?
Yes. In fact, the Mini-PRT may suggest full PRT assistance as an option for consideration.

May we express interest in receiving Mini-PRT assistance while receiving full PRT assistance?
Yes, if the Area of Focus of the Mini-PRT process is substantially different from the Areas of Focus of the full PRT process.

May we express interest in receiving Mini-PRT assistance *after* receiving full PRT assistance?
Yes, your CEO may file another Letter of Interest specifying Mini-PRT assistance.

If we have already received Mini-PRT assistance, may we express interest in receiving another round of Mini-PRT assistance?
Yes, your CEO may file another Letter of Interest as long as the final expenditure report from the prior Mini-PRT process is filed well before the visit of the next Mini-PRT process.

May we request a specific person with specialized expertise to serve on the Mini- PRT?
Yes, and IEPI will try to accommodate the request if that person is available and interested. However, that person will still need to be approved for the PRT volunteer pool, will serve as a volunteer, and will receive training in the IEPI approach to technical assistance.